

## Transforming Aging Population: Child as a Change Agent Environmental Context and Development of Self

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### Abstract

Growth and development is a process of growing to maturity. Development is a lifelong process of physical, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional growth and change. It transforms from infancy to childhood, childhood to adolescence, and adolescence to adulthood and during these phases enormous changes take place. During these phases an individual passes through a variety of challenges and adjustment processes. One needs to understand and study how human being is related to the feelings, growth and development of self and others. Various models for the relationship that occurs in each of human being's growth and development process. Old age is the "Heritage" which is needed for any past or future references. Certain pre-requisites that any elderly may follow in order for this smooth transformation and a child can be an agent in this transformation.

**Keywords:** Growth; Development; Child; Aging; Family; Human Development; Development Models.

### Introduction

It is said that "time is flying!" In fact, the youth of this time wants to move ahead with increasing speed!

Keeping in mind the above mentioned statement, it becomes natural for the other category of human to be at par with these so called "fast pacing world". Old age is the "Heritage" which is needed for any past or future references.

Thus, in keeping with the article topic, how a school going child may be an agent in transforming aging population? For that, there are certain pre-requisites that any elderly may follow in order for this smooth transformation.

They are as follows:

1. Accepting self as they are
2. Being nonjudgmental
3. Keeping self in the present time
4. Maximizing flexibility related to new technology

in the surrounding

5. Remaining in Soul consciousness than body consciousness
6. Always in Giving mode than in Receiving mode
7. Remaining in useful and necessary thoughts
8. Believing that the past was good, the present is fantastic and future will be excellent
9. Avoid waste and negative thoughts
10. Be of help to others as much as possible
11. Tendency of acceptance than expectation

If any elderly keep these above mentioned points in their day to day dealings, it will be easy for the school going child to be an agent in transforming aging population [1].

One needs to understand and study how human being is related to the feelings, growth and development of self and others. For this, here are the models for the relationship that occurs in each of human being's growth and development:

*An introduction to Human Growth and Development across the Lifespan [2,3,4].*

#### Perspectives on Human Development

##### ⊙ *Life-span Development*

- Study of Birth to Death
- Increasing research in adult development.

##### ⊙ *Interactional 'Systems' Perspective*

- MUTUAL interaction between the person and the environment.
- Limitations of a Linear understanding.
- Nature of Human Development: Quantitative, Qualitative.

#### *Some Definitions*

- 'Psychology' is a science which studies behavior and thinking of people.
- 'Developmental Psychology' is concerned with specific changes that occur over time.
- 'Life span Developmental Psychology' is the discipline which studies changes from conception through adulthood and looks at the processes and influences that account for these changes.

#### *Some Definitions*

- 'Growth' ordinarily refers to physical changes.
- 'Maturation' –Less precise than growth – is used to describe changes that are relatively independent of environment. However, in almost all aspects of human development, maturation and learning interact, e.g. talking or walking. Both require adequate maturation of the nervous system. However, neither can be achieved if the opportunity to practice the skill is denied [3].
- 'Learning' – defined as the result of experience rather than maturation. All changes in behavior resulting from experience are examples of learning.
- To develop is to grow, to mature and to learn. Development is the process by which we adapt to our environment.

#### **Why Life-span Perspective?**

- A life-span perspective helps to ensure that all milestones of human life will be covered.

- Earlier emphasis was on childhood up to adolescence.
- Today, the life-span understanding covers from conception to death.

#### **Why Interactional / Systems Perspective to Human Development?**

- It provides a way of understanding the relationship between the human being and the 'significant contexts' or environments of life. Many important events throughout the life – span are the result of the mutual interaction between the person and the contexts of development [5].

E.g.:

- Development of the unborn Child between Pregnant Mother and Child
- Growth and Development of infant
- Between Child and Family

#### **Why Interactional / Systems Perspective to Human Development?**

- Mutual interaction between contexts and individual.
- Changing and evolving nature of contexts and individual.
- Cumulative impact of each context of development.

Characteristics of Child, Characteristics of School, Democratic or autocratic school of environment Child's success in school Adaptation of Adult to the world of work Skills and personality of the worker, Characteristics of the job and the workers:

#### Summary of Interaction / Systems Perspective

- The person is a growing active individual.
- Interaction is reciprocal.
- Interaction is not only between P and E, but also E and E.

#### *Person (P) With*

- Experiences
- Motivation

Environment (E) Consisting of 5 primary life contexts

- Family

- b. School
- c. World of Work
- d. Peer
- e. Community

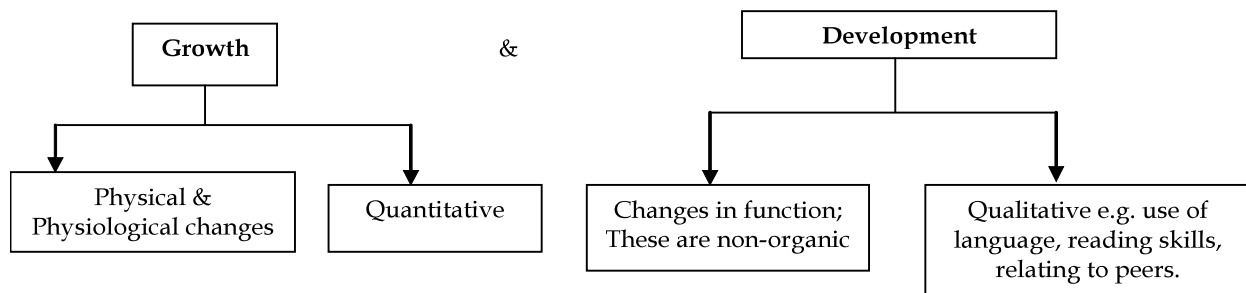
The Nine Periods of Human Development Life Span	Appropriate Age
Prenatal period	Conception to Birth
Infancy (includes toddler period from 2 -3 years)	0 -3 years of age
Pre-school years	3 -5 years of age
Middle childhood	5 -12 or 13 years (the onset of puberty)
Early adolescence	Approximately 12 or 13 (the onset of puberty) until 17 or 18 years of age (the high school years)
Later adolescence	Approximately 17 -18 years of age (the completion of high school) until the person attains a sense of social status or social identity in the early 20s.

*Principles of Human Development [2,4]*

- General patterns or principles of growth that hold true in describing the way human beings develop.
- The process of Human Growth and

Development relate to changes in the Psychological, Social, Emotional, Physical, Mental (intellectual) and Moral domains throughout life.

- The terms Growth and Development are used to describe this overall process.



‘Growth’ has a positive emphasis. Doesn’t include changes in later life e.g. deterioration of tissues, vision, hearing, smell, etc.

⊙ *Principle 3*

**Individual Variation**

While process of growth is orderly there is considerable variation among individuals. E.g. physical growth differs, growth ‘spurts’ may occur - no consistency.

**Four Principles of Human Development**

⊙ *Principle 1*

*Growth gradients*, i.e. physical and physiological changes:

- There are 3 directions of such growth.
- Cephalocaudal
- Proximodistal
- Differentiation (from simple to complex).

⊙ *Principle 4*

**Sensitive or Critical Periods**

There are specific periods when potential to grow and develop are maximal as well as harm from environment is maximal.

- e.g. 1 - Malnutrition in under - three’s.
- e.g. 2 - Rubella in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

⊙ *Principle 2*

*Orderly and Sequential Development*

- Human growth and development are orderly not random from conception to death.
- Predictability.

**Methods of Study**

⊙ *Naturalistic Studies*

- Include Baby biographic, Naturalistic Observations, Time Sampling.

## ⊙ Clinical Studies

<b>Clinical Method</b> i.e. observation plus questioning, flexible, open-ended, can probe	<b>Interview Method</b> - Can get a broad picture. - Could be supported by a physical examination, IQ tests, personality test, etc.
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### ⊙ Experimental Studies

- Independent variable and Dependent variable.
- Are standardized.
- Less subjective can be replicated.

### Methods of Data Collection

1. Longitudinal Design
2. Cross Sectional Design
3. Cross Sequential Approach

### What is the Systems Perspective?

The general systems theory originated with Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, a theoretical biologist as a way to think about and study the constant, dynamic adjustments of living phenomena [6]. A system "is an organized set of interrelated and interacting parts that attempts to maintain its own balance amid the influences of its surrounding environment". The systems method of analyzing means accepting and recognizing that causation is multiple and forces that influence are complexly interrelated. Therefore, it is a way of thinking about behavior that avoids / discards the idea that complex behaviors in groups result from a single cause [7].

In human development, it presents a framework for thinking about the developing human being in relationship to the significant environments of his or her life, e.g., the family, school, peer group, world of work, the neighborhood, the media, the community. This holistic approach is referred to as the systems perspective.

### Defining Systems

A "System" is an organized sustained pattern of interaction between two or more units or components and their attributes or characteristics resulting in an interated, self - governed adaptation of these units or components. (Ambrose,1977).

### Units/Components

These are parts of a system. Can be physical e.g.

games, bones, family school can be abstract, e.g. self - concept, mortality, cognitive processes.

### Attributes

These are the properties of the components.

### Interactions

Relationships that "tie the system together"

These relationships are in the context of the problem or issue which is raised.

Sample issue: Why do some children from some Scheduled Caste families have difficulty succeeding in school?

### Steps

First identify the components, then their attributes, and then specify the relationships.

Defining Systems

### Environment

Both physical and social including cultural



### Feedback

- Reciprocal or mutual interaction among the components of the system
- This allows the system to self-regulate itself.
- Homeostasis.

### Traditional View V/s Life Span View

There are marked differences in views between the traditional view of human development and the life - span view:

1. *Development is continuous*: old view is that infancy to childhood to adolescent to adulthood, after this little will change.
2. *Maturity is Relative*: cannot easily be described

as a predetermined final state nor is such a description useful. To be a person is to change.

3. *Development Occurs in Context:* Context meaning ecology (Oikos – home (in Greek). In human development theory, it refers more to the social context in which behavior; a development occurs (Bronfrenbrenner). Not only does the child construct the world, but also world constructs the child and the adult [5].
4. *Developmental Influences are Bi-Directional:* children influence parents, parents influence children and both in turn are influenced by the ecology – social context including culture etc. and influence it in turn.

### Three Basic Beliefs

Three basic beliefs underlie these four approaches:

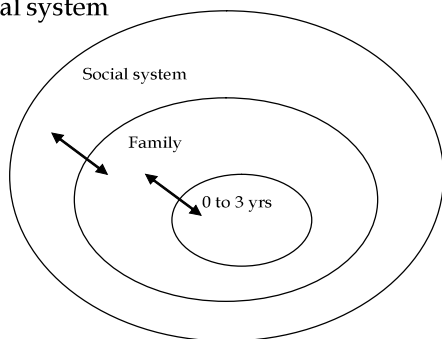
1. Children and adults are constantly changing organisms as are families, societies and cultures. Hence, development does not stop at any point in life. It is continuous.
2. Influences in development are bi-directional.
3. Not only parents and children influence each other, but are also greatly affected by and themselves affect the social context they are embedded in.

### Implications of these Beliefs for Contemporary Human Development Research and Teaching

- a. Shift from individual in isolation to individual as part of a complex social context.
- b. Increased attention to how individual affects surrounding systems and ways in which these systems affect the individual.
- c. Shift of focus from describing states and stages to investigating processes i.e. a shift of concern from Static to the Dynamic.

### Infancy and Toddlerhood (0 -3) Years

Social system



*Social System Includes* [5]

- Neighborhood.
- Parental work setting.
- Government structure and social policies.
- Education Institutions.

*The Family*

“A Family is a group of adults and children who live together for an extended period of time.”

Type of Family Groups:

- Family of orientation.
- Family of Procreation.
- Nuclear, Extended, Single –Parent.

*Family Functions*

1. Economic Co-operation and Division of Labor
2. Care for & Socialization of Children
3. Legitimizing sexual relations.
4. Reproduction.
5. Provision of Status & role.
6. Emotional support & companionship.

*Physical Growth*

- Height
- Weight
- Skeletal Development
- Muscle Development

**Motor Development** [7]

*Locomotion*

- From general reflexes to differentiated (and relatively skillful) movements.
- All motor development follows the principles of cephalocaudal and proximodistal development

*Prehension (Grasping):*

10 stages from 16-52 weeks

Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget - The Sensori-motor stage.

*Sub Stages*

- Reflex (0 -1 month)

- First Differentiations (1 -4 months)
- Reproduction (4 -8 months)
- Co-ordination of Schemata (8 -12 months)
- Experimentation (12 -18 months)
- Representation (18 -24 months)

Construction of the Permanent Object -represents the beginning of ability to "think".

### Memory is an Aspect of Cognitive / Mental Development

- Memory is a process of expecting and predicting future events based on past events.
- Construction of object permanence is the beginning of building a memory.

### Language Development

#### Functions of Human Language

- Self-stimulation and control of individual activity.
- Organizes social behavior and interactions of people with each other.

#### Theories of Language Acquisition

- Learning Theory (Stimulus -Response - Reinforcement).
- Psycholinguistic Theory (Built in preprogram in deep structure)
- Social Learning Theory (imitation)

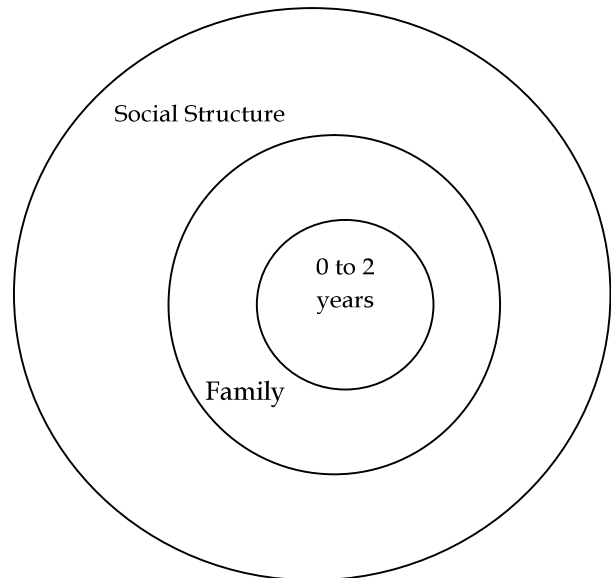
#### Course of Early Language Development

#### Social & Personality Development

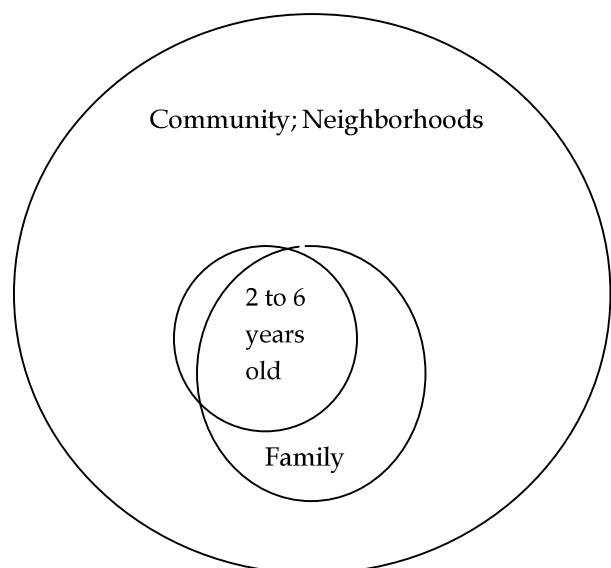
- *Attachment as a System; Components*
  - a. Rooting & Sucking
  - b. Adjusting posture
  - c. Looking & Following
  - d. Listening
  - e. Smiling
  - f. Vocalizing
  - g. Crying.
- Four Phases of the Development of Attachment.
- Relationship between attachment & other infant behaviors.
- a. Play, exploration & attachment.

- b. Fear of strangers.
- c. Separation anxiety.
  - Role of the Father.
  - Emerging Self-concept - who am I, whom do I trust, what can I do.

*Environmental Context: Development of Self: (From Birth to Toddler our Relationship with Self, Family and Society) [8]*

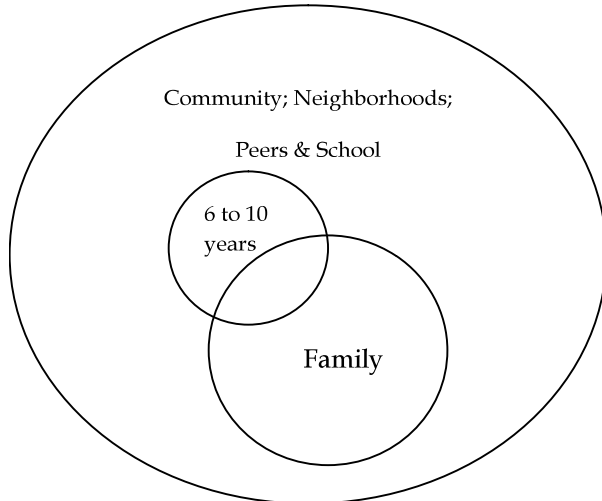


*As a Preschool Child, our Relationship with Self, Family, Society, School and Peer Group: (Observe How this Preschooler is Slowly Emerging Away from Family to Mingle more with outside Environment)*

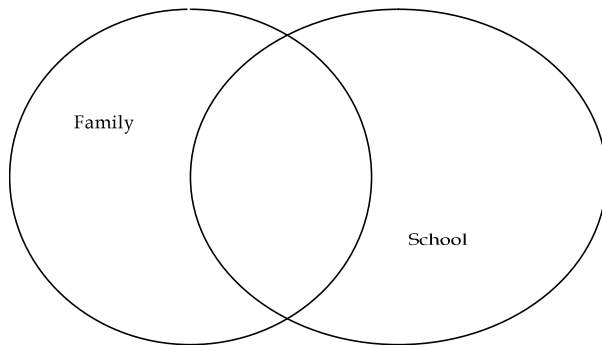
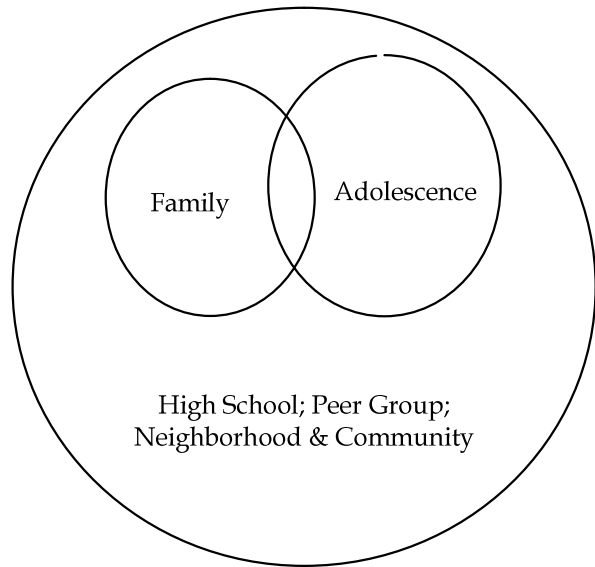


**Environmental Context: Development of Self**

As a school going child our relationship with self, family, society, school, neighborhood and peer group: (observe how this school child is almost emerged away from family to mingle more with outside environment)

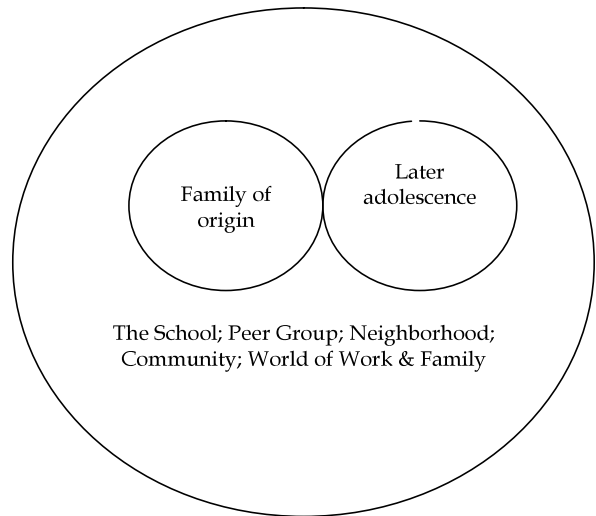


mingle more with outside environment as though in search of self...)



**The System of Later Adolescence:**

Later Adolescence: (12 to 16 years)



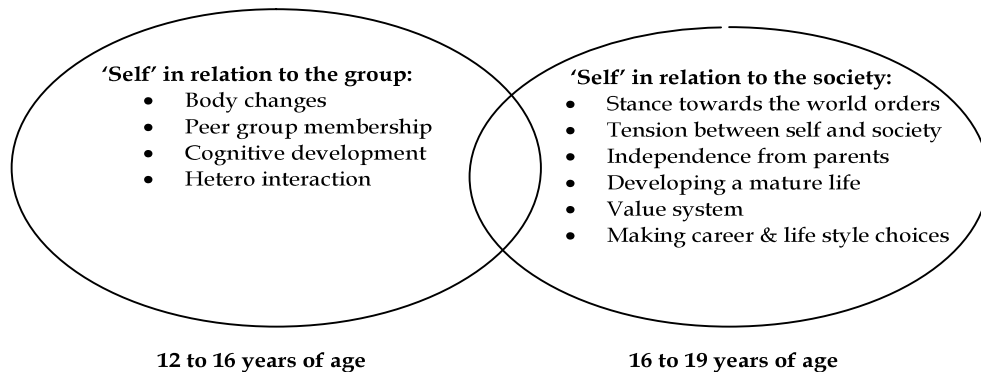
**Environmental Context: Development of Self**

The System of Early Adolescence [3]

As an adolescent, our relationship with self, family, society, school, neighborhood and peer group: (observe how this adolescent is 90% emerged away from family to

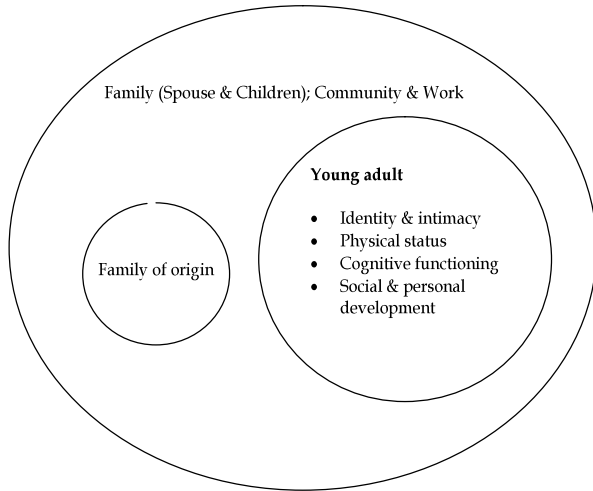
**Environmental Context - Development of Self[10]:**

Developing identity – the system of adolescence



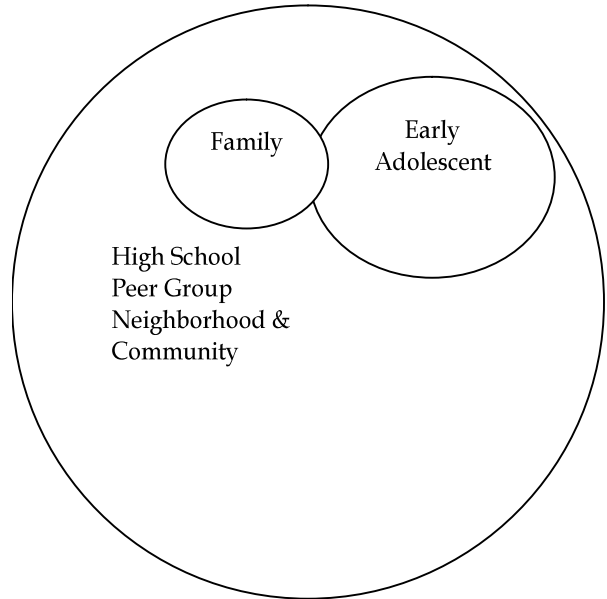
**Environmental Context - Development of Self:**

*Context of Early Adulthood*

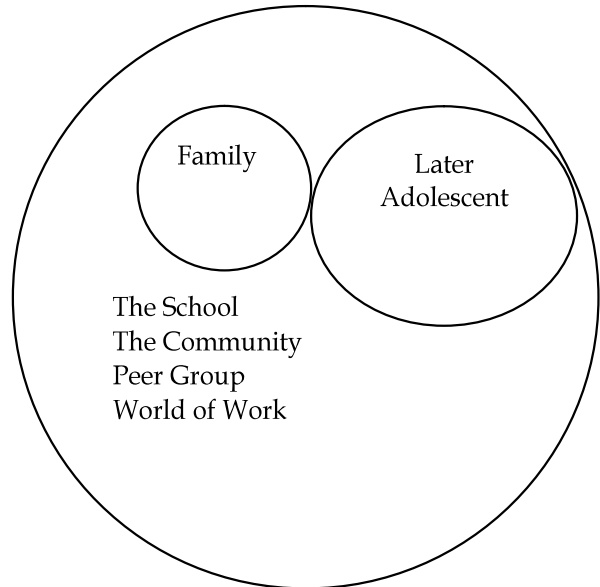
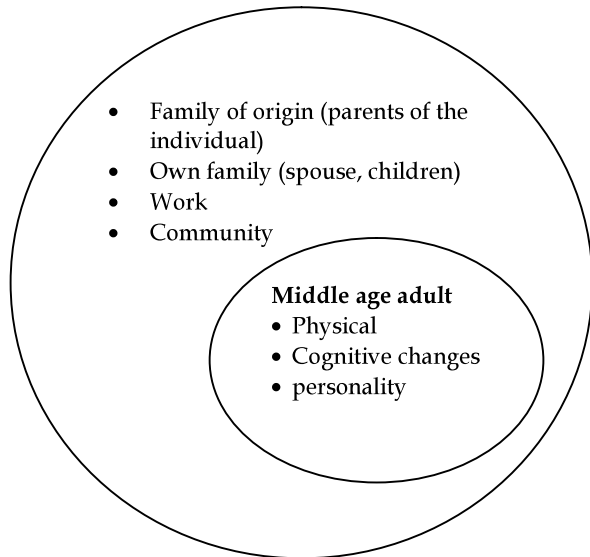


**Early Adolescence (12/13 -15/16)**

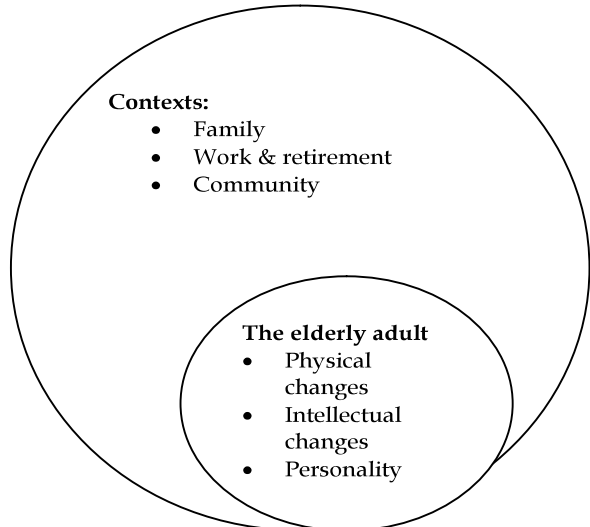
**Youth (16/17 -19/20)**



**Environmental Context - Development of Self**



**Environmental Context - Development of Self**



**Identity [12]**

**Early Adolescent**

"Self" in relation to the 'group'

- Body changes
- Peer Group membership
- Cognitive Development
- Hetero Interaction



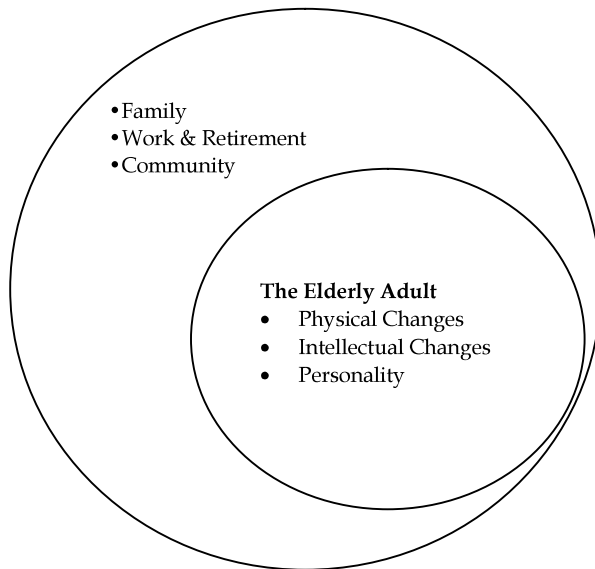
**Later Adolescent**

'Self' in relation to 'Society'  
"stance towards the world"

- Tension between Self and Society
- Independence from Parents
- Developing a mature sex role
- Developing a mature value system.
- Making career and life style choices.

Later Adulthood (60+ years)

Context of Later Adulthood



**The Family [8]**

- Developing a mature relationship with adult children
- Married elder couple continues to adapt to the "empty nest".
- Role of the Grand parent
  - ❖ A new role to take up as others close.
  - ❖ Meaningful relationship with grandchildren with minimal responsibility.
  - ❖ Gives them a sense of human continuity and biological renewal
- Death of a spouse creates a new role -widow / widower.

**The Community**

- Changing nature of friendships
- Participation in community activities
- Quality of housing

Successful adaptation to changes in the above three is an important basis for morale and life satisfaction.

**Work & Retirement**

Work gives identity

- Retirement as an event.
- Retirement as a status.
- Retirement as a process.

Meaning of retirement to a person is linked to what work meant to that person.

**Factors Related to Positive Adjustment are**

- A relatively high level of income prior to retirement.
- A relatively high standard of living during retirement.
- Good health
- A relatively high level of education.
- Pre - retirement planning.

'Structuring' time is a preoccupation for the retired.

**The Individual - Elderly Adult [2,4,9]**

*Physical Changes*

- Vision, hearing
- Movement and motor skills -changes in Bone, Muscle, Nervous System

*Cognitive Functioning*

- Slower reaction, intelligence remains the same
- Memory -Short-term memory may decline, long term appears unaffected.

*Personality Patterns and Changes*

- Disengagement theory
- Activity theory
- Continuity theory

**Patterns of Ageing [1]**

*The 'mature' Person*

He ages successfully but accepts his role. Reviews the past fruitfully, has confidence in himself and his optimism for the future

*The Rocking Chairman*

Who accepts his role and also relies on other to just some extent for emotional and financial support.

*The Disengaged*

Who doesn't want to admit that he is going old, weak. He doesn't want to depend on anybody for anything, continues his old habit.

*The Self Haters*

The one who hate being old and dependent. They hate the way they are and look forward to their death.

**The Individual -Elderly Adult***Self - Concept & Self - Esteem*

More dependent on **inner** thoughts and feelings than on **external** factors e.g. People's opinions. Neugarten calls this a change from **active** mastery to **passive** mastery. Ability to relate emotionally to others declines.

*Stability in Self-Concept Through Adult Life*

- This is associated with positive adjustment to the role changes. The key to positive self - esteem in old age may, in most cases, lie in the past
- Important dimension of self-esteem at all ages is the perception of competence and being in control (as much as possible) of one's life.
- Positive sense of self-esteem is associated with making decisions for self [2,3].

*Later Adulthood*

In later adulthood, according to Erikson, the issue is integrity (a belief that one's life has had a purpose) vs. despair.

**Ages 60-65 - Late Adult Transition (Levinson, Gould and others) [2,3,6]**

- This transition brings retirement or anticipation (or dread) of retirement.
- It may be especially difficult for those who have largely defined themselves by their careers. Women who have not worked, often make this transition more easily than either men or women who have previously had their time structured and energies absorbed by careers.

- Adjustments to less income.
- Confronted by loss (loss of jobs, loss of home, loss of spouse), the older adult may react with alienation, a sense of powerlessness, meaningless, isolation, self-estrangement, futility or despair.
- Or the older adult may choose to meet the crisis as a challenge to be mastered and continue to grow.
- "Expand a vocational interest, do those things I've always wanted to do."

**Ages 65 and up - Late Adulthood (Neugarten, Levinson and others) [9]**

Phases of retirement (R.T. Atchley):

1. Pre-retirement (anticipation).
2. Honeymoon (euphoria at newfound freedom).
3. Disenchantment (missing the former life).
4. Reorientation (finding new interests).
5. Stability (routinization).

**Ages 65 and up - Late Adulthood (Neugarten, Levinson and others)**

With advancing age, engagement, rather than disengagement, is more closely associated with psychological well-being.

Older persons who are educationally active tend to have greater zest for living & better self-concept and are more generally satisfied with their lives.

Although religious practices (like attending church) tend to decrease in later years, religious feelings and beliefs increase.

At some point, late adulthood may be characterized by any one or more of the following [9,10,11].

1. Retirement from full-time employment.
2. Relinquishment of household management.
3. Withdrawal from active community and organizational leadership.
4. Breaking up of marriage through death of one's mate.

**Ages 65 and up -Late Adulthood (Neugarten, Levinson and others)**

1. Loss of independent household.
2. Loss of interest in distant goals and plans.
3. Acceptance of dependence on others for support

or advise and „management funds .

4. Acceptance of subordinate position to adult offspring or to social worker.
5. Taking up membership in groups made up largely of old people.
6. Acceptance of planning in terms of immediate goals.
- Search for meaning of one’s life; feelings of fulfillment or failure.
- Looking backward in time; reviewing one’s life.

### Human Response to Change

#### Phases in responding to personal life change (Gordon Lippitt)

- Shock
- Disbelief (It can’t be happening!)
- Guilt (What did I do to cause this?)
- Projection (blaming, anger, rage)
- Rationalization (finding reasons to justify)
- Integration (Making change fit)

#### The Dying Process (Elizabeth Kubler-Ross)

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

Parents, school and society need to teach the school going child the following aspects that may be beneficial for any child to be an agent in transforming aging population:

1. Accept the restlessness and discontents of adolescence
2. Don’t minimize their feeling of unique struggle - Their emotions
3. Be supportive in time of turmoil
4. Encourage to express Hidden Worries
5. Allow them to search for identity
6. Don’t hurry to correct facts.
7. Don’t violate their privacy
8. Avoid cliché and preaching
9. Don’t label them
10. Don’t use reverse psychology

11. Acknowledging experience
12. Narrate Story with a Moral
13. Avoiding criticism and name calling
14. Parents can be their children’s advocates
15. Provide Emotional first aid
16. Always give nonjudgmental reply
17. Have Empathy and genuineness (what you think, what you feel, what you say and what you do, are consistent)
18. Constructive criticism for the growth. Parental criticism is unhelpful. It creates anger, resentment, and defiance in children.
19. *Praise*: a new approach
20. Appreciate the Effort Rather than Evaluate the Person
21. *Social life*: freedom and limits
22. Provide Autonomy and Guidance
23. *Our Responsibility*: Setting Standards and Upholding Limits while Respecting Feelings
24. *A Discussion on Sex*: providing sex education. This helps to learn, to grow, to change.
25. Avoid Parents’ Fears and promote Teenage Sports

### Conclusion

During the process of growth and development there are often additional challenges to be faced and there may be some detours along the road, but these stages are the similar and follow a pattern. As health care workers knowledge of these stages and the role of “anticipatory guidance” to countries that are developing the role can be helpful to developing countries. Throughout the life span whether pediatric and adolescent or elder or elderly development even though the stages are known and are clear, the individual must progress through them in order to emerge as a strong and healthy individual, Knowledge of development of self in environment context will help the health care worker to assist in smooth transformation and developing child as a change agent.

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