Counseling Boys and Young Men
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Editors
We dedicate this book to boys and young men, the parents and families who love them, and the counselors committed to helping them live happy, productive lives.
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Preface

This book is designed to provide readers with a better understanding of the unique challenges faced by today’s young males and to share the most effective strategies for counseling boys and young men. The cultural expectations of young girls and women have long been the topic of books, articles, and media attention, but there has been a lack of attention to the specific needs of young boys and young men. Therefore, the content of this book represents a multidimensional exploration of issues and concerns that this group brings into the counseling office. By presenting a holistic view of the development of young males within their social, emotional, and behavioral realms, this book highlights many of the potential pitfalls they may face and relevant interventions to be used by clinicians.

When selecting topics for the chapters in this book, current statistics and our rapidly changing culture shaped our choices. The content provides readers with information related to areas beyond those typically found in books addressing the counseling concerns of children and adolescents. The media is an overwhelming and greatly uncontrollable influence on our youth, and the current culture heavily emphasizes the importance of “having it your way” and “getting it while it is hot.” Coupled with the increasing pressure to grow up fast and the ability of the Internet to provide information on taboo or titillating topics at the speed of a keyboard click, young people are confronted with knowledge and images beyond their maturity at record rates. Counselors must be willing to help young males make sense of the overabundance of data they are being fed, as they try to create their evolving identities. Thus, we have invited experts in the field to share their knowledge, experience, and strategies for best meeting the needs of these modern men-in-the-making.

As the capabilities of technology escalate, new doors to new vices (online gaming, easily accessible graphic pornography, “instant” friendships,
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eetc.) are being opened. Counseling professionals are being asked to treat young men for behaviors that the practitioner may feel unprepared to address. By covering timely and critical topics, this book serves as a primer for both experienced and newly trained clinicians. The authors not only provide descriptions of contemporary presenting issues, innovative strategies, and novel case studies but also help readers visualize how to recognize and treat clients wrestling with specific behavioral issues or emotional concerns. Where relevant, chapters offer lists of additional resources (e.g., websites, books, organizations) to assist the reader in learning more about areas of particular interest.

We have organized this book around four aspects of clinical interest. The first section is titled Understanding and Promoting Healthy Development and its purpose is to help readers understand the developmental processes of males from cradle to early adulthood. The normal developmental path for young males is presented in terms of physical, emotional, and moral development in the first chapter and a detailed case example is presented. Also in this section are chapters that emphasize the ways in which therapy with young males is different than with young females, as well as a comprehensive discussion of how to adequately assess the issues and concerns of your adolescent male clients within a contextually focused perspective. This section also includes a look at the developmental problems that arise when young males suffer from learning disorders. Males are diagnosed with this type of disorder more frequently than females and, most unfortunately, research shows that individuals with learning disorders are twice as likely as others to report emotional distress and to attempt suicide (see Knopf, Park, & Paul Mulye, 2008). It is clear that we must recognize that learning disorders impact more than just academic performance. We also take a look at giftedness in young males and the ways in which this can negatively influence a young boy’s life as academic excellence can lead to bullying and ostracism by a boy’s peers. We close this section with a look at career counseling for young men. The traditional world of work has changed dramatically, as factories and industries have moved offshore or replaced manpower with machine power and technology. It is essential that we help our young men prepare for career paths that no longer reflect the typical trajectory outlined by early career theorists.

Just as “no man is an island” and “it takes a village to raise a child,” young boys grow up within a web of multiple relationships. Our second section, Relationship Development and Relationship Concerns, provides perspectives on a young male’s relationships within the family and with peers and romantic interests. The first chapter outlines normal relationship development with parents, siblings, and same-sex peers, and our second chapter explores some of the struggles faced by young boys growing up in single-parent homes, which currently comprise over a quarter of
the homes in which children are residing. Kreider and Ellis (2011) reported findings from the U.S. Census Bureau that while 75% of White children live with both parents in their home, only 67% of Hispanic and 37% of African American children live in two-parent households, suggesting that there are huge inequalities in the lives of youth that counselors must be willing to acknowledge and address through advocacy and special programming. In the chapter on single-parent homes, the authors outline the special needs of young boys in families of divorce, as well as homes in which a parent has been incarcerated and those in which military deployment has removed a parent from a young boy’s daily life.

Romantic relationships are explored in the following chapter and the authors take a look at concerns including adolescent sexual activity, “sexting,” dating violence, and teen fathers. The final chapter in this section addresses gay and questioning young males. Studies show gay men usually recognized that they were somehow “different” from their heterosexual peers around age 5 or 6 and society is increasingly supportive of young men “coming out” in their early teen years; however, the individual decision may be fraught with tension and anxiety, and depending on the environment or geographical location, a young man’s peers may respond with diverse reactions ranging from nonchalant acceptance to physical violence perpetrated against him. This chapter will provide readers with useful strategies to assist these young males as they seek to determine and develop their sexual identities.

Our third section, Emotional and Mental Health Concerns, focuses on a variety of mental health issues that may impede a young male’s healthy functioning. Knopf et al. (2008) reported that adolescent males are more likely to have mental health difficulties than their female peers, yet they are less likely to seek treatment, according to studies. Males have consistently been more frequently diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) than females, and we include a look at ADHD and its treatment via innovative methods—one case study illustrates the use of sand-play therapy for ADHD, and a separate chapter provides a rich base of knowledge on the use of adventure-based counseling as a treatment for young men with ADHD. It is a unique platform for connecting with young males that goes beyond the office and into the realm of metaphorical and actual adventure. In another chapter, authors explore working with young males who have suffered victimization and abuse. They also provide information addressing clinical work with boys who have abused their siblings or their parents.

A chapter on grief and loss is next in this section. Grief is a complicated emotion, and many young males are unprepared to work through this emotion, as our culture still seems to frown on the expression of sadness and vulnerability in males. Information on helping the boys cope with loss is shared, as well as a case study outlining grief counseling with
a young boy. This is followed by a chapter looking at mood disorders in young males. It has been reported that around 20% of male high school students have acknowledged at least some mild depressive symptoms, and research also shows that the suicide death rate for adolescent males is 2.5 times that of adolescent females (see Knopf et al., 2008). Clearly, we need to understand more about the emotional life of young men, and this chapter provides welcome knowledge about emotional concerns and suicide assessment for this population.

Oftentimes, a young man’s inability to seek help for his emotional distress may lead him to attempt to soothe himself through behaviors that are nonproductive or even lethal. These choices are discussed in the final section, Behavior Disorders and Concerns. Substance use and abuse disorders are found more often in young males than females. Addictions to substances have been joined in their negative influence on the lives of young men by addictions to processes, such as gaming, sexual activities, and gambling. To best meet counselors’ needs, we have included two chapters on addictive behaviors—one on identifying and assessing these behaviors and another providing strategies for treatment. The authors of these two chapters address the variety of addictive behaviors that are keeping young men from healthy interactions and normal development. Males who suffer with oppositional defiant disorder or conduct disorder create heartache for families and distress for many others in their environments. In a chapter addressing these disorders, the author describes symptoms and strategies for helping young men and their families combat the damage of these problems. A chapter on bullying provides information on the dynamics of bullying, as well as how to involve the bully, the bullied person, and by-standers in an effort to mitigate this harmful interaction among youth. A chapter on helping boys and young men deal with their anger is provided so that clinicians can help young males find more productive ways of handling the anger that may arise from unmet needs or desires, or from sadness or loss, emotions they are typically uneducated in handling. The final chapter in the book is focused on street gangs and their members. Unfortunately, the prevalence of gangs has continued to rise over the past decade, and research presented in this chapter suggests that society-level interventions are necessary to fully combat the ability of gangs to function and grow their membership. Programming initiatives are described and a unique case study is presented showing the efficacy of a novel treatment, play therapy, with an 11-year-old boy who was on the cusp of falling into gang membership.

Throughout this book, our authors provide a textured exploration of the challenges faced by young men today, as well as the challenges faced by clinicians who work with these young men. Communication and emotional expression practices of young males are described and suggestions
for building a productive therapeutic alliance are shared explicitly and through the case studies presented. In summary, the aim of this book is to raise the awareness of practitioners to the many ways in which young men need assistance navigating from boyhood to manhood.

REFERENCES


Acknowledgments

This project grew out of the realization that while our boys and young men need counseling techniques and approaches that are targeted to their unique developmental and temperamental needs, there was an absence of literature on this topic. So, we turned to the experts in the field and asked if they would share their wisdom and experience with readers, which they did with skill and clarity. Therefore, we acknowledge that it is their commitment to the well-being of boys and young men that allowed this book to take shape. We also greatly appreciate the support shown by our editorial team, Jennifer Perillo, who helped shape the project from its origin, and Nancy Hale, who has seen it through to its completion. We also offer sincere gratitude to Katie Corasaniti, who keeps the ball rolling and keeps us on track!
Physiological Development

The developmental path of males and females from childhood throughout adulthood varies by gender. Although the physical disparities are apparent, the divergent physiological pathways are not. A host of neurobiological differences between genders affects differences in learning, behavior, and emotional regulation and expression. Although these differences may be quite striking, neither the male nor the female brain is superior in functioning to that of the other, even though the male brain tends to be about 10% to 15% larger than the female brain (Bonomo, 2010).

On average, the brain stops growing between the ages of 12 and 14, but structures of the brain may develop into early adulthood (Scholastic, 2008). Gender differences in the size and function of various components are evident early on. The prefrontal cortex is responsible for carrying out future decisions, making right and wrong choices, and weighing risks and rewards. The limbic system is the center of emotional responses. Since the prefrontal cortex develops late and the limbic system matures early, this often has an effect on the decision and choice making of teenagers (Scholastic). Teenagers are more apt to make decisions without thinking through an issue logically or rationally. During mental tasks (e.g., speaking), males do not engage both cerebral hemispheres to accomplish the task, whereas females rely on both (National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families, 2011).
Males also have a greater volume of gray matter, and females possess more white matter. White matter allows neural activity to be sent and spread throughout different parts of the brain, while gray matter retains neural activity in a localized position (Gurian, 2010). This may be a reason females tend to be more empathic and openly emotional. Moreover, throughout the day, a male brain needs time to recharge and will periodically enter a state of rest, but a female brain rarely does so. As a result, males and females tend to approach tasks and learning differently. Females are more easily able to handle multitasking because their corpus callosum is significantly larger, and this structure transmits signals between both hemispheres (Bonomo, 2010). Another brain structure that is distinctive in size is the inferior parietal lobule (IPL) that is responsible for processing spatial attention, perception, and sensory integration. The IPL is larger in males, and research shows that the left side is particularly larger than the right (Sabbatini, 1997). Information processing is also different between female and male brains. Information even travels to different parts of the brain for males and females. In addition, the hippocampus (short- and long-term memory), the occipital lobe (visual processing), the frontal lobes (emotion center), and the temporal lobe (organization of sensory input) are not as active in males as in females. Thus, females tend to associate more sensation and emotions to their experiences and keep records of each moment in their memory (Gurian, 2010). Throughout development, on average, males carry out spatial tasks such as mentally visualizing the shape and rotation of an object better than females. However, females, on average, can execute tasks such as emotion recognition and particular verbal functions better than males due to more cortical areas (National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families, 2011). In regards to learning, females are more proficient in reading and writing, while males perform better in advanced mathematics and physics (Bonomo, 2010).

Besides differences in specific brain structures, the neurophysiological make-up is gender unique. Female neural activity is consistently busier than in males. Females also have more nerve fibers in their skin and are more sensitive to pain (Gurian, 2010). Males process pain slower than females and are less sensitive to pain. Nerve connections that assist in listening are more developed in females, giving them better auditory skills (Bonomo, 2010). The neurochemical and hormone differences between the genders affect physiology and behavior. Males have a significantly higher level of the aggression/desire-seeking chemical known as testosterone (Ginger, 2003). However, females have higher levels of oxytocin and serotonin. Oxytocin is a chemical neurotransmitter in the brain that is associated with bonding, sometimes referred to as the hormone of love. Females tend to bond easier and more often with others. Serotonin helps stabilize mood and is referred to as the “happy feeling” chemical (Gurian,
Because of possessing less serotonin, males are more at risk to display impulsive behaviors. According to Zimmer (2011), there is a specific region in the brain that evaluates conflict, the cognitive control network. The network functions more poorly in childhood but develops with age. During the adolescent years, teenagers are more likely to be impulsive without thinking about the consequences or the risks associated with the consequences or behavior. As young males develop, more risks occur such as venturing off without parents, increasing autonomy, experimenting with new drugs, alcohol, and risk-taking behaviors. Due to experience, environment, and genetics, adolescents may have decreasing levels of cognitive control. These levels may lead to the developing of anxiety, depression, addictions, and other affective and cognitive disorders.

Both boys and girls follow similar developmental paths, and multilevel development is occurring from conception through death. This chapter will present development from conception through late adolescence and will focus on the uniqueness of boys. In exploring this uniqueness, a number of developmental theories and postulates were explored, including the role of play in children’s development.

**EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PLAY**

Developmental theorists Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky emphasized the importance of play in the development of a child. Early in life, young boys are already identifying and choosing gender-appropriate toys (Dunn & Hughes, 2001; Martin, Wood, & Little, 1990). Within the Piaget Sensorimotor Stage (birth to about age 2), it was noted that even at age 1, there is a difference in the preference of toys between boys and girls (Snow, Jacklin, & Maccoby, 1983). From a very early age, boys show an interest toward vehicles, weapons, building blocks, and progress to toys involving construction and mechanical systems. They show a propensity for building things. They favor objects that are animated and devices with functions that can be manually activated (Baron-Cohen, 2005). Girls focused on playing with dolls and related objects, and boys found interest in playing with tools, toy cars, and airplanes. Servin, Bohlin, and Berlin (1999) found that boys continue to show a preference for action/manipulative type toys from the age of 1 to 5. More recently, Golonblack et al. (2008) conducted a longitudinal study involving the sex type behavior of boys and girls from 2½ to 8 years old. They focused on the types of toys each sex played with, and they found that sex type behavior increased through the preschool years to at least 8 years of age.

Vygotsky (1978) believed that play is a significant tool for learning and development. According to Vygotsky, “play traits are the result of proximal development of the child. In play, a child always behaves...
beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play, it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all development tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development” (p. 102).

According to Newman and Newman (2009), play is an important experience that enhances physical skills, motor coordination, and perceptive skills, as well as social and personality development. As children grow into middle childhood and participate in team sports, they learn the value of cooperation through the division of labor. Team play also fosters interpersonal relationships and further develops social skills. Play can also influence the building of familial relationships. According to Kazura (2000), play can be a significant vehicle in the development of father–child relationships. Children who were socially attached to their fathers demonstrated much higher levels of play activity than those who demonstrated an insecure attachment to their fathers.

In general, play is critical to a child’s physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and personality development. It also enables a child to develop environmental awareness (Hendrick & Weissman, 2005). According to Maccoby (1998), children between the ages of 3 and 9 spend most of their time that is not managed and controlled by adults in some form of play activity. As compared to girls, boys more often participate in aggressive, competitive, risk taking, physically rough and tumble, and conquering types of play activity.

According to Connell (2002), the left hemisphere of the brain is essentially responsible for auditory and verbal language skills that include listening, speaking, and writing. The left hemisphere functions as a means of processing information in a sequential and analytical manner and, in turn, allows us to focus on details. The right hemisphere provides the functional means for visual–spatial and visual–motor activity that include sports, architecture, sculpturing, painting, and carpentry. The right hemisphere allows for a holistic style of processing information. This is evident in the different styles and preferences of play between boys and girls.

Due to the advanced biological development of the left hemisphere in girls as compared to boys, girls are better able to read and write than boys at an early school age. It was found that boys are better able to learn using nontraditional methods, such as movement and visual–spatial skills consistent with their more developed right hemisphere (Gurian, 2001).

These differences in brain function between boys and girls can explain the sex differences in the type and style of play. These differences continue along the cognitive developmental path. The associated behavioral differences also appear in social schemas such as play. The consequences of play permeate all aspects of development,
that is, psychosocial, cognitive, behavioral, emotional, spiritual, moral, and so on.

**COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER**

Boys’ cognitive development is significantly influenced by the strength of their right hemisphere functioning and the weakness of their left hemisphere functioning. Spatial abilities refer to *space relations*, and this involves the ability to think in three dimensions and to picture mentally the shape, size, and position of objects when shown only a picture or pattern. It is important for carpenters, architects, machinists, engineers, dentists, dress designers, and others whose work requires them to visualize solid forms or spaces. Spatial abilities also include *mechanical reasoning*; this is the understanding of mechanical principles and devices and the laws of everyday physics. This ability is important for mechanics, engineers, and a variety of factory positions (Bennett, Seashore, & Wesman, 1991). Within a broader definition of visual–spatial abilities is *form perception*, which is the ability to perceive pertinent detail in objects or in pictorial or graphic material and to make visual comparisons and discriminations and see slight differences in shapes and shadings of figures and widths (Field & Field, 2004).

**Learning Styles and Gender**

Boys and girls learn differently, as these brain differences suggest, and they should be afforded a teaching style specific to their needs (Gurian, 2001). According to Geist and King (2008), girls’ learning styles encompass their read/write or auditory approach; boys learn best through visual and kinesthetic means (as cited in Bevan, 2001; Fleming, 2005; Molumby, 2004; Singham, 2003). Females are typically visual learners, and they learn best through presentation and demonstration. For example, they may absorb and understand the lesson by drawing things out or visualizing a problem on a chalkboard. Males, though, are typically kinesthetic learners who learn best through hands-on methods. Problem solving by the kinesthetic learner is facilitated by allowing them to use related objects during the course of the solution or to physically act out a scenario. It is important that motion/movement interaction be incorporated for this learning style. These learners also benefit from the use of everyday problems being included in the course of learning and understanding mathematics (Geist & King, 2008). This style of learning is an extension of a biological learning trait of boys that has been further developed and socialized through play.
Girls can multitask better than boys because the corpus callosum in females is 26% larger than in males. The corpus callosum is the nervous tissue that sends signals between the two halves of the brain.

Girls have the ability to transition between lessons more quickly and are less apt to have attention span issues.

The neural connectors that create listening skills are more developed in the female brain and therefore enhance listening skills, memory storage, and tone of voice discrimination in girls.

Girls make fewer impulsive decisions than boys due to a higher serotonin level.

The female brain has 15% more blood flow than the male brain, allowing for enhanced integrated learning.

Because girls have more cortical areas devoted to verbal functioning, they are better at sensory memory, sitting still, listening, tonality, and the complexities of reading and writing (the skills and behaviors that tend to be rewarded in school).

In the male brain, a larger area is devoted to spatial mechanical functioning and half as much to verbal emotive functioning.

Boys utilize the cerebral cortex less often than girls, and they access the primitive areas of the brain more often while performing the same types of activities or tasks.

For the male brain to renew or recharge, it will go into rest states, while the female brain does so without rest states or sleep.

Boys have less serotonin and less oxytocin, which makes them more impulsive and less likely to sit still to talk to someone.

Boys structure or compartmentalize learning because they have less blood flow to the brain.

Boys’ brains are better suited to symbols, abstractions, and pictures. Boys in general learn higher math and physics better than girls. Boys prefer video games for the physical movement and destruction. Boys get into more trouble for not listening, moving around, sleeping in class, and incomplete assignments.

Gender Implications for Education

In addition to the neurological and biological differences mentioned earlier in this chapter, research has shown that there are sex differences in hearing, vision, and smell. Girls acquire binocular vision much sooner than boys do. The sense of smell for females is estimated to be 100,000 times more sensitive than that of a male. The sense of hearing is also much more sensitive in girls than in boys, especially at higher frequencies, which are critical for speech discrimination. Some boys who have been classified as delayed learners perhaps may have been
able to grasp learning much sooner if the teacher had spoken louder (Sax, 2006).

According to Sax (2006), there are differences in the autonomic nervous system between males and females. He explains that the female autonomic system is more influenced by the parasympathetic nervous system, and the male autonomic nervous system is more influenced by the sympathetic nervous system. An interesting point made by Sax is the influence of the parasympathetic nervous system on digestion, heart rate, vasodilatation, and increased continuous blood flow with a subsequent response to higher ambient temperatures. He pointed out that studies have shown that boys learn better in colder temperatures and girls learn better in warmer temperatures. The ideal classroom temperature for a boy is 69°F and 75°F for girls. He also explained that boys' learning is facilitated by instruction that is presented in a loud, concise, and precise manner. In contrast, he explained that girls learn better when instruction is presented in a softer, less demanding manner. As a proponent of single-sex schools, Sax's research shows that there has been significant success in higher achievement in single-sex schools. He has found that single-sex schools have allowed both boys and girls to flourish in subjects that have been traditionally dominated by the opposite sex. An interesting side note is that research shows that the teachers' gender does not have a significant bearing on the motivation of boys and girls. Research has shown that academic outcome is influenced by the nature and quality of the didactic delivery and the motivation generated by the individual student (Martin & Marsh, 2005).

According to King, Gurian, and Stevens (2010), traditional education has resulted in a gender gap, with boys falling behind girls in academic achievement. This is especially true in reading. They have found that boys tend to be graphic thinkers and respond better to an academic environment that provides kinesthetic techniques and a competitive structure. They attributed gendered learning differences to physical differences in the brain, as well as psychosocial influences. They also suggested that boys would benefit in a learning environment that is kinesthetic and visually oriented with material that is consistent with boys' interests. These researchers found that tailoring teaching methods to boys' learning style increases motivation and academic achievement.

Another researcher, Zaman (2008), suggested that teacher bias against boys' classroom behavior might lead to the disproportionate number of boys versus girls who are expelled from school. Furthermore, she opined that a lack of gender sensitivity could become an insidious negative attitude by a teacher, which, in turn, has a direct negative impact on a boy's motivation to learn and subsequent academic achievement. She proposed that teachers undergo gender sensitivity screening and training in order to promote a learning environment more supportive and beneficial for boys.
In another study addressing the learning behaviors of girls and boys, Hancock and Stock (1996) found that girls develop strategies through planned behavior (e.g., focusing on the preparation for tests within a much earlier timeframe than boys do). They also found that a learning style dominant in boys involves aural comprehension. It was suggested that this may be the reason why boys read at a lower level than girls do, but boys are better listeners. It was found that the sixth-grade boys were not as concerned with tests, texts, and surface processing of information but more concerned with independent study behaviors and the processing of aural classroom interaction at a deep level. The authors suggested that these study strategy differences between boys and girls might be the source of ongoing gender differences in academic achievements.

Other researchers (Tyre, Murr, Juarez, Underwood, Springen, & Wingert, 2006) have found not only that boys start off elementary school with lower literacy skills than girls do, but that they are less frequently encouraged to read, which only widens the literacy gap. They also reported that girls exhibit consistently higher scores in reading and writing throughout elementary, middle, and high school. From a greater likelihood to suffer from disabilities such as emotional disturbances, learning problems, and speech impediments in elementary school, young males are more likely to engage in physical fights, use illegal substances, and drop out of high school than girls are. However, Pollack (1998) noted that in mathematics and science, boys surpass girls at a significant rate. These differences in learning and processing have led Pollack to develop the following suggestions for parents when enhancing the educational experiences and achievements of young males:

1. Provide praise for your son’s school achievements.
2. Become involved and remain involved.
3. Actively keep track of your son’s emotional life.
4. Prevent and dissuade schools from misjudging your son.
5. Help to influence the school’s mission.

Pollack recommended the following for schools to help improve the achievement levels of boys:

1. Provide subject matter that is boy-friendly.
2. Implement teaching methodology that is specific to the learning styles of boys.
3. Allow every boy the opportunity to learn at his pace.
4. Establish same-sex classes in order to experiment with this approach to teaching.
5. Increase the number of male teachers.
6. Find mentoring programs that allow for compatibility between the student and the mentor.
7. Establish safe places for boys (guy spaces) to help develop appropriate emotional and social growth.

**The Importance of Attachment in Development**

John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth are responsible for the initial development of the evolving theory of attachment. Bowlby (as cited in Bretherton, 1992) set forth the supposition that the genesis of the attachment relationship between caregiver and infant begins with proximity. Frequent close proximity to the caregiver fulfills a basic security need of the infant. Based on empirical evidence, Bowlby postulated that in order to develop in a mentally healthy manner, the infant and young child should experience an environment that is warm and intimate through continuous relationship with his caretaker that provides mutual satisfaction and enjoyment.

The experience of attachment is both internal and external. The attachment experiences that are stored in memory control the reactions of an individual following loss (death) or separation from an attachment figure (Bretherton, 1992). Reynolds (2002), as cited in Gurian and Stevens (2005), proposed that an attachment system that emphasizes learning optimizes a young child’s ability to learn. A profound emotional connection encouraged between the parent and the child at the inception of bonding occurs during the first moment of introrecognition and physical contact. Attachment is a developmental process of parent/caregiver and child mutuality that allows the ongoing process of affectionate caregiving that enhances the innate bond throughout life (Gurian & Stevens, 2005). Attachment can extend beyond the death of one of the shareholders. Attachment is a developed emotional bond. For the vast majority of people, the need for close physical proximity to the caregiver diminishes significantly during early childhood with eventual virtual extinction.

Bowlby determined that attachment disruption or poor attachment could lead to separation anxiety (as cited in Bretherton, 1992). This anxiety manifests as a pervasive fear of abandonment that can be experienced at the mere thought of a caregiver’s unavailability. Excessive levels of separation anxiety are related to negative family experiences that include repeated threats of abandonment or rejection by parents or exposure to a parent’s illness or death for which the child feels a sense of responsibility. Bowlby suggested that poor attachment during the early developmental stages could affect personality development and possibly lead to personality disorders.

Mary Ainsworth (as cited in Bretherton, 1992) performed field studies of infant–mother relationships in Uganda. In essence, Ainsworth
determined that infants with secure attachment to their mother seemed content and did not cry as often as insecurely attached infants. She also noted that infants who have not yet formed attachments showed no differential behavior toward the mother (Ainsworth, 1963, 1967). Waters (2004) recounted that Ainsworth and her collaborators developed a standard laboratory procedure called the Strange Situation, an observational means of determining a child’s style or type of attachment. According to Newman & Newman (2009), the attachment types are classified in four pattern categories: (a) A child who has a secure attachment is spontaneous in the exploration of the environment and will interact with strangers in the presence of their caregiver. After a period of separation, the child may openly greet the caregiver. If there was distress during the separation, the return of the caregiver will reduce the distress of the child. (b) Children who fit an anxious-avoidant attachment pattern avoid contact with their caregiver after separation and/or will ignore efforts toward interaction. These children do not show the same level of distress at being separated as do other children. (c) Children who reveal an anxious-resistant attachment are cautious in the presence of a stranger, and there is a disruption in their spontaneous exploratory behavior due to separation from the caregiver. Upon the return of the caregiver, the child shows signs of wanting to be close to the caregiver, but there is also a show of negative or angry behavior with a poor response to soothing or comfort. (d) Children that fall within a disorganized attachment pattern have no consistent strategy for managing separation or stress. Their behavior is contradictory and unpredictable with expressions of extreme fear and confusion.

Bowlby determined that attachment is a lasting psychological relationship or connectedness between human beings (Waters & Cummings, 2000). It seems logical that the effects of an experience as strong as attachment would have a continuing effect on relationships, and research is showing this to be true (Crowell, Treboux, & Waters, 2002; Waters, 2004). Based on these studies, it is apparent that attachment has a profound and continuing effect on individuals and their subsequent encounters from birth through adulthood. However, Bowlby suggested that a change in attachment patterns could occur in both childhood and adult relational interactions (as cited in Crowell & Treboux, 1995). He put forth that this change could be the result of new emotional relationships in combination, with the development of formal operational thought resulting in the individual being able to reflect on and reinterpret the efficacy of past and present experiences.

According to Crowell and Treboux (1995), children develop expectations of a parent’s potential behavior in various situations setting forth postulates regarding close relationships and how they fit into daily life and stressful situations. Bowlby proposed that those internal working models of the world include others and oneself, and once these
models are formed, they tend to remain stable and usually operate at the unconscious level. These models are believed to be based on attachment relationships, and they provide the basis for the organization of memory that includes the roles that shape one’s access to knowledge about the self, the attachment object, and resulting qualities of the relationship.

Based on Bowlby’s postulates regarding mental representations (as cited in Crowell & Treboux, 1995), attachment research has shifted away from behavioral observations of infants toward methodologies geared toward determining the cognitive and effective foundations of the attachment behavior system throughout the life span. Waters noted (as cited in Crowell & Treboux) that even though it is not specific to the attachment behavior system, mental representations allow the means through which the subjective view and experience of a person, as opposed to merely the objective features of experience, can have a bearing on behavior and development. According to Crowell and Treboux, mental representations conceptualize attachment as a binding process among people across time and space. Waters sets forth (as cited by Crowell & Treboux) that the understanding of the binding nature of attachment among people across time and space is provided through mental representations. Bretherton (as cited by Crowell & Treboux) opined that Bowlby’s induction of mental representations into attachment theory provides a life span insight of the attachment behavior system and allows for an understanding of the developmental change in the expression of attachment and its continuing importance of development of behavior in relationships.

Mental representations are the residual effects of attachment behavior experienced between the child and the caregiver. Unlike the infant–caregiver attachment experience, the dyadic attachment relationship between older adolescents or between adults is reciprocal. According to Ainsworth and Weiss (as cited by Crowell & Treboux, 1995), attachment relationships manifest in a variety of ways such as camaraderie, sexual bonds, sense of competence, and mutual experience.

In the same vein as mental representation, Peter Fonagy discussed attunement and contingent communication. Fonagy (as cited by Sonkin, 2005) explained that the key legacy of secure attachment is the ability of individuals to reflect rationally on their internal emotional experience while reflecting on the mind of another. The individual gains this ability through the verbal and nonverbal cues exchanged between child and caregiver, allowing a child to see himself or herself through the eyes of the caregiver. This is what Fonagy terms attunement and contingent communication. He suggested that individuals lacking secure attachment are void of this reflective function due to repressed emotional responses as they exist in dismissing attachments or are extremely heightened in emotional responses as indicated in preoccupied attachment. In each case,
the individuals lack the ability to identify their own internal experience or reflect on the experience of another. These insecure approaches to regulating contemporaneous attachments indicate a compromise in the individual’s capacity for reflection on self or on others.

Gurian and Sevens (2005) noted multiple research efforts that suggested that children with positive attachment experiences through nurturing within a secured attachment system develop positive self-esteem and good relational skills, become confident and inquisitive, form a conscience, and learn more successfully. They attributed a biological reason for the relationship of secure attachment to increased learning. Specifically, they set forth “the organic mechanisms in the brain by which the brain learns requires secured attachment in order to grow fully” (p. 71). Furthermore, bonding and attachment have an insidious influence on a child that affects the nervous system, as well as their emotional, social, and intellectual development. Poor or insecure bonding in attachment can have a devastating effect on all aspects of a child’s life, including experiences while in school. The environments in which children and adolescents live are critical in promoting mental health and mitigating the possibilities of depression, anxiety disorders, and other affective, behavioral, and cognitive disorders. An individual’s environment may significantly influence the course of his or her thought-processing behaviors (Erk, 2008). Family issues are a primary trigger of depression and anxiety in children and adolescents who are already predisposed to these disorders. Child abuse (including physical, verbal, sexual, and emotional) significantly increases risks to physical, cognitive, and emotional development, as well as the well-being of the youth.

Poor attachment for boys can lead to violence and learning disorders, whereas, for girls, it can lead to anorexia, bulimia, and depression. Due to a boy’s kinesthetic nature that can involve fidgeting and pulling away, it is much more difficult for the caregivers to provide meaningful touch at an early age in the attachment experience. As cited by Gurian and Stevens (2005), Nancy Bayley’s research at UCLA (as cited in Blum, 1998), boys, more than girls, during early childhood experience learning difficulties resulting from poor attachment. Bayley concluded that insecure attachment resulted in test scores that revealed lower adolescent intellectual skills for male infants than for female infants who did not experience secure attachment. This is another example of the differences in the structure and function of male versus female brains.

LEARNING TO FOLLOW SOCIETY’S CODE OF CONDUCT

Human development does not occur in a vacuum. We are social beings that adhere to a societal code of conduct. This code of conduct is known
as morality. In developing a sense of morals, a child navigates through this code of conduct with the help of caregivers, siblings, peers, educators, mass communications, and so on, as well as through trial and error. Lawrence Kohlberg established six stages of moral development (Bailey, 2011). His stages are as follows:

**Level I: Preconventional Morality**

*(Children up to Ages 10 to 13)*

**Stage 1: Orientation to Obedience and Punishment**

Kohlberg explained that during Stage 1, children are not yet speaking members of society, and they view morality as an external influence dictated by older people. Children learn that there is goodness or rewards in obedience and punishment or badness in disobedience.

**Stage 2: Individualism and Instrumental Exchange**

In Stage 2, the child has continuing awareness that disobedience is wrong with a consequence of punishment, but now understands that punishment is a risk that needs to be avoided. Also during this stage, a child develops an egoist persona in which decisions are made to suit one’s own needs and desires. Other people are valued in terms of utility. Furthermore, vengeance is considered a moral obligation.

**Level II: Conventional Morality**

*(Children in Their Early Teens up to Middle Age)*

Kohlberg set forth that most people do not go beyond this level. This is the level in which the acceptance of the rules and regulations of an individual’s subgroup and group unfolds.

**Stage 3: Interpersonal Conformity**

At this stage, children learn the importance of morality within their lives and within the general population. They develop the belief that it is important to live up to the expectations of family and society. They understand the value of the attributes of good behavior, such as the reciprocity of feelings, trust, and protection, as well as mutual emotions involving love and empathy. A child learns the complexities of peer pressure. Moral focus is placed on group standards and following group mores and dictates. Furthermore, a child learns that individual vengeance is no longer accepted, and retribution is now a function of the collective. As an individual, the child learns that forgiveness is preferred over revenge.
Stage 4: Law and Order (Maintaining the Social Order)
During Stage 4, the developing individual expands the importance of relationships and conformity outside of smaller groups, such as family and friends, to society as a whole. The individual participates at a higher level within the moral code and is now focused on obeying laws, respecting authority, and contributing in a manner directed toward helping sustain social order. The conformity to the moral code goes unquestioned for most people. It is now accepted that it is not just for one to forego rewarding positive contributing efforts to maintaining society or to not punish recalcitrant members.

Stage 4½: The Cynic
Kohlberg found that some people transition through or remain in an area of development that is between the conventional stages and the post-conventional levels of 5 and 6. These individuals question the rigidity of conventional morality, but have not yet found a higher level of moral function. They still find themselves controlled by conventional morality, but develop a disdain for a lack of debate and compromise within the conventional stages and find themselves becoming cynical toward leadership and the utility of society in general.

Level III: Postconventional Morality
This level focuses on ethical obligations including nonmalfeasance, justice, autonomy, and justice. Very few people reach this level and seldom prior to middle age.

Stage 5: Social Contract and Individual Rights
During this stage, individuals begin to question the overall value of society. They question the status quo and explore ways in which society can improve the rights and values of its members. In doing so, these individuals take a developmental approach and determine if emerging rights and values have met the initial goals in the formation of the society. The assumption made by these individuals is that societal members would all want to enjoy liberty, the right to thrive, and protection, as well as democratic processes that can address and change harmful laws while improving society. These individuals are opposed to retributive punishment because it does not comport with human rights and welfare. Emphasis is placed on individual rights and freedoms established by the whole society.

Stage 6: Universal Ethical Principles
At this stage, the individual promotes abstract principles in place of concrete rules or moral decision making. The ultimate attainment within this stage is justice for all through the development of individual human rights.
Although not every young male will follow this linear path to optimal morality, it is useful as a guide in understanding the behavior—and misbehavior—of youth. In a semistructured interview with 29 young males, aged 6 to 19, living in a residential care facility, the younger boys staunchly avowed that abusive behaviors were wrong. However, the older young men expressed their belief that physical and verbal abuse of others was acceptable if they “deserved it.” These young men seemed to see abuse as a way to punish or get revenge against someone who had wronged them. Some of these same youths showed a sense of isolation in that they denigrated friendships as being superficial and lacking value. Others, who described their families as supportive, both spoke out against abuse as unacceptable and expressed their belief that while they did not need to be liked and accepted by everyone, they did value their close friends to whom they could turn to for validation and acceptance. The ways in which even one young man's attachment behaviors and sense of morality can vary over time are broad. Following is a case study of a young male's development from birth to late adolescence using attachment and morality development as the measure of his progress.

**CASE STUDY: GROWING UP AS A BOY FROM AN ATTACHMENT AND MORALITY PERSPECTIVE: STEFAN’S STORY**

**Ages 0 to 5**

**Family Constellation and Relationship Development**

My name is Stefan and I am currently middle aged. I grew up in the inner city of a large Midwestern community. Both my paternal and maternal grandparents were Polish immigrants. I was a middle child and, during this stage, I had a brother two years older and another three years younger. My mother did not graduate from high school. My father graduated from high school in three years.

My caregivers were my mother, father, and paternal grandmother. My crib was in my parents’ bedroom. During my waking hours while lying in my crib, I remember being upset if my mother did not have her foot within reach of my hands. I recall regular interaction with my mother. She was not an overtly affectionate person, but, in retrospect, her affection was always genuine and present. My father worked two jobs and was not available to me during most of my waking hours. He was fair with punishment and not abusive. I recall having a good feeling when he was present. My paternal grandmother, who was a widow, lived with us. She was bilingual in Polish and English. I had a very close relationship with her. She was nurturing and protective.
I recall that my mother was somewhat jealous of the relationship I had with my grandmother. I was clearly clingy during this stage. I was very reluctant to leave my grandmother or mother. In fact, I remember my grandmother attempting to hand me over to her friend. I became very resistant and bit her friend.

I do not recall a lot of interaction with my brothers during this stage. I remember having a feeling of rejection by my mother after my younger brother was born. I was 3½ years old. I developed a closer relationship with my grandmother following the birth of my brother. I was enthralled with my father's career as a firefighter. Some of my earliest fond memories were going with my mother and brothers to visit my father at the fire station.

My earliest memory of quality interaction with my mother relates to the evenings I would sit on her lap while she read a book to me. My grandmother provided me with basic childcare while my parents were at work. I accompanied her to many of her social activities. In retrospect, it seemed that I was her favorite grandchild.

**Physical Challenges**

When I was between two and three years old, I underwent eye surgery. I recall waking up and repeatedly kicking at something. I was alone and frightened. My mother and father appeared shortly after I awoke. I recall that I wanted my little red teddy bear named Timmy with me during my surgery. One of my parents handed the bear to me shortly after I awoke. The limited vision that I experienced after the surgery resulted in my inability to judge the proximity of my caregivers. I was very frightened by the experience. I panicked when a caregiver did not respond to my calls. I recall running through the house and bumping into doors and walls while searching for a caregiver. The teddy bear seemed to provide me with a sense of comfort, if I knew my caregivers were nearby.

My speech was delayed during my first three years due to tongue-tie (ankyloglossia). This was surgically corrected, and my speech followed a normal course. The development of my eye, hand, and foot coordination was delayed due to uncorrected hyperopia (farsightedness). Following eye surgery and with the use of eyeglasses, I eventually succeeded in attaining normal motor coordination, although this took until I was nine or ten. I did not learn how to skip until the end of kindergarten. Cognitively, I developed at a stage-appropriate pace.

**Entering School**

I was terrified my first day of kindergarten. I did not want to leave my mother. I cried and clung to her. I do not recall the immediate aftermath of that incident; however, I slowly adjusted to a normal daily kindergarten routine.
At age 6, I was completing kindergarten. I attended kindergarten during the morning session. My mother was a room mother for my older brother's third grade class at a Catholic grade school. During special event days at his school, my mother always helped serve treats to the students. I recall accompanying her to many of these events. Sister Angeline, the first grade teacher, always made a special effort to talk with me whenever I was at the school. She would remark that she could not wait until I was in her first grade class.

**THROUGH THE LENS OF ATTACHMENT THEORY**

According to Bowlby (1956), the nature of dependence and independence in the form of child and caregiver relationships is manifested through attachment. In essence, John Bowlby set forth in his attachment theory that it is a basic human need to be securely attached to another person(s) (Holmes, 1993). This theory is partly based on Freudian theory, field studies involving mother and infant relationships, as well as various ethological studies (MacDonald, 2001). The synthesis of his research led him to the formulation that a child’s internal self and pursuit of external needs are the result of a collective attachment history.

During my Infancy and Early Childhood Stage, I experienced external attachment with my parents. My internal attachment was somewhat insecure during this developmental stage. I sensed some emotional distance between my mother and me, but I was satisfied with the internal attachment I had with my father. Initially, my strongest attachment was with my grandmother. The consistent relationship with my grandmother acted as a bridge to the ongoing development of my parental attachments. My sense of security was tenuous during this stage of my life.

In order to experience separation anxiety, there must be a history of attachment (Bretherton, 1992). Based on my display of separation anxiety as demonstrated by the biting incident, my behavior following eye surgery, and my initial difficulty adjusting to kindergarten, it was apparent that my internal and external attachments were not in harmony. I was not able to grasp the idea of proximity.

**THROUGH THE LENS OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT THEORY**

I do not recall any specific personal instances of punishment during this stage; however, I have a recollection that my father did administer punishment. Although I do not recall specific instances, Kohlberg’s premise regarding obedience and punishment was most likely realized during this stage.
Ages 5 to 9

My first day in first grade was disastrous. I was disruptive and recalcitrant. Sister Angeline made me stand in a corner of the room during lunch hour. I felt fear and shame. I remember she eventually allowed my older brother to take me home for lunch after what seemed like a very long stay in the corner. Questions arose such as, “What will my parents think and will they punish me?” Also, my first thought regarding Sister Angeline was that she no longer liked me. I did not understand how she could be so mean to me. On the way home for lunch, my fourth grade brother explained why I was wrong and why I was punished. I do not recall if I fully understood his explanation, but I do recall that my behavior was not a major problem for the remainder of first grade. Also, this seems to be the period of time that I began to pursue a close relationship with my brother.

My caregiver relationships did not significantly change from the prior developmental stage. I recall having what seemed like a lot of autonomy during my outdoor playtime. I developed friendships with the two girls who lived next door. With the boys, I played games that were action oriented such as Cops and Robbers. The games I played with the girls were domestically oriented. Combined boy and girl games were “Captain, May I?” “Tag,” and “Hide-and-Go-Seek.” I do not recall playing athletic games such as “Catch” during this developmental stage. At seven, I learned how to ride a two-wheel bicycle. This was a very proud moment for me. I received praise from my entire family.

My language and cognitive skills were age appropriate. I maintained average grades. In retrospect, I was an underachiever. I did not like school. I was still having difficulty with motor activity. Occasionally, I would trip and fall while running. During this period, I was undergoing some type of vision therapy.

I continued to develop a close relationship with my older brother. We spent a lot of time playing various board and card games. Also, he would allow me to participate in outdoor activities with him and his friends, such as sledding and exploring. Although the relationship with my older brother was positive, it was just the opposite with my younger brother. I resented the close relationship he had with my mother.

I recall my father almost losing his life in his role as a firefighter during a major multilevel structure fire. He attempted to save two children from a burning building. He would have died in that fire if he had not stumbled down a staircase. His near death caused me to experience a prolonged period of anxiety.

Before third grade, we moved to a new neighborhood. I was very upset by the move away from my friends. Also, I was apprehensive
about going to a new school and developing new acquaintances. My initial experience in the new neighborhood was poor. Peers ridiculed me for having thick glasses and wearing cowboy boots. I eventually developed new friendships. My grades were deficient during the first half of the third grade. Following participation in a schoolwide standardized test, my parents had a conference with the teacher. It was agreed that I would be allowed to complete homework and take tests at my own pace. This was an embarrassing experience for me. I knew the cause of my poor performance was my attitude toward school and not my academic ability. I put forth an earnest effort toward my schoolwork and received outstanding grades for the next few months. After proving that I had the ability to excel, I edged back toward mediocrity.

THROUGH THE LENS OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

Attachment theory extends to other nonprimary caregivers within the family system (Bretherton, 1992). During my primary grade years, I developed a close attachment with my older brother. At this stage, our attachment was more external than internal. Internal attachment was maintained through a sense of proximity with my caregivers. However, I did begin developing an internal attachment with my brother concomitant with the incident when he rescued me from my punishment in the corner of the first grade room. This was the beginning of a close bond that we would share until his death at age 46. According to Waters and Cummings (2000), the secure base phenomenon of attachment sets forth that individuals develop representations of their own secure base experience through the formation of representational skills. My father’s near death represented a basic concept, although concrete in nature, that my external attachments to him could have been lost. This evoked an internal response in the form of separation anxiety.

THROUGH THE LENS OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT THEORY

The incident involving my misbehavior during my first day of first grade represents an example of classic Stage 1 moral development. Punishment is tied to wrongness. Although my brother was not quite 9 years old, it appears that he was functioning at a preliminary level of conventional morality. He essentially explained to me that he would always try to live up to the expectations of the family and was a course I should follow. He also stressed a Stage 2 premise that punishment is a risk that one naturally wants to avoid (Newman & Newman, 2009).
Ages 10 to 11

During these years, I just assumed that everyone my age followed the same rules. During the fifth grade, however, I first experienced bullying. Three boys from the neighborhood taunted and threatened me on a regular basis. I finally made a decision that I had to take a stand. I discussed my options with my older brother, and he encouraged me to take action. I made a decision to confront each of these boys individually. I got in a fight with one of the boys and, fortunately, I got the better of him. The remaining two boys decided that they did not want to have a physical confrontation with me. We all eventually became friends. I felt a sense of respect. However, I also felt guilty having to resort to physical means in order to establish myself as a respected member of my peer group. It was from this point forward that I began to develop leadership skills. I did not always use these skills properly. However, as I progressed through the developmental stages, I eventually put these leadership skills to good use.

Ages 12 to 14

In sixth grade (Catholic grade school), my world revolved around athletics and friends. All my friends were boys. Most of my free time was spent playing football or baseball. 

During the initial years of this stage, my caregiver relationships did not significantly change. Toward the later years of this stage, I became openly defiant to my mother and covertly defiant to my father. I continued to maintain a positive relationship with my grandmother. I continued to have an active relationship with my older brother. I would play sports with him and occasionally accompany him to social events. I began developing a good relationship with my younger brother. Although he was still favored by my mother, it did not significantly affect me. I recall that I became protective of my younger brother. In fact, I became his role model.

My motor skills significantly improved during pubescence. I excelled in football and baseball. I enjoyed playing athletic games and socializing with my teammates. I also recall a strong desire to impress my father with my athletic accomplishments.

Language and cognitive skills remained age appropriate. During the sixth grade and part of the seventh grade, I was an avid reader. Most of the books that I read were adventure stories. My grades were average to below average. I was performing significantly below my potential. This poor academic performance led to parental reprisals that included a decrease in my social activities. The reprisals were enforced by my father. I increased my academic efforts for a few months and then fell back into mediocrity. My motivation for increasing my grades
was external. I knew that I could achieve at a higher level, therefore the grades I received did not personally (internally) matter. I wanted to increase my grades to regain my social privileges.

In the midst of my seventh grade year, I developed a defiant behavior pattern. In retrospect, my behavior was reinforced through acceptance by my peer group. I felt a very strong bond with my friends during this time. I frequently questioned the fairness of rules, and it was not unusual for me to break various rules. I recall having ambivalent feelings about my behavior.

I was a leader, but my leadership was not always directed toward positive behavior. In eighth grade, my friends and I caused some minor damage to the school. We were apprehended by school officials. Our parents were notified and eventually met with the school officials. The penalty issued by the school required us to perform cleaning and yard maintenance chores over the course of several weekends. I was surprised that my father did not impose his own punishment. He had a very sincere conversation with me regarding moral character, reputation, and values. My worst punishment was my father’s disappointment in me. For maybe the first time, I fully understood the intrinsic qualities of consequences.

I was in seventh grade when I first became romantically involved with a girl. This relationship lasted for a few months. It ended when I kissed another girl at a party. In eighth grade, I developed my second girlfriend relationship. During this relationship, I attended a few of her family’s activities. I never attempted to take sexual advantage of her. I do not recall what led to the end of this relationship.

THROUGH THE LENS OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

Crowell et al. (2002) suggest that a child’s expectations of self in the attachment figure(s) progresses into the operational reality of close relationships and this perceived and/or real attachment further directs the child’s belief formation and expectations of the attachment relationship. During my middle school stage, I miscalculated the potential attachment relationship with my parents. I measured independent thought by defiance and detachment. This maladaptive attachment behavior was further supported by the attachment I developed with my social group.

Attachment Theory literature reveals that there is a difference between emotion regulation within an attachment concept and emotion regulation from the nonattachment relationships. This explains the often temporary relationships individuals have with perceived friends. In my case, interaction with the social groups did not become extinct before the end of this developmental stage. The emotional ties with my caregivers still remained despite my external behavior.
Kohlberg’s theory holds that children develop morally through social experiences and conflict. He explains that a child’s moral reasoning is developed through these experiences and through internal-external debate pertaining to a dilemma. He further theorized that the stages of moral development are consecutive and invariant in sequence, with no skipping or returning to a stage. It is important to note that even in Kohlberg’s moral decision-making model in which he utilizes dilemmas as a platform, the attained moral level can be obfuscated by the basic need to survive. It is not uncommon for an individual to make a moral choice at a base or preconventional level in order to avoid punishment, even though there has already been a realization of moral thought at a conventional level (Crain, 1985). I perceived my social group as an authority figure. My thoughts at that time were not going against the wishes of the group for fear of shunning or punishment. At the same time, I had reached a stage where my behavior outside the group conformed to laws. My morals were otherwise good, and interaction with most authority figures was with respect. This was a matter of ambivalence as opposed to a dichotomy. In essence, this was an ongoing dilemma during this stage of my life.

Ages 15 to 18 (Catholic High School)

I continued to play sports my freshman year in high school. I injured my right knee during football season, and upon my return to the team, I broke my left wrist. I was finished playing sports for the year. Prior to the injuries, I was on the first team. My motor skills were above average. Despite my social and school agenda, I still had time to read adventure novels. My verbal skills were above average. I had some deficits in spatial/mathematic relationships. It appears my eyesight affected my visual–spatial perception abilities.

After the property damage incident in eighth grade, the relationship with my father became stronger. He began to discuss mature topics such as careers and politics. Even though he worked two jobs, he attended the few football games I played during my freshman year. The summer before my sophomore year, he took my brothers and me on a fishing trip. Unfortunately, my father died of a heart attack one week before the start of my sophomore year. He had never experienced a serious illness.

The death of my father changed my emotional status. This change continued beyond the initial bereavement. I no longer felt as if our family still existed. My father had been the operational figure in our family dynamics. The family still functioned, but it was different. Approximately
six months after the death of my father, my older brother joined the Air Force. My mother continued to work. She did not drive; therefore, all of the activities that required driving became my responsibility. This responsibility included grocery shopping and driving my mother, grandmother, and younger brother to various events. Along with these responsibilities, I also gained a lot of freedom. I was able to use the car at my discretion. My mother did not strictly enforce the curfew on weekends. I felt a sense of responsibility for the upbringing of my younger brother. He was three grades behind me. Most of my involvement with my younger brother pertained to academics and behavior. Unfortunately, I was not a consistently good role model.

During my sophomore year, I reinjured my knee and I was advised by my physician to refrain from further athletic activity. The exclusion from sports put another void in my life. The voids were filled with negative behavior. I lost interest in the academic aspect of school. I associated with delinquents during my sophomore year; however, I still associated with my usual friends, and I continued to perform my responsibilities at home.

My grades were poor my sophomore year. I was required to attend summer school. It seemed like I significantly matured during that summer. I attended summer school at the local public school. I had a few long conversations with one of the teachers. His assessment of me resulted in a positive and confident self-assessment. My grades improved significantly during my junior year. I no longer associated with delinquents, but my behavior remained somewhat defiant. Although I was arrested on a few occasions for fighting and curfew during this stage, I was never charged with an infraction. Fortunately, the local juvenile detectives became familiar with the active teenagers in their district. A conversation with one of these detectives several years later revealed that they arrested people from my group of friends in order to remind us that there were limits to bad behavior. I sensed their motivation. They were confident that most, if not all of us, would get through the teenage years without becoming societal problems.

I developed a few strong romantic relationships during the latter part of high school. At the time of graduation, I maintained the relationship with my current girlfriend, and we were eventually married.

Just before my senior year, my grandmother died. I was very close to her. Initially, her death caused me to become depressed and angry. I spent a lot of time reflecting about her involvement in my life. She was a very spiritual (religious) person. Her actions and words helped to shape my spiritual (religious) and moral self. Developmentally, both of my parents provided me with a spiritual and moral framework. Even though I was not the most civilly obedient adolescent, I was very aware of the moral implications of all of my actions.
The experience of attachment is both internal and external. The attachment experiences that are stored in memory control the reactions of an individual following loss (death) or separation from an attachment figure (Bretherton, 1992). Initially, the death of my father had a significantly negative impact on me during my high school years. During this developmental stage, I dwelled on the external detachment and, as a result, placed myself back in a moral dilemma similar to the one I experienced in the previous stage. Later during this stage, I began having success academically, interpersonally, and socially. I became a member of the Student Council during my senior year. My attachment with my mother became stronger.

My grandmother’s attitude toward the death of my father was inspirational. Emotionally and spiritually, she still maintained an attachment with her son. I finally realized that the internal attachment with my father was still available to me. The realization of internal attachment continued following the death of my grandmother. I no longer experienced anxiety or despair at the end of this stage. I felt secure in my attachments.

Kohlberg’s use of dilemmas as a means of demonstrating moral development and reasoning assumes that an individual will utilize a purely moral/ethical reason for making a decision. It appears that he discounts the emotional components of survival, although he attributed emotions as part of the moral development. Survival can pertain to concrete aspects of life such as food and shelter, or survival within a social context.

During this stage, I reached the conventional level of morality. Attachment issues I experienced during this developmental stage influenced this level of morality. I was capable of understanding and even debating dilemmas at a postconventional level; however, I was uncomfortable pursuing that level of morality while experiencing significant attachment ambivalence.

It is likely that only a small percentage of people have ever reached Stage 6 of Kohlberg’s moral development model. Nevertheless, today’s Stage 6 might be tomorrow’s Stage 1. During my early childhood and primary grade stages, family therapy would have provided me with behavioral interventions that would have properly shaped my reaction to separation. My parents would have received education in healthy mutual attachment development. A successful outcome would obviate therapeutic intervention at later stages.
Intervention during my middle school and high school stages would have involved eclectic talk therapy of an empathetic and nonconfrontational nature. Education pertaining to the possible reasons for my behavior would have been an initial approach. After I developed a trusting relationship with the therapist, behavior modification would be employed to remediate immediate problems and concerns. This could include the implementation of a cognitive-based program in order to develop a long-term strategy to preempt misunderstanding or irrational thoughts. Choice Therapy and Gestalt techniques, for example, empty chair, would also be appropriate.

CONCLUSION

In summation, this chapter has focused on the research related to differential development between the sexes. Developmental differences of note include those in the physical, emotional, and social realms. From early in life, young boys are already experiencing specific physiological changes as they enter a world in which they are socialized early toward the appropriate gender role. Boys and girls both share a need for attachment, belonging, and social support, yet they often work toward these outcomes quite differently. Throughout the remaining chapters, this book will address the risks and consequences of less-than-optimal development, and the authors will share suggestions for useful and creative interventions.

REFERENCES


Counseling Boys and Young Men
