Chapter One

AN INTRODUCTION TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT
Child development is the scientific study of the patterns of growth, change and stability that occur from conception through adolescence.
The Scope of the Field

Child development includes:

- Social and personality development
- Physical development
- Cognitive development
# Approaches to Child Development

## Table 1-1 Approaches to Child Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Defining Characteristics</th>
<th>Examples of Questions Asked&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Physical development      | Examines how brain, nervous system, muscles, sensory capabilities, and needs for food, drink, and sleep affect behavior | What determines the sex of a child? (3)  
What are the long-term consequences of premature birth? (4)  
What are the benefits of breast-feeding? (5)  
What are the consequences of early or late sexual maturation? (14) |
| Cognitive development     | Emphasizes intellectual abilities, including learning, memory, language development, problem solving, and intelligence | What are the earliest memories that can be recalled from infancy? (6)  
What are the consequences of watching television? (9)  
Are there benefits to bilingualism? (12)  
Are there ethnic and racial differences in intelligence? (12)  
How does an adolescent’s egocentrism affect his or her view of the world? (15) |
| Personality and social development | Examines enduring characteristics that differentiate one person from another and how interactions with others and social relationships grow and change over the life span | Do newborns respond differently to their mothers than to others? (4)  
What is the best procedure for disciplining children? (10)  
When does a sense of gender develop? (10)  
How can we promote cross-race friendships? (13)  
What are the causes of adolescent suicide? (16) |

<sup>a</sup>Numbers in parenthesis indicate in which chapter the question is addressed.
Physical Development

Physical development examines:

- the brain
- nervous system
- muscles
- developmental milestones
- needs for food, drink, and sleep
Cognitive Development

Cognitive development examines:

- learning
- memory
- problem solving
- intelligence
Personality and Social Development

• **Personality development** includes the stability and change of enduring characteristics that differentiate one person from another.

• **Social development** examines how social relationships grow, change, and remain stable over the course of life.
Age Ranges and Individual Differences

- Researchers divide childhood and adolescence into broad ranges:
Cohort Influences on Development

• Cohort

• Cohort effects

• Age-graded influences

Who are the members of your cohort?
Development is also affected by *sociocultural-graded influences*, which include:

- **ethnicity**
- **social class**
- **subcultural membership**
- **other factors**
Non-normative Life Events

• Non-normative life events are specific, atypical events that occur in a particular person’s life at a time when such events do not happen to most people.

• Ex: winning a science competition

• You can create your own non normative life event.

Can you think of an example of a non-normative life event?
Children of the Past

Early Views of Children:

Locke
- *tabula rasa* or “blank slate”
- We are born w/out personality
- children entirely shaped by their experiences as they grew up

Rousseau
- noble savages
- children born with innate sense of right and wrong and morality.
- Saw human as being good
- Infants develop into worthy children unless they are corrupted by negative circumstances in their lives.
Baby Biographies

Baby Biographies (Germany 1700s)

• First time children methodically studied
• Observers traced growth of single child
• Darwin believed that understanding the development of individuals within a species could help identify how the species had developed.
Focus on Childhood

- Children were no longer used for cheap labor
- They went to school and were separated from adults
- Psychology helped people see how childhood events influenced people when they were adults.
- Child development became its own field.
Contributions of Women

- Women made significant contributions to child development despite prejudice.
- Hollingworth: one of first psychologists to focus on child development
**Table 1-2** Major Issues in Child Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuous Change</th>
<th>Discontinuous Change</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Change is gradual.</td>
<td>• Change occurs in distinct steps or stages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Achievements at one level build on previous level.</td>
<td>• Behavior and processes are qualitatively different at different stages.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Underlying developmental processes remain the same over the life span.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Periods</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sensitive Periods</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Certain environmental stimuli are necessary for normal development.</td>
<td>• People are susceptible to certain environmental stimuli, but consequences of absent stimuli are reversible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emphasized by early developmentalists.</td>
<td>• Current emphasis in life span development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Life Span Approach</strong></td>
<td><strong>Focus on Particular Periods</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Current theories emphasize growth and change throughout life, relatedness of different periods.</td>
<td>• Infancy and adolescence emphasized by early developmentalists as most important periods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature (Genetic Factors)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nurture (Environmental Factors)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emphasis is on discovering inherited genetic traits and abilities.</td>
<td>• Emphasis is on environmental influences that affect a person’s development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continuous Change vs. Discontinuous Change

- In **continuous change**, development is gradual.
Continuous Change vs. Discontinuous Change

- **Discontinuous change** occurs in distinct steps or stages.
Distinguishing Sensitive vs. Critical Periods

Critical periods are specific times during development in which a particular event has its greatest consequence.
Ex: critical period

Mother taking drugs while the brain is developing can cause permanent harm to the fetus.
Distinguishing Sensitive vs. Critical Periods

Sensitive periods are particular times when an organism is susceptible to certain kinds of stimuli in their environment.
Lack of exposure during infancy may result in delayed language.
Collectivistic Orientation

• Interdependence among members of society
• Asian societies
Individualistic Orientation

- Concentration on uniqueness of the individual
- Western societies
Life Span Approaches Versus a Focus on Particular Periods

- Early developmentalists tended to focus on the periods of infancy and adolescence, largely to the exclusion of other parts of childhood.

How has this view changed? What influenced this shift in thinking?
Influence of Nature and Nurture on Development

- Nature: traits, abilities, and capabilities inherited from one’s parents
Influence of Nature and Nurture on Development

• Nurture: environmental influences that shape behavior
Children and Violence

Explaining the roots of violence

• Early behavioral and physical problems → later difficulties in controlling aggression

• Exposure to violence in the media and in video games → aggression.
Children and Violence

• How can we explain the level of violence?

• How do people learn to be violent?

• How can we control and remedy aggression?

• How can we discourage violence from occurring in the first place?
Looking back

• How have the views of childhood changed historically?

How are children treated differently today than in earlier times?
Looking back

• What are major societal influences that determine development?

Give an example of how cultural differences affect childhood.
Looking back

• What is the future of child development likely to hold?

How is the study of genetics and genetic behavior likely to impact or change the field of child development?