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CHAPTER 3

Life Span Development: Childhood, Adolescence, and Adulthood

Cindy L. Juntunen *and* Stephanie San Miguel Bauman

Abstract

This chapter examines human development in the context of multiple identities. It begins with an exploration of the complexity of human development through the lens of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), as augmented by multicultural and feminist psychology (Gilligan, 1982, 1996; Hurtado, 2010; Neville & Mobley, 2001; Yakushko, Davidson, & Williams, 2009). The roles of resilience and empowerment in development are then presented in the context of social identities. The remainder of the chapter explores important developmental concerns across the life span, including physical, emotional, social, and cognitive and academic/vocational development. Across each of these life domains, the specific contributions of feminist multicultural counseling psychology perspectives are identified, with an emphasis on fostering positive development throughout the life span.

Key Words: Life span development, ecological systems theory, multicultural feminist theory, resilience, empowerment, multiple social identities

Human development is often conceptualized as a relatively orderly and predictable progression through stages of growth and change. Major developmental theorists, including Piaget (1926), Erikson (1964), and Kohlberg (1963), have addressed the ways in which people develop cognitively, socially, and morally. These "classic" theories do not explicitly address the role of culture or gender, but instead were generalized to women and other cultures from the experience of primarily White and male humans. Feminist psychologists, including Carol Gilligan (1982) and the scholars at the Stone Center (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991), challenged these generalizations and noted the qualitatively different importance of relationship and interpersonal connection in the development of women and girls. In turn, early feminist psychology has been criticized as being primarily Eurocentric and was subsequently challenged by scholars focusing on the implications of multiple identities and the unique experiences of girls and women of color (Landrine, 1995; Russo & Landrine, 2010).

Both feminist and multicultural psychology scholars have pointed out significant limitations in the classic developmental theories. Despite their origin in the experience of White males, developmental theories do provide an important basis for understanding human development from a feminist multicultural perspective. For example, although it is criticized for being both andro- and ethnocentric, the biopsychosocial framework proposed by Erikson (1964) provides a significant foundation for most postmodern and feminist perspectives on development because it envisions development as a process that is lifelong and shaped by an individual's participation in multiple social relationships (Sorell & Montgomery, 2001). However, early theories did little to integrate or address the

development of social identity, which refers to the sense of being emotionally connected to a socially and politically identified group (Hurtado, 2010). Such social identities evolve in a meaningful sociopolitical context, or environment, in which the individual develops.

Many recent developmental theories attend more closely to sociocontextual factors, emphasizing the relational nature of the interaction between individual and environment (Lerner, 2002, 2006); the importance of understanding development in the context of environmental factors (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006); and the interaction of culture, individual perceptions, and social policy on development (Spencer, 2006). In fact, the emphasis on the interaction of the individual and his or her social context has become a hallmark of developmental research over the last 25 years (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009a). This increasing emphasis on social context has contributed to "understanding how development, at any point across the life span, involves the relations of diverse and active individuals and diverse, active, and multitiered ecologies" (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009b, p. 9).

When human development is conceptualized as a function of person-context interaction, the groundwork is laid to examine the influence of social systems on individual development, as well as the impact of the individual on social systems. The feminist multicultural perspective, which utilizes the analysis and critique of social hierarchies and norms, allows a deeper understanding of the impact of social identity and social context. Specifically, feminist multicultural theory directly and fundamentally considers the intersectionality (Hurtado, 2010) of multiple identities in the development of a given individual.

In this chapter, we examine human development in the context of multiple identities. We begin with an exploration of the complexity of human development through the lens of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), building on expansions by multicultural counseling psychology (Neville & Mobley, 2001) and feminist psychology (Yakushko, Davidson, & Williams, 2009). (See Ancis and Davidson, chapter 4 of this volume, for additional discussion of the ecological model.) We then discuss the role of resilience and empowerment in development in the context of social identities. In the remainder of the chapter, we explore important developmental concerns across the life span, including physical, emotional, social, and cognitive and academic/vocational development. Across each of these life domains, we identify the specific contributions of feminist multicultural counseling psychology perspectives, with an emphasis on fostering positive development throughout the life span.

Development in the Context of Multiple Identities

Richard Lerner (2006) has argued that early developmental psychology theories, which assumed uniform and permanent change, viewed diversity factors as sources of deviation or deficit from optimal development. In contrast, contemporary developmental science is a multidisciplinary area of study that significantly extends early theories of developmental psychology. Importantly, contemporary theories embrace a systems framework with an appreciation for diversity, both intra-individual change and inter-individual differences, in the development process. Diversity is also recognized as a key part of the systems in which change occurs (Lerner, 2006).

Models within counseling psychology, specifically feminist and multicultural models, expand on this appreciation of diversity by articulating the ways in which individuals develop social identities. Discussed more thoroughly in a later chapter (Fischer and DeBord, chapter 5 of this volume), social identity development models provide important insights into the process by which people come to understand themselves in the context of their ethnic, gender, sexual, religious, social class, and other identities. Human development is made more complex by the recognition that social identities are fluid and evolve at least partially independently of each other, at different times, as individuals encounter new situations across different environments. This is recognized in several locational feminisms (Enns, 2010) as "acknowledge[ing] the messy and complex nature of constructing healthy identities (p. 336)." In the framework of ecological systems theory, "development is a function of forces emanating from multiple settings and from the relations among these settings" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 817).

Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1993) conceptualized an ecological system consisting of four major subsystems, which interact to influence human development. These subsystems include (a) the microsystem, which consists of the interpersonal interactions that occur in a given setting such as home, school, work, or social group; (b) the mesosystem, in which two or more microsystem environments interact, such as the

relationship between work and home; (c) the exosystem, which consists of social structures and linkages that indirectly impact individuals, such as community resources or neighborhood characteristics; and (d) the macrosystem, which is most distal from the individual and includes norms and values of the larger society.

Bronfenbrenner's model has been adapted to specifically address multicultural counseling psychology processes (Neville & Mobley, 2001). Although the authors were focusing on counseling and training in their proposal of the Ecological Model of Multicultural Counseling Psychology Processes (EMMCPP), the constructs they used are readily adaptable to examining human development from a perspective in which culture is an integral influence on human behavior. Neville and Mobley also incorporated the individual as a system within the ecological framework, resulting in five interacting systems that influence human development.

The complexity of human identity has been explored in the Identity Salience Model (ISM; Yakushko, Davidson, & Williams, 2009), which is also anchored in Bronfenbrenner's model of development. Responding to the criticism that both multiculturalism and feminism have been marginalized in psychology because of their lack of intersectionality (Silverstein, 2006), Yakushko and colleagues applied ecological theory to the psychotherapy process, explicitly identifiying the ways in which multiple identities might have greater or less salience in the psychotherapy relationship. The ISM also provides promising application for research and theory development beyond psychotherapy (Allen, 2010). Both the ISM and EMMCPP provide a clear link between ecological development theory, counseling psychology tenets, feminism, and multiculturalism. Together, these ideas support a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexity of human development across multiple domains and identities.

Illustrative Case Example: Mikayla

Within the core system of the individual exist multiple social identities, each of which develop and change at different points in time. Imagine the case of Mikayla, a biracial female of divorced parents, currently living with her father and his male partner. Mikayla's mother is Latina and her father and stepfather are both White, of European descent. Mikayla has no known physical or mental disabilities. She and all of her parents identify as Catholic, and they live in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood. Mikayla's family is considered "well-to-do" by community standards, although her parents do not flaunt their wealth. As she grows into adolescence and young adulthood, Mikayla dates both males and females, and eventually identifies as bisexual.

Mikayla's earliest identity may be defined primarily by genetic and heritability factors, such as sex, race, and temperament. However, as she grows and has more social interactions, Mikayla's understanding of her own identity will likely change numerous times. Given the diversity of her family, she may have some understanding of her social identities from a fairly young age, but that cannot be assumed. Nor will these identities stay constant, as she will continuously be influencing and influenced by her social environment. Her identity may change as she encounters a sexist event in middle school (microsystem-individual interaction); might evolve again as she becomes aware of the impact of her family's social class on the way in which teachers respond to her in high school (mesosystem-microsystem-individual interaction); may again change as a young adult when she begins to question the role of sexual orientation and laws about same-sex marriage in her selection of a life partner (exosystem-individual interaction); and may be altered when a woman is elected president of the United States or when the Catholic Church votes to ordain gay priests (macrosystem). Each of these potential system interactions may be enacted in different ways at different points of the life span, as Mikayla becomes a member of the workforce, becomes a parent or chooses not to do so, accesses the health care system, moves out of the workforce, and potentially enters a community living environment as an older adult.

In each of these, and myriad other instances, Mikayla's development is significantly influenced by the ecological systems in which she lives. However, these environments also influence and are influenced by her social identities, which are numerous and vary in salience depending on the situation at hand (Yakushko et al., 2009). The reality of these multiple identities can serve as an exemplar of three core concepts of multicultural feminist theory—intersectionality, self-reflexivity, and accountability (Hurtado, 2010).

The *intersection* of Mikayla's multiple identities strongly influences her process of development, even though a specific aspect of her identity may be more salient at a given moment, such as gender identity in the face of a sexist event. Her understanding of

herself in new situations is constantly informed by her recognition (or lack of recognition) of other social identities. Given that these intersecting identities may be at various levels of awareness for Mikayla, this process can produce stress as well as renewed understanding, and the internal conflicts that emerge can either inhibit or promote development. For example, Mikayla's resiliency, or the ability to foster resiliency through empowerment, can provide her with the opportunity to thrive or flourish, following such challenges (O'Leary & Bhaju, 2006).

In general, *self-reflexivity* refers to having an image or representation of one's self. Through a feminist multicultural lens, this includes understanding one's self in the context of a social structure that includes oppression and privilege (Hurtado, 2010). It is important to attend to the reality that individuals are likely to experience social locations in which they both experience oppression and contribute to oppression. Mikayla may experience gender oppression in the context of a sexist or null (Betz, 1989) environment, and may simultaneously be a member of the dominant group if she "passes" as White, is assumed to be heterosexual, or is able to afford a higher education. As Mikayla develops, self-reflexivity will help her become increasingly aware of the system of privilege and oppression, as well as her own position as privileged or oppressed, or both.

Further, Mikayla is impacted by and is impacting the social environment in which she lives, learns, works, and relates to others. As a member of social groups, she becomes *accountable* to the well-being of others, as well as herself. "Accountability assumes that the self is not constituted in the individual; rather it is encased in a body that is socially connected" (Hurtado, 2010, p. 36). As she recognizes her own place in the social environment, and the relationship between community well-being and her own well-being, Mikayla may become empowered to contribute to social change. For example, Mikayla may become more aware and intolerant of homophobia on a national level (exosystem and macrosystem), and more specifically to the lack of response by high school administration and teachers when homophobic slurs are made (microsystem). This awareness could then lead to Mikayla and her father's efforts to establish a gay student association in her high school (individual-microsystem-exosystem interaction).

In this thumbnail sketch of a case example, only a small number of Mikayla's possible identities are acknowledged, and the complexity of her environment is only briefly realized. Yet even within this simplistic scenario, the factors that can either inhibit or promote Mikayla's development are numerous. As pointed out by Lerner (2006), traditional theories of development may have pointed to several sources of risk in Mikayla's development related to factors of social identity: her biracial identity, her father's sexual orientation, her gender, and her religious identity may all have been viewed as potential contributors to Mikayla deviating from successful human development. In contrast, a multicultural feminist perspective on Mikayla's developmental context highlights the potential for strengths to emerge from these same factors, and particularly highlights the value of empowerment and resilience as Mikayla encounters challenges in her ecological system.

Resilience and Empowerment

The variability of social contexts and the complexity inherent in intersectional identities present numerous sources of both strain and strength across the life span. Inevitably, individuals encounter stressors and sources of adversity that have the potential to enhance or impair human development. Whether or not an individual is able to respond effectively to such stressors is often attributed to resiliency, as a personality trait, or resilience, the process of adapting to adverse situations (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Enhancing the individual's ability to respond to adversity can be achieved through feminist empowerment-focused interventions (O'Leary & Bhaju, 2006). Both resilience and empowerment are consistent with the strengths-based, contextually informed, life span development approach of counseling psychology, as exemplified by the work of the Society of Counseling Psychology Section for the Advancement of Women (Whalen, Fowler-Lese, Barber, Williams, Judge, Nilsson, & Shibazaki, 2004).

Resilience

The construct of resilience began to receive serious attention in the psychological literature several decades ago, primarily in its application to understanding positive and negative outcomes among groups of at-risk children (Garmezy, 1993; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Rutter, 1987). Several models of resilience have been proposed, varying in terms of the relationship between stressors and adaptation. The compensatory model (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984) proposes that compensatory factors

(which can take many forms, such as positive attitude, spiritual beliefs, or problem-solving approach to barriers) neutralize the potential negative impact of stressors. In contrast, the challenge model views moderate stressors as potentially enhancing adaptation (Garmezy et al., 1984) as the individual learns from successfully meeting the challenge. The protective factor model (Garmezy et al., 1984) proposes that protective factors can moderate the influence of risk factors to reduce the likelihood of a negative outcome. The reserve capacity model (Gallo & Matthews, 2003) proposes that sociocultural and contextual factors will influence the availability or amount of resources (be they tangible, interpersonal, intrapersonal, or culture-specific) available to either promote or protect health in the face of adversity.

Similarities across these models are apparent when one considers the functions of resilience, which cut across models. These functions, as identified by Rutter (1987), include reducing the impact of risk factors; reducing negative chain reactions; helping to establish and maintain self-identity and self-efficacy; and enhancing opportunities. Through these functions, resilience has significant influence on the interaction of subsystems within the ecological system of human development.

The existence of several models of resilience does highlight an ongoing challenge in clearly defining the term. Resilience as a psychological construct is perhaps most widely understood as a "dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 543). The explicit inclusion of contextual factors in this definition provides several opportunities for intersection with feminist multicultural perspectives, as does the implicit rejection of pathological and deficit models (O'Leary & Bhaju, 2006). Clauss-Ehlers (2008) noted that "significant differences in the experience of childhood stressors when socioeconomic variables are considered further suggests that overcoming adversity (i.e., resilience) needs to move beyond a mere focus on individual traits to incorporate the ecological context" (p. 209). Drawing from sociology and ecology, as well as cross-cultural psychology, Ungar (2010) recently defined resilience as "the capacity of individuals to access resources that enhance their well-being and the capacity of their physical and social ecologies to make those resources available in meaningful ways" (p. 6). With this expansion, Ungar clearly locates resilience in the interaction of the individual, the exosystem of community, and potentially the macrosystem of the larger society.

RESILIENCE IN A FEMINIST MULTICULTURAL FRAMEWORK

Until quite recently, studies of the development of children in racial/ethnic minority groups tended to focus on negative outcomes and deficiency models (Coll et al., 1996). Consistent with the increasing attention to diversity among developmental theories in general (Lerner & Sternberg, 2009b), current research in resiliency also attends more closely to specific diversity factors as they relate to positive outcomes. The specific contributions of culture to the development of resilience and coping have been explored in a model of cultural resilience developed through the work of Clauss-Ehlers (2003, 2004, 2008) and her colleagues (Clauss-Ehlers, Yang, & Chen, 2006). Cultural resilience includes "a developmental trajectory within a cultural matrix composed of norms, family structure, and peer relationships" (Clauss-Ehlers, 2008, p. 198).

Cultural resilience is supported by empirical evidence that cultural resources, including cultural beliefs, family ties, and social support, are related to resilience among Latino youth (Clauss-Ehlers & Levi, 2002) and adults (Gallo, Penedo, de los Monteros, & Arguelles, 2009), African American girls (Belgrave, Chase-Vaughn, Gray, Addison, & Cherry, 2000), and culturally diverse college women (Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2006). Among diverse college women, Clauss-Ehlers and colleagues (2006) found that a strong engagement with ethnic and gender identity predicted greater resilience in response to stressors, including those related to racial or gender discrimination. In another diverse sample of college women, Clauss-Ehlers (2008) found that sociocultural support, including specific cultural traditions and attributes, was predictive of adaptive coping (or resilience).

The cultural resilience model articulated in developmental psychology is congruent with a counseling psychology emphasis on strengths-based counseling, which assumes, among several other key propositions, that (a) strength is the outcome of a process that includes struggle with adversity; (b) all strengths are based in culture; and (c) that race, class, and gender are integral parts of all experience, including counseling interactions (Smith, 2006). Specifically, Smith has posited that "cross-cultural counseling should focus on clients' cultural and individual strengths rather than on

the victimizing effects of racial or ethnic discrimination" (p. 17). In order to meet this goal, Smith proposes ten steps to strengths-based counseling, which include instilling hope, using a solution-oriented framework, empowering clients, and building resilience.

This emphasis on strengths is not intended to overlook the realities of social disparity in the larger cultural context. As Vera and Shin (2006) noted in their response to Smith, health disparities and differences in academic and vocational achievement that disadvantage lower-income people of color may well be due to social context. The authors go on to note that several social toxins, including poverty, limited adult supervision, excessive exposure to television, and limited connection to community, need to be addressed at the environmental, rather than individual, level. They suggest that counseling psychologists can take a more active stand in influencing public policy and advocating for families. Engaging in community outreach and prevention strategies, as well as educating families so that they can advocate for themselves, are all ways of influencing the exo-, meso- and metasystems in which children and families develop. This call to action echoes Bauman (2002), who pointed out the need to intervene at the levels of the environment, the community, the school, and the family in order to foster resilience in children.

While Smith (2006), Vera and Shin (2006), and Bauman (2002) focus their interventions on different levels of the ecological system, their strategies share a common focus on the interaction of the individual with his or her sociopolitical experience. All of them point to the need for counseling psychologists to engage with the larger political and ecological experience of clients, and all describe strategies that empower the client, be that an individual, a family, or a community, to make positive changes.

Empowerment

Empowerment is a key principle of feminist therapeutic approaches, and it plays an important role in the feminist multicultural framework (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010). It is deeply rooted in social justice efforts, as reflected in McWhirter's 1991 definition:

> The process by which people, organizations or groups who are powerless (a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, (c) exercise this control without infringing upon the rights of others and (d) support the empowerment of others in their community. (p. 224)

As a therapeutic intervention, empowerment involves helping the individual develop a sense of control over his or her own thoughts, behavior, feelings, and development (Worell & Remer, 2003). Empowerment interventions provide a route to resilience and eventual positive outcomes for individuals who do not inherently identify or utilize the resources that are available to them. Specifically, if an individual who encounters adversity does not know how to access resources to respond to that adversity, empowerment therapy provides interventions to help the individual both recognize and obtain the necessary resources to respond, be they internal or external. Ultimately, the use of empowerment interventions are expected to lead to overcoming adversity, developing resilience, and thriving through positive adaptation (O'Leary & Bhaju, 2006).

"Empowerment" is a popular term that has only recently been systematically located in a model and defined as a complex process by Cattaneo and Chapman (2010), who define empowerment as:

> an iterative process in which a person who lacks power sets a personally meaningful goal oriented toward increasing power, takes action toward that goal, and observes and reflects on the impact of this action, drawing on his or her evolving self-efficacy, knowledge and competence related to the goal. Social context influences all sex process components and the links among them. (p. 647)

A full exploration of this complex definition is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, several key components of this definition resonate with the feminist multicultural perspective and will be relevant throughout the exploration of developmental stages. Of particular importance is the emphasis on recognizing the impact of action taken, which implies that there is change in the individual's social influence as well as intrapsychic change (Cattaneo & Chapman). Further, the social context is explicitly acknowledged as influencing the presence of and access to power. Finally, the emphasis on taking action, recognizing the impact of that action, and drawing on self-efficacy to move forward are all relevant to the process of human change and development, and are inherently part of the growth of individuals from infancy to older adulthood.

Childhood and Adolescence

One way to tell the story of a life consists of using a life span development approach and tracing developmental connections from infancy through childhood and adolescence to adulthood (Miller, 2006). Thus, to understand child and adolescent development from a feminist multicultural perspective, Erikson's (1964) stages of psychosocial development provide a helpful starting point. Sorell and Montgomery (2001) explain, "Erikson proposed that people know who they are through participation in particularized sociohistorical contexts, and the ways in which self-definitions are composed vary across the life span as bodies grow and age and social opportunities, expectations, and responsibilities grow and change" (p. 102). In each of Erikson's stages, the individual faces a particular "crisis" or developmental task. These crises or developmental tasks come to the forefront because of not only changing characteristics of the person, such as biological maturation or deterioration and advancing or declining cognitive skills, but also changing attitudes, behaviors, and expectations of others. For school-age children, these developmental tasks include building a sense of industry as a precursor to a sense of competence. For adolescents, Erikson's primary developmental task is developing a sense of identity. Notably, Erikson's lack of focus on the role of relationships in earlier development has been challenged by Carol Gilligan (1982) and other psychologists who emphasize the centrality of the capacity and desire for relationships to women's development and human development in general (Impett, Sorsoli, Schooler, Henson, & Tolman, 2008).

As previously mentioned, a feminist multicultural perspective draws on the foundation provided by Erikson's life span development approach yet also considers sociocultural factors and the interaction between the individual and the environment. For children and adolescents, the transactional nature of multiple systems undoubtedly affects development (Masten, 2003). Ecological models like Bronfenbrenner's (1977) take into account that youth are nested in families, and families are nested in communities and other systems (Wyche, 2006). Dire economic circumstances, political chaos, or a restricted range of beliefs, roles, and activities may adversely impact development and the opportunity to develop a personal sense of identity (Sorell & Montgomery, 2001). In contrast, families, schools, and communities characterized by caring and support, high expectations, and members' active involvement are protective factors for children. Benard (1991) asserts, "It is only at this intersystem level—and only through intersystem collaboration within our communities—that we can build a broad enough, intense enough network of protection for all children and families" (pp. 19–20).

Physical Development

Many noteworthy physical changes occur during childhood and adolescence. From preschool to school years, improvements in gross motor coordination appear. These changes are followed by refinement in fine motor development and eye-hand coordination (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). With adolescence comes puberty, the process of sexual maturation, as well as a growth spurt, a rapid increase in size. Puberty takes an average of three to four years to complete. The dramatic physical changes in adolescence tend to begin and end about two years earlier for girls than for boys. There is, however, wide variation among individuals. For example, puberty can happen in as little as 18 months for some girls or can take up to five years for other girls (Piran & Ross, 2006).

By adolescence, some areas of the brain, such as those dealing with motor control and eye-hand coordination, are well-developed. However, other areas, including those in the highest regions of the brain, continue to grow during puberty. Consequently, even when much of the adolescent body has matured into an adult form, the adolescent brain functions differently from an adult brain. Skills like organizing ideas, devising strategies, and managing impulses are not fully developed because the frontal lobes, more specifically the prefrontal cortex, are not fully formed (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010).

During adolescence, it is crucial to promote optimal physical development by way of diet, exercise, and social coping skills. It is equally important to prevent risk behaviors, including drug use, unprotected sex, and violence (Abreu & Newcomb, 2002). Given the timing of adolescence of girls relative to boys, girls are more likely than boys to simultaneously face the physical changes and the transition to middle school or junior high (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). In addition, it can be challenging for girls to go through puberty due to adverse social forces such as sexual harassment, dating violence, objectification of women's bodies, prejudicial treatment, and discrimination (Piran & Ross, 2006). Indeed, while physical appearance is a concern for both adolescent males and females, the standards for women

are relatively more strict, so girls may risk more sanctions for violations (Travis, 2006).

It is important to note that the resources necessary for healthy physical development are not equally accessible to all children and families. For example, correlates of poverty in children include inefficient cardiovascular functioning (Evans & Kim, 2007), decreased likelihood of receiving childhood immunization vaccinations (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007), and increased likelihood of obesity (Chen & Escarce, 2010). Families with limited access to resources are less likely to be able to afford healthy, organic, or even lean foods, and more likely to have diets that include heavily processed foods. Attending to the intersection of social class and the dietary resources available in the community is critical to understanding potential differences in physical development.

Emotional Development

Emotions such as fear, sadness, happiness, anger, and surprise aid human survival, motivate behavior, serve as a mechanism of communication, and facilitate decision making. The ability to identify and express feelings is one component of social competency that aids healthy development, resilience in the face of risk factors, and overall well-being (Bierman, 2004; Broderick & Blewitt, 2010; Werner, 1990). Interventions designed to foster emotional development often focus on self-esteem. Self-esteem is a person's evaluation of her or his attributes. Moreover, it is the positive or negative emotional valence associated with those attributes. Global self-esteem reflects an individual's perception of personal strengths and limitations considered relative to competent performance in areas of personal importance. This is true during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. In other words, if a child performs poorly in athletics, the negative impact on self-esteem is greater if sports are important to the youth and less adverse if sports are unimportant. Consequently, a child or adolescent could experience high overall self-esteem even if she or he displays low competence in specific areas. It has been hypothesized that marginalized groups have lower global self-esteem than mainstream groups due to internalization of discriminatory appraisals. Current developmental research, however, does not support this unequivocally. Although findings may vary from individual to individual and group to group, in general, strong racial or ethnic identity is correlated positively with global self-esteem (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010).

Self-esteem tends to decline somewhat during middle childhood and early adolescence because children recognize, often for the first time, that they may fall short in comparison to others. A small, but consistently observed gender difference in self-esteem favors males in late childhood and early adolescence (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). Nonetheless, recent studies have shown that many girls show a steady increase in self-esteem after the age of 13 over the course of adolescence and young adulthood. For example, Impett and colleagues (2008) assessed adolescent girls' tendencies to silence their own thoughts and feelings. They found that congruence between what girls felt, thought, and did in relational contexts (i.e., relationship authenticity) distinguished girls who experienced an increase in self-esteem during adolescence from those who did not. For the girls in the study, self-esteem was tied to the ability to bring themselves fully and authentically into their relationships with others. This is consistent with feminist psychologists' assertion that relationship authenticity is central to self-esteem and well-being. In Impett and colleagues' study, relationship authenticity predicted increases in self-esteem after ethnicity was taken into account.

Social Development

From their earliest moments, people are social. Babies actively create an attachment system through behaviors that keep a caregiver close or elicit caregiving. Examples of such behaviors include clinging, sucking, and smiling. Attachment systems are essential for social development; they provide ongoing protection and nurture emotional bonds (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). For children, feeling a sense of belongingness is a need and may be established not only at home with primary caregivers, but also in the context of other microsystems such as school and community groups. A youth's sense of belonging reflects a personally felt, active engagement with, and psychological connection to a group (Baskin, Wampold, Quintana, & Enright, 2010).

Relational capacity or social competency serves as a source of strength and resiliency (Brabeck & Brabeck, 2006; Werner, 1990). Specific skills associated with social competency across different social situations include social participation (joining peers and being comfortable in peer contexts), emotional understanding (identifying and expressing feelings), pro-social behavior (being cooperative), self-control, communication skills, fair play (being a good sport), and social problem-solving skills (Bierman, 2004). A child or adolescent who

masters social competency is better equipped to contribute to the well-being of self and others. Thus, social competency facilitates accountability, which is, as discussed earlier, one of the core concepts of multicultural feminist therapy (Hurtado, 2010). A related cognitive-developmental milestone is when children can de-center their thinking, understand that the self and each other person has a perspective, and grasp that the perspectives of self and others may differ (Miller, 2006). In other words, the multicultural feminist core concept of self-reflexivity becomes a possibility (Hurtado, 2010). Notably, to be consistent with an ecological model of development, when there are issues in regard to social development, intervention should include not only individual children, but also the peers with whom they are most likely to interact.

In their classic book, *The Psychology of Sex Differences*, Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) concluded that aggression was the only area within social behavior for which sex differences are fairly well-established. Since then, meta-analyses have found that physical aggression with an onset during toddlerhood is more typical of boys, while relational aggression with an onset during middle childhood is more typical of girls (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). However, counter to common sex stereotypes, girls have not been found to be more dependent, sociable, or pro-social than boys. According to Bem's gender schema theory (1975, 1983) children's self-concepts become sex-typed when they limit their choices and regulate their behavior to conform to cultural definitions of femaleness or maleness. As a result, Bem encouraged moving beyond gender as a way of responding to the world. Werner (1990) found that during the middle childhood years, resilient youngsters possess a broad spectrum of skills, rather than limiting themselves to behavior governed by traditional gender stereotypes. For instance, resilient girls display autonomy and independence, while resilient boys tend to be emotionally expressive, socially perceptive, and nurturing. Gilligan (1996) emphasized the importance of relationship to human development, and suggested that the fluid interaction of resilience and vulnerability to others fosters development for both boys and girls.

As children grow into adolescents, peers have increasing and significant influence. In early adolescence, friends are often chosen due to similarity in behaviors, attitudes, and identities. In later adolescence, individual differences among peers are more common. Meanwhile, adolescents may spend less time at home and may try to negotiate a more egalitarian relationship in the family context (Piran & Ross, 2006). Parents and caregivers, however, remain an important microsystem. For example, parental warmth or responsiveness is associated with adolescents' self-confidence and social competence, while parental control is associated with adolescents' own ability to exert self-control. Through high levels of monitoring and involvement, adults also may positively influence adolescents' choice of peers (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010).

The complicated nature of the relationships between adolescents, peers, and parents is reflected in the risk and mediating factors related to bullying behaviors. Using an ecological model, Barboza and colleagues (2009) elucidated the ways in which gender, race, social support, parental relationships, teacher relationships, school climate, and school-parent interactions can influence whether or not adolescents participate in or are victims of bullying behavior. Specifically, they found that students who perceive the school atmosphere as unwelcoming, unfair, and unpleasant were more likely to bully. The authors also found that Asian American and African American students were significantly less likely to bully than White students. An important follow-up question, consistent with a feminist multicultural perspective, would be to examine the extent to which discrimination might contribute to social climate factors and increase the likelihood of bullying in a school system. A rash of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) adolescent suicides in the United States in late 2010 drew national attention to this question, as it increased public awareness of the tragic cost of homophobia and bullying based on sexual orientation (Crary, 2010).

Cognitive and Academic/Vocational Development

Piaget's broad framework for describing and explaining cognitive development is one of the grand psychological theories of the twentieth century (Sorell & Montgomery, 2001). Although the specifics of Piaget's cognitive stages of development have been the subject of debate, his general characterizations of children's abilities are useful. Piaget's assertion that the human mind constructs knowledge is an underlying assumption of much of the current research on cognitive development. As they interact with the environment, children try to fit new information into an existing knowledge structure or an organized way of thinking through the process of assimilation. Then, children engage in the process of accommodation, in which they modify

the existing knowledge in order to achieve a better match or fit to the environment (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). Piaget's focus on human agency and learning is compatible with feminist pedagogy because both see students as active learners and teachers as facilitators of self-directed learning (Miller, 2006).

From the perspective of Erikson's psychosocial stages of development, significant events for children and adolescents include things of an academic or vocational nature (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). Significant events for children aged 6 to 12 years include learning important academic skills and comparing favorably to peers in the school context. In turn, significant events for adolescents moving toward adulthood include making choices about vocational goals as they strive to establish a sense of identity. The future orientation required to make such choices is something that an adolescent is cognitively capable of doing (Gordon, 1996).

Consistent with a feminist multicultural perspective, counselors and psychologists who work in school settings must watch for and remove barriers to student learning and academic/vocational development. Such barriers include low educator expectations and attitudes, biased curriculum, and other inequities that prevent students from experiencing an environment conducive to learning and achieving at high levels. Advocacy in the school setting takes many forms, including empowering students to become leaders and helping families to navigate the bureaucracy of the school system and to access its resources (Chen-Hayes, Miller, Bailey, Getch, & Erford, 2011).

Although key aspects of physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development each have been highlighted in turn, it is crucial to remember that these factors all come into play and interact when individuals of any age navigate daily life and make decisions. As a case in point, Gordon (1996) examined the prevention of early pregnancy at an inner-city high school and found that many of the participants desired pregnancies; that they preferred single parenthood to traditional family structure; and that they experienced low academic skills and poverty prior to pregnancy. For some, getting pregnant was seen as an intentional decision with a desirable outcome. Thus, a prevention program for sexually active teens who want children would need to focus on helping adolescents develop other alternatives to early childbearing. Meanwhile, a prevention program for adolescents who do not want children would focus more on the provision of knowledge about reproduction and contraception. In short, the more carefully and comprehensively we consider cognitive, social/psychological, and cultural social factors, the better positioned we are to understand and assist children and adolescents.

Young Adulthood

Historically, research on the transition to adulthood focused on the timing and transitions of "markers" of an adult status, like completing school, beginning full-time work, getting married, and becoming a parent (Aronson, 2008). In contrast, the work of Arnett (1997) demonstrated that individuals rely less on the attainment of such life markers and more on intangible, psychological indicators of adulthood, including accepting the consequences of one's actions, making decisions independent of parents or other influences, and becoming financially independent. Viewing adulthood as social construction, Aronson's (2008) research on young women's transition from adolescence to young adulthood revealed how objective transitions, such as marriage, which are often used in life course research, are neither subjectively relevant nor universally applicable. After interviewing 42 young women who were part of the Youth Development Study, Aronson commented, "Young women make sense of their lives through perspectives absorbed from the women's movement. They expect to have fulfilling jobs, support themselves economically, develop their own identities, raise children alone if necessary, and pursue their own goals even when they are in relationships with men. Feminism, in this context, is lived through women's everyday experiences" (pp. 77–78). Some of the young women whom Aronson interviewed incorporated feminist attitudes in their lives through a self-reliant and self-sufficient approach; by "living feminism," the young women crafted their life pathways.

Notably, the majority of girls navigate the transition from girlhood to womanhood with success (Currie, Kelly, & Pomerantz, 2006). Piran and Ross (2006) identified factors that contribute to a positive transition from girlhood to womanhood, such as a sense of physical safety, equitable treatment at home and at school, positive peer and adolescent and adult relationships, and participation in empowering experiences.

Physical Development

The period from about age 18 to 25 may be described as a time of emerging adulthood. Sometime between age 18 and 30, all biological systems reach

peak potential. Within that time frame, some systems peak early, such as muscle strength, flexibility, speed of movement, and response. Other systems peak later, such as abilities dependent on control (e.g., arm-hand steadiness, precision, and stamina) and performance dependent on cognitive factors like strategy use. Good habits that help maintain peak or near peak functioning include eating a healthy diet, regularly exercising, not smoking, and refraining from excessive drug and alcohol use (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010).

Emotional Development

Erikson identified two developmental tasks as essential for adulthood adjustment: establishing and strengthening bonds with significant others; and becoming a productive worker. For young adults, the development of intimacy may be reflected in a willingness to commit to affiliations and partnerships with the positive outcome of love (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). Erikson's theory has been criticized for having an androcentric bias because, in line with a tradition male trajectory, it emphasizes independence over connectedness (Sorell & Montgomery, 2001). Sorell and Montgomery asserted that male and female development can be conceptualized as involving different psychosocial trajectories without considering either gender deviant or inferior. In turn, Langdale (1986) asserted that both men and women possess the capacity to develop independence and agency, as well as the capacity to develop relationality and connectedness.

As gendered beings in a gendered society, males and females face different circumstances and expectations and thus tend to balance independence and connectedness differently. Individual people also differ in the degree to which they are relational. Psychologists are encouraged to facilitate the development of both communal and agentic traits in their clients (Brabeck & Brabeck, 2006). Compared to individuals who adopt more traditional gender-role behaviors, individuals who can function in situations requiring agentic, instrumental behaviors as well as situations needing communal, expressive, and emotionally nurturing behaviors are more likely to have relatively high self-esteem, self-confidence, and low depression (Worell, 2006).

The emphasis on gender differences in committed or intimate relationships has contributed to a socially constructed tendency to overlook the experience of same-sex couples forming relationships in young adulthood. While forming attachments that lead to marriage is seen as a fundamental step in young adult development, the same process of attachment for gay and lesbian couples can be viewed as atypical or even psychologically immature (Roisman, Clausell, Holland, Fortuna, & Elieff, 2008). However, empirical evidence suggests that committed gay and lesbian couples do not differ from married heterosexual couples in terms of their relationship quality or their interactions in conflict resolution (Roisman et al., 2008). This is consistent with extensive research on gay families, which suggests that the children of gay parents experience stability and positive outcomes similar to those of the children of heterosexual parents (American Psychological Association [APA], 2005).

Social Development

Closely tied to emotional development is social development. Two ways of conceptualizing adult social development are the nuclear family tradition and the peer/romantic tradition (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). The nuclear family tradition examines the degree to which a person's earliest attachments to primary caregivers endure throughout life and how these earliest attachments affect the quality of caregiving provided to the next generation. Consistent with this tradition, young adults develop working models of relationships that allow them to process information about people and to respond quickly. Problems arise if people behave in current relationships in ways that were adaptive in past relationships under very different circumstances. Thus, the challenge is to accommodate to the realities of current relationships.

In contrast, the peer/romantic tradition focuses on the peer attachments of young adults and whether partners have a positive sense of themselves and others, expect others to be available and supportive, and are comfortable with both intimacy and autonomy. Research on adult relationships reveals that women and men define romantic relationships similarly, with the most essential features being trust, caring, honesty, and respect (Brabeck & Brabeck, 2006).

Although it is often overlooked in psychological literature, the role of friendship is also important in adult development. For example, in a study of young adult college students, discussing negative events with an ambivalent friend contributed to higher blood pressure and higher heart rates than discussion with a supportive friend (Holt-Lunstad, Uchino, Smith, & Hicks, 2007), suggesting that the quality of friendships may have an effect on physical well-being.

Cognitive and Academic/Vocational Development

There is some debate as to whether additional thinking skills emerge during young adulthood or whether existing abilities are simply sharpened and honed so that thinking becomes more relativistic. What is certain is that in young adulthood, individuals increasingly face circumstances in which the "right answer" is not pre-established and varies with the circumstances and the perspective of the problem solver. Ill-defined or ill-structured problems include choices regarding educational and career paths. Thus, the ability to stand back and use relative judgment is a major achievement in intellectual development (Schaie & Willis, 2000).

Whether or not young adults pursue college, they share similar goals and face some common expectations of work as a microsystem. College and non-college youth see good pay, opportunities for advancement, and the chance to contribute to society as highly desirable characteristics of a job (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). After studying the requirements for success in the twenty-first century workplace, Achieve, Inc. (2004), concluded that the knowledge and skills needed for success in the workplace are essentially the same as those needed for success in a post-secondary setting. Entry-level jobs require analytic and literary skills. Problem-solving skills and the ability to work in a team are also essential. Despite common goals and expectations of college and non-college youth, the reality is that education is a key predictor of educational success and career advancement. Thus, an education that ends with high school often limits options and opportunities (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). This reality is of particular importance in the context of an educational macrosystem that continues to be differentially accessed by people of color. For example, the US Department of Education reports that high school dropout rates differ significantly by race: 4.4% of Asian/Pacific Islander, 4.8% of White, 9.9% of African American, 14.6% of American Indian, and 18.3% of Hispanic 16–24-year-olds were not enrolled in or completing a high school credential in 2008 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010a). Among youth who completed high school, 49.2% of White youth, 40% of African American youth, and 36.7% of Hispanic youth were enrolled in a degree-granting institution in 2008 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010b).

Young adulthood contributes to a person's social location, which in turn influences his or her understanding of self. Miller (2006) comments, "Specifically, each phase opens up new possible experiences, denies access to other experiences and constrains how experiences are understood, in part because people enter different social institutions and cultural discourses in each phase" (p. 446). Ideas from Piaget can inform efforts to explain how a young adult might come to understand the new academic or vocational experiences and, in the process, develop an identity. In line with Piagetian theory, a student or worker initially comes to understand a new experience in terms of what he or she already knows. If this current knowledge system cannot successfully make sense of the educational or employment experience, then she or he experiences conflict or disequilibrium. At that point, the individual actively tries to develop a new level of understanding of school or work that resolves any contradictory beliefs. Equilibrium is experienced after a more complex level of understanding of the academic or vocational experience is attained. The cycle will begin again as this new level of understanding proves partial and imperfect. Continued learning and change are inevitable because the person's new cognitive structure makes him or her aware of other novel aspects of life that must be understood. By coming to understand multiple new experiences over time, she or he gradually constructs a new identity that acknowledges the intersection of an academic or vocational identity with race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, and other selves. Reflecting on this identity development, Miller (2006) asserts, "Over time certain aspects of self become stronger and more prevalent, and others diminish. Thus, a self, identity, ability or skill is multiple, fluid and ever changing; the balance simply shifts" (p. 462).

Middle Adulthood

Perhaps because many early developmental theories attached such great importance to the tasks of childhood, adolescence, and relationship formation, limited attention has been paid to midlife and later adult development (Valsiner, 2006). Erikson did address development across the life span, but his proposals about the developmental crises of adulthood have not been widely explored or researched. One recent and notable exception is a study of two midlife adult cohorts, which tested Erikson's assumptions and concluded that personality continues to develop into and throughout

midlife (Whitbourne, Sneed, & Sayer, 2009). This study is consistent with the recent interest in midlife development apparent in the emergence of life span development (Baltes, 1987; Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 2006) and life course development (Elder & Shanahan, 2006). Certainly the rich literature on the intersection of vocational and family demands (Schultheiss, 2006), examined by counseling psychologists over several decades, has addressed some aspects of midlife development. Finally, a series of research lines have been launched using the National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS), data collected in the mid-1990s by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (Brim, Ryff, & Kessler, 2004). While these developments suggest that more attention is being paid to midlife, it continues to be overlooked relative to other stages of life span development.

A closer examination suggests that midlife is frequently a period of life filled with transitions in work, family, relational, and health arenas. Lachman (2004) notes, "Middle-aged adults are linked to the welfare of others, including children, parents, coworkers, other family members, and friends.... At the same time, they are addressing their own needs for meaningful work (paid or unpaid), health and well-being" (pp. 306–307). This tension between caring for others, while also undergoing significant transitions, results in midlife being a dynamic and complex phase of the life cycle. Women continue to assume many of these caregiving tasks, in both their roles as mothers and daughters (Tronto, 1993). Among collective cultures, caregiving burdens in midlife are also more likely to be significant, as there is a greater likelihood that aging parents or grandparents will be cared for by family members than in dominant White culture. For example, Latino families in the United States are less likely to use formal caregiving resources and are more likely to assume care of older family members, with that care often being assumed by women in the family (Ibarra, 2003). The interplay of gender and culture therefore has the potential to have a significant impact on midlife development, although this is again the subject of very limited investigation.

Physical Development

Physical changes in midlife are often viewed negatively and as harbingers to old age. In a culture that is generally identified as youth-oriented, even the earliest signs of age can be viewed as cause for anxiety and worry (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006). A single day of television commercials demonstrates the intense fear of wrinkles, age spots, and sagging skin that is being suggested to the average U.S. citizen. In that context, common middle-age changes such as weight gain and decreased physical activity can be ominous.

Concerns about health and physical conditions are likely to be intensified among adults who are uncertain of access to health care, an area in which social identity contributes to meaningful discrepancies. Midlife women are less likely to have access to health care than older women or men of either age group, and are more likely to report delays in receiving health care, even after controlling for access to insurance (Ng & Scholle, 2010). Disparities can also be found in the effectiveness of health care received, with Black and Hispanic midlife adults (ages 45–65) receiving less effective care than Whites of the same age group (Ng & Scholle).

Midlife physical changes related to sexuality are also notable. Normative physical changes, such as menopause and decreased fertility, are also common in midlife, particularly among women. Men's sexual activity and satisfaction may decrease in the presence of health concerns during midlife, as illness can have a disproportionately high impact on male sexual functioning (Carpenter, Nathanson, & Kim, 2009). While menopause may be viewed as a loss, research has also found that some midlife women experience it as an opportunity for increased freedom in sexual activity (Rossi, 1994). Although the experiences of midlife women of color have been generally under-studied (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006), there is some evidence that ethnicity influences the experience of menopause. Specifically, in a qualitative study of 38 women living in Britain, Wray (2007) found that women of color were less likely to think of menopause as an event or condition requiring medical attention than White women. In the words of one participant, "We don't let it stop us doing anything ... we ignore it" (Wray, 2007, p. 39). This attitude is consistent with feminist perspectives on menopause, which suggest that treating it as a medical event contributes to the stigmatization of women's physical selves.

Although some physical changes at midlife are viewed negatively, it is also important to note that many midlife adults remain very physically active and maintain good health (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006). For example, Finn (2000) notes that women "view midlife as a time of positive change" and are "not willing to let peri-menopausal symptoms disrupt their lives" (p. 354).

Emotional Development

Erikson (1964) identified the primary task of midlife as generativity, the need to care for and give back to the next generation. Current research, drawing on a sample of MIDUS participants, demonstrates that generativity does predict psychological well-being (Rothrauff & Cooney, 2008). Interestingly, no differences were detected between parents and non-parents, suggesting that well-being is associated with caring for the next generation, whether or not that generation is one's own offspring.

Psychological well-being has also been examined in the context of discrimination and sense of control (Jang, Chiriboga, & Small, 2008). Based on a sample of approximately 1,500 from the MIDUS database, the authors concluded that perceived discrimination has a negative impact on psychological well-being, but that this effect can be mediated by a sense of control. Participants with a higher sense of control experienced less impact of perceived discrimination, and those with lower sense of control experienced greater negative affect.

Discrimination has also been connected to psychological well-being among lesbian, gay, and bisexual midlife adults. Also drawing from the MIDUS sample, self-identification as LGB was predictive of lower levels of eudaimonic psychological well-being (Riggle, Rostosky, & Danner, 2009), defined as a sense of personal growth, purpose, meaning, and self-actualization. In this same study, women with less education also had lower levels of well-being. Racial/ethnic minority members, however, had higher levels of eudaimonic psychological well-being. The authors posit that the protective factor of community and family support contributes to this higher level of well-being, and suggest that LGB individuals have less overt community support and so may have less protection from perceived discrimination.

These three studies highlight the important impact of social identity and contextual factors on psychological well-being and emotional development. The impact of discrimination, along with the presence or lack of protective factors moderating that discrimination, may determine emotional health in midlife.

Social Development

Changing social relationships are perhaps among the most significant transitions in midlife. Changes in child, parent, grandparent, spousal, and work relationships are all likely to occur during midlife, bringing with them a multitude of emotions, challenges, and opportunities (Kogan & Vacha-Haase, 2002). As midlife adults adjust to their changing roles in these relationships, they may also be juggling the demands of multiple roles, many of which are changing simultaneously. Although a thorough exploration of all of these potential role changes is beyond the scope of this chapter, a few issues of particular salience are highlighted. For example, it is very likely that midlife adults will be caring for family members in multiple generations.

By the mid-1980s, the need to care for aging parents was identified as a "normative family stress" experience (Brody, 1985) for many midlife individuals. As more and more older adults live longer and develop chronic rather than acute illnesses, the ranks of midlife adults in the "sandwich generation" (Raphael & Schlesinger, 1993) has grown significantly in the first decade of the twenty-first century. While this experience may be normative, it is important not to overlook its stressful aspects. Social support can be particularly important in midlife (Lachman, 2004), helping adults manage the multiple responsibilities they have. Further, the lack of social support can increase stress and contribute to illness (Lachman).

Relationships with children also change during midlife. Midlife parents are not a homogenous group, as their family may include young children, adolescents, or young adults leaving or returning to the family home (Lachman). Negotiating the changing expectations in child-parent relationships as children mature can present midlife adults with significant challenges, and these challenges can be intensified for parents who are also preparing their children to deal with life stressors such as discrimination or limited financial resources. Of particular relevance in the current period of economic downturn, many midlife adults are negotiating living arrangements with their adult children who are staying in or returning to the family home into their twenties and beyond. This interaction of the family microsystem and the macrosystem represented by the economy then becomes a source of interpersonal stress that most parents have not anticipated; the financial security that many people hope to achieve during midlife may be delayed as a result.

Intimate and couple relationships can also experience significant change during midlife, at least partly in response to the additional tension placed on couples by the changes in other family relationships. As men and women enter midlife, their expectations regarding gender roles may change. This is particularly likely to occur if work roles are

also changing, especially if partners are unequally engaged in or advancing at work. Especially for heterosexual couples, the continuing gender inequity in the workplace and the division of labor at home continue to present very different challenges for men and women (Kossek & Lambert, 2005). Divorce is also fairly common at midlife, and can result in significant change in economic resources and social status (Smock, Manning, & Gupta, 1999). However, divorce can also be viewed as a positive change, particularly if the marriage relationship has been abusive or restrictive in some way (Rice, 2003). In fact, empowerment to leave such relationships is a significant intervention consistent with feminist theory.

Cognitive and Vocational/Academic Development

Midlife adults who have access to work and educational settings are likely to make valuable cognitive contributions, as they hold important positions in the family and work environments (Lachman, 2004). However, it is important not to overlook the contributions of adults who have not had access to experiences that contribute to cognitive development. Research on cognitive development among adults with lower incomes, for example, is quite limited (Hendrie et al., 2006).

This lack of research is inconsistent with the reality that many non-dominant cultures place high values on the wisdom of midlife and older adults (Assmann, 1994). The discrepancy between measuring cognitive development and wisdom is an example of how the dominant culture influences which research questions are pursued and ultimately disseminated. From a feminist multicultural perspective, the wisdom of midlife and older adults is as valuable as memory and processing speed.

Career development is more fully explored elsewhere in this volume (see chapters 14 and 15), so will be only briefly addressed as a developmental issue. In the original life span approach to career development, Super (1990) identified midlife as a period of maintenance, during which time the worker is primarily focused on keeping his or her skills updated to meet job requirements and to obtain advancement. Most of the career development "action" is seen in the earlier stages leading up to having an established career. However, given the significant career changes and flexibility of most workers (Savickas, 2002), at least in the United States, this period of maintenance can no longer be seen as static. Numerous career transitions, both planned and unplanned, can occur during midlife, with both positive and negative outcomes (Juntunen, Wegner, & Matthews, 2002). Beyond transitions from one job or kind of work to another, midlife adults might also experience a re-commitment to their careers. In fact, Bejian and Salomone (1995) proposed career renewal as a stage worthy of further consideration. Little has been done to follow up on this suggestion empirically, but as attention to midlife development increases, this will be a fruitful area of further study.

Older Adulthood

There is general recognition of the need to attend to the unique issues encountered in older adulthood, if for no other reason than the fact that the percentage of older adults is growing in response to the aging of the Baby Boomer generation. Across psychology, there is increased awareness of the unique issues encountered by older adults, as evidenced by documents such as the American Psychological Association Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Older Adults (APA, 2003). However, the research and theoretical literature in counseling psychology does not convey a clear commitment to issues encountered by older adults. The inclusion of chapters in landmark books such as the *Handbook of Counseling Psychology* have called for greater involvement, and have outlined ways in which counseling psychology can contribute to an understanding of aging through the lens of normative development and adaptation (Hill, Thorn, & Packard, 2000). These opportunities are supported by the fact that there are perspectives on aging that are consistent with the strengths-based approach supported in counseling psychology and feminist multicultural theory, such as successful aging (Rowe & Kahn, 1997) and active aging, a policy framework developed by the World Health Organization 2001.

Despite these opportunities for intersection, there is "disturbingly little representation of older adults" (Werth, Kopera-Frye, Blevins, & Bossick, 2003, p. 803) in the two major journals of counseling psychology. This is certainly inconsistent with the life span focus that is central to the counseling psychology identity, and suggests that our understanding of the developmental needs of older adults may be limited. Given that studies of healthy, active, or successful aging are much less common than studies of age-related decline (Hendrie et al., 2006), this lack of attention by counseling psychology and feminist multicultural theorists is particularly unfortunate. It may, in fact, contribute to the perception that

aging is primarily a time of decline and support the idea "that 'successful aging' should be distinguished from 'normal aging'" (Hendrie et al., p. 14).

Physical Development

The emphasis on decline has been refuted by feminist scholars, such as Antonucci, Blieszner, and Denmark (2010), who note that most older Americans remain healthy well into old age and also perceive their own health to be good or better. These authors suggest that the negative stereotypes related to aging (ageism) contribute to the perception that age is associated with ill health, as well as related factors such as sexual activity or interest. It is important to acknowledge that such stereotypes could also be at play among researchers, including psychologists, who make the decisions about which areas of behavior or functioning to examine.

In the Report of the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Cognitive and Emotional Health Project, Hendrie and colleagues (2006) reviewed 96 published studies that were longitudinal in nature, included samples of at least N = 500 who were 65 years and older, and focused on cognitive or emotional health. They found that poor physical health, including chronic illness, disability, and cardiovascular concerns including hypertension, contributed to both poor cognitive health and poor emotional health. The authors also caution that very few large-scale longitudinal studies have examined questions related to healthy or positive physical development in late adulthood, although there is the capacity to do so with the large databases that exist.

In one notable exception to the emphasis on age-related decline, Bowling (2008) interviewed 279 adults age 65 and older about their perceptions of the construct of active aging. The most common response was maintaining physical health and physical function, including physical exercise, endorsed by 43% of the sample. This was followed by leisure and social activities (34%), mental functioning (18%), and social relationships (15%). Importantly, participants rated physical functioning as equally important, whether they were themselves physically fit or not. This may suggest that frail elders are not aging actively, in their own perception, and could also suggest that these perceptions are influenced by stereotypes that place significant salience on physical functioning over other aspects of active aging.

Emotional Development

Emotional well-being among older adults is related to several sociocultural factors, as well as to indicators of physical and cognitive health. Hendrie and colleagues (2006) found that there was a strong relationship between emotional and cognitive well-being, suggesting either a bidirectional relationship or the possibility that both are affected by some common process. Several contextual factors appear to function as protective factors for emotional well-being, including higher levels of education, higher socioeconomic status, and greater social support (Hendrie et al.). Social engagement has also been shown to be related to psychological well-being among older adults living in assisted living facilities (Park, 2009).

Risk factors for emotional well-being include chronic illness, cardiovascular disease, and a history of mood concerns, including depression and anxiety (Hendrie et al.). There is also some evidence that personality traits influence health-related quality of life. Specifically, neuroticism (as measured by the NEO Five Factor Inventory) contributes to lower self-assessment of health-related quality of life among older adults (Chapman, Duberstein, & Lyness, 2007).

Social Development

Understanding social development, and specifically the changes in social relationships, is particularly important for older adults. Social relationships change significantly as partners, family, and friends die, and as grief becomes a part of the lived experience. The lower life expectancy of men means that, as they grow older, heterosexual women are less likely to be married, as they tend to re-partner less than men following widowhood or the end of relationships. Specifically, the U.S. Census Bureau (2009) reports that 41% of women 65 and older are widowed, compared to 13% of men. However, women are also more likely to have close friends and to rely heavily on social networks. For example, evidence suggests that contacts with social networks increases throughout the first three years following widowhood, and then returns to pre-widowhood levels (Guiaux, Tilburg, & Van Groenou, 2007). Such positive social relationships may serve as a protective factor against stigmatization due to marginalized social identities (Antonucci et al., 2010).

Stigma is also related to social well-being among older LGB adults. Specifically, in a study of Dutch LGB adults aged 55 to 85 years, Kuyper and Fokkema (2010) found that minority stress contributes significantly to the experience of loneliness. Not surprisingly, less loneliness was experienced by participants with steady partners, who had

good physical health and high levels of self-esteem. Importantly, the presence of an LGB network also served as a protective factor against loneliness. Past experiences with prejudice and expectations of prejudice from others, including caregivers, contributed to greater feelings of loneliness.

It is also critical to note that much of the literature on aging and relationships is also influenced by assumptions that death, dying, and isolation are the primary areas of concern. However, in a review of literature focused on marriage and aging, several studies found that marital satisfaction and sexual relationships are widely experienced among older adults (Melton, Hersen, Van Sickle, & Van Hasselt, 1995). These authors also noted that there is a significant need for more research in the sexual relationships of older adults, but little has been examined in the 15 years since that call.

The use of social media among older adults is also an area that is significantly understudied by counseling psychology. It is estimated that 46% of adults 65 and older use the Internet (Pew Research Center, August, 2010), and the number of older adult users of social media sites, such as Facebook, is growing more quickly than any other age group (Madden, 2010). Older adults reported that they were increasingly likely to use social media for three major reasons: to reconnect with people from their past, to find online support for managing chronic disease, and to stay involved with other generations, particularly grandchildren (Madden, 2010). This increased use of new technology to support social development is another example of older adulthood having the potential to be a time of renewal, rather than decline.

Cognitive and Vocational/Academic Development

Hendrie and colleagues (2006) found consistent support for the protective factor of education in cognitive health among older adults. This may be due to the role of education in developing a "cognitive reserve" (p. 22). It may also be that education is representative of other protective factors, such as socioeconomic resources and healthier contextual environments. Other protective factors include social engagement, social support, self-efficacy, and cultural factors.

Beyond cognitive ability, some researchers have considered the relationship between age and wisdom, defined as consisting of cognitive reflective and affective dimensions. Specifically, wisdom includes the search for a deeper truth, the ability to engage in self-examination, self-awareness, and self-insight, and the ability to feel greater compassionate love for others (Ardelt, 2003, 2010). In a study that compared older adults to college students, Ardelt (2010) found that older adults with a college education scored higher on a three-dimensional wisdom scale than young adults, and concluded that wisdom may increase over time due to learning from life experiences, at least among those with the opportunity and motivation to pursue wisdom. These findings acknowledge both the potential benefit of age in cognitive development, and the importance of contextual factors that support the development of wisdom.

Conclusion

The ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner) provides a culturally and contextually informed perspective on the complexities of human development. In the preceding pages, we have attempted to infuse feminist multicultural analysis of key developmental issues, including the role of resilience and empowerment, an emphasis on social support and networks, and a recognition of the stress related to identity and sociocultural status. It is important to note that there is significantly more empirical and theoretical support for this infusion when discussing childhood and adolescence. However, a feminist multicultural understanding of development in adulthood remains relatively limited.

Future Directions

1. There is a significant need for feminist multicultural counseling psychologists to attend more fully to the psychological well-being, relational needs, and optimal functioning of older adults.
2. The cross-cutting impact of socioeconomic status on most domains of development needs to be more fully addressed and integrated into feminist multicultural research.
3. The role of sexual orientation is only sporadically considered in developmental research. This is an area in which culturally competent counseling psychology researchers could make a significant and systematic impact, by considering the interaction of identity development models with other developmental processes.
4. Analyzing development from a strengths-based model of counseling psychology can contribute to increased recognition of positive development over time, which would potentially

mitigate some of the bias toward decline present in current aging literature.

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