

# Analysis of my childhood experience and its impact on changes in my life

[Psychology](#), [Child Development](#)



During the 1600s, the concept of childhood (6-12 years old) began to emerge in Europe. John Locke, commonly known as ‘father of liberalism’ considered the mind at birth to be a “blank slate”. To many, childhood has this concept of play and innocence. I agree that childhood symbolises the brief period of sanctuary before we encounter the perils and hardships of adulthood.

To be more accurate, childhood is not a natural phenomenon, but a creation of society. Therefore, how I portray childhood is largely dependent on my macrosystem which in accordance with the ecological theory, refers to the cultural environment in Singapore. Below I will explore my encounter with life experiences and events that result in changes in my life that necessitate coping and adaptation. These include parental conflict, school entry and re-entry. There is no such thing as a relationship entirely free from conflict and disagreement, and surely all children see their parents argue at one time or another. However, it must be noted that parental conflict is not only harmful due to possible spill-over effects but also because it causes distress to the child. In my case, the spill-over effects were not significant as my parents did not direct their anger towards me in any forms of aggression.

However, I was still very much in distress whenever they fought in front of me. This affected my emotional security during my childhood. At first, I feared that the argument would escalate into a physical fight and my parents would get hurt. Then there was the anxiety and sadness that I was the source of their unhappiness because one of their major fight was indeed because of me. I also felt a sense of brooding anger as to why I was the only

one who always witnessed their fights. I felt helpless yet not able to confide in my siblings because I did not want them to feel burdened. Till this date, I do not have the habit of confiding or seeking emotional support. I became self-reliant by managing, coping and solving my fears and problems by internalising them. People in my microsystem described me as someone who would choose flight over fight in my efforts to avoid conflicts. I did not lose trust or have negative internal representations of family relationships.

However, I tend to catastrophize situations unconsciously. It is irrational and unrealistic, but also my coping mechanism. Childhood is often called the age of schooling because at age 6, we enter primary school. Due to frequent residential mobility, I experienced entry and re-entry to schools. Relocated children often face various stress of adapting to an alien environment, a new school, building new friendships and social networks. I faced double stress because I had to re-establish my identity as a Chinese and Indian bi-racial individual. Ai Tong Primary School provided an ethnically diverse environment hence I had no problems maintaining my bi-racial identity there. I identify with both my parents' culture as well as Singapore's culture. In CHIJ St Nicholas Primary School, the ethnic majority were Chinese due to it being a Special Assistance Plan school which meant everyone had to learn Mandarin as a Mother tongue language. Quickly, my group of friends jumped from being racially diverse to primarily Chinese. The social learning theory can be used to explain how the effect of the entry to this new school influenced my identity and involvement with certain friends. The social learning theory defines children's socialization in terms of specific social

learning experiences, such as modelling, reinforcement, and behaviour that emerge from these formative experiences. Initially, I noticed that being biracial was a source of curiosity and fascination to my peers and teachers. However, in this new environment, the interest in my race made me feel self-conscious and I begin to be dismissive when asked about my race. I slowly became fully immersed in Chinese culture and language.

Eventually, I formed a common identity with my Chinese friends. This conscious decision is based on people's perceptions of my racial identity. When people see my social circle, hear me converse in fluent mandarin and see me immersed in the Chinese culture they perceive me as a Chinese rather than bi-racial and this reinforced my change in identify. The effect slowly faded off as I grew up and begin associating with people of different races. I have come to accept that it's important for all parts of my heritage to be acknowledged equally. I also developed an interest in race, racial identity, and racism because I'm so struck by the way ethnicity has coloured my experiences. Personally, I feel that I have a little bit of special insight because of the different cultures in which I am embedded.