

THE CHILD

Infants and Children

Nancy J. Cobb



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Preface

What do you remember of your own childhood or the games you played? Imagine yourself sitting on a park bench watching children at play. Over next to the trees, you notice a few school-age children taking turns on the swings. Close by, you can make out four young children playing contentedly by themselves in a sandpit, one with a shovel and the others with various toys. In the distance is a skateboard park seemingly used only by boys, each doing their own thing on the ramps or clustered in small knots around the perimeter. A number of girls their age are walking through the park by two's and three's, involved intensely in conversation. You continue watching. Have you ever really looked at children playing before? Is there more than meets the eye in the way children of different ages play?

What is play, you wonder? Do toddlers usually play alone, even if they are right next to each other? When do children learn to take turns? Why were only boys at the skateboard park? Is the scene at this park typical for children of these ages? You were a child once, presumably much like these children. But, you're surprised to find you don't have answers to these questions. And then you wonder what makes some children aggressive and others shy? What brought aggression to mind? You remember seeing a news story on TV only this morning about a school shooting. Several experts in child development talked about possible signs of disturbance that could have told the parents or teachers that something was going wrong, or already had gone wrong, in the lives of those children. Others commented that many times there are no reliable signs to distinguish children who are truly troubled from those who are not. They also said that troubled children can come from homes that are just as loving and supportive as those of other children.

Last Sunday's newspaper profiled a very different child. The Teen Life section described the day-to-day life of a teenage boy—active in 4-H, a merit scholar bound for the university next fall—whose favorite activity is serving as a volunteer at an after-school day care center near his home. Three days a week, for 3 years now, he has helped children with their homework, played games with them, and just kept them company. What makes children so different? How much of a difference is there to begin with from one child to the next? How do circumstances change life outcomes, you wonder? As a casual observer you may never discover the answers to these questions. But, as a student of child development, some questions may be answered and others that you never imagined may come to mind.

This book introduces you to ordinary children, such as those in the park, with the hope that you will see things about them that you previously never noticed or thought about. Instead of simply talking about children, as many textbooks do, this book will let children talk to you as well. This textbook relies on the use of narrative, using children's own words as well as stories about children and their families, to help you understand developmental concepts. In addition, three features distinguish this textbook's approach: This book will emphasize a con-

structive perspective to development, it will highlight ethnic and gender diversity, and it will stress continuity of development.

A Narrative Approach

As you read this text, you will be invited to see things from the perspective of the children as well as from that of the researchers who study them. The things children say and do, as well as narrative accounts of their experiences by others, provide a rich database from which to study development. You will be encouraged to analyze and make sense of children, as developmentalists do, by observing them and their families firsthand through these narrative accounts. Instead of simply presenting you with various theories or research findings, you will be included in the process of discovery itself by being introduced to the developmental issues, in the form of narrative accounts, that research and theory were designed to address.

A Constructive Perspective

As you begin to look at things from the vantage point of children, you will see that they frequently see things differently than do adults. The constructive perspective assumes that individuals actively “construct” reality rather than passively react to events. In doing so, they organize experience in meaningful ways that change predictably with age. Individuals continually interpret the events they experience. As a consequence, a single event can mean different things to different people. Perceiving the world, whether listening to someone talk or making sense of what we are seeing, is an active process. Reality does not come at us packaged for passive absorption. In order to experience a coherent, meaningful world, a person must construct or assemble it from the moment, from less coherent raw material. This view of perception as an active, constructive process is termed the constructive perspective and will inform the pages of this text.

Gender and Ethnic Diversity

In reading this book, you will discover how differences of gender and ethnicity contribute to the way children construct their reality. Few differences are as important to children, or to individuals of any age, for that matter, as those associated with their gender. Some differences are biologically based, whereas others are socially determined and reflect what a particular culture expects of children depending on gender. Culture contributes to development in even more general ways, affecting everything from which foods children like (preferences that may be established even before birth) to which language they use when talking to a grandparent. The very rituals, beliefs, and rhythms to life that a culture provides furnish the perspective from which children learn to view the world. Culture, whether this is provided by children’s sex or their ethnicity, provides the interpretive lens through which they look when constructing the events they experience.

Continuity of Development

You may be surprised to discover yourself in the experiences of the children you are reading about. Development brings many changes—in size, skills, maturity

and understanding—but each of us still carries within us the self we were at different points in our lives. Continuity of development assumes that within every adult there lurks an adolescent and an even younger child. Issues of intimacy, for instance, are salient not only in early adulthood but also in infancy. A concern with autonomy is central not only to adolescence, but also to toddlerhood, and emerges again as an issue in later adulthood. As you discover how children at different ages deal with various issues, you may discover new things about yourself as well.

Continuity exists in yet another way. Despite obvious differences between groups of children defined by factors such as ethnicity or gender, the differences *among* children within any group are greater than the differences *between* those groups. Underlying commonalities may suggest ways of conceptualizing solutions to some of the social ills that affect children's lives. With respect to this point, each chapter contains a social policy box that highlights a policy related to some aspect of children's well-being. Issues covered in these policy boxes include substance abuse in pregnancy and how to balance the rights and responsibilities of the individual with those of the community, genetic testing and the human genome project, and how best to teach schoolchildren who are not proficient in English.

Additional Features

What else distinguishes this book? One of the most important features of this text is one that you may *not* notice at first. The writing style of this book is designed to be “reader friendly” and conversational. The text is intended to read much the way someone would sound when speaking to you—informal and personal. When this approach is successful, you, the reader, become aware only of the concepts you are asked to think about and not the process of reading about them. Don't be misled by the informal tone to the text; you will be getting a sophisticated analysis of developmental concepts, research, and theory.

In addition to boxes highlighting social policy, this book contains boxes highlighting research. The study of child development involves two quite different types of knowledge. One of these describes *what* we know about children's development, the ways they change with age and the factors that are responsible for those changes. The other describes *how* we know what we know, the research methods that generate the findings you'll be reading about. The Research Focus boxes introduce you to this second type of knowledge: the basic methods of developmental research. These boxes are important because they provide you with the tools you will need to actively analyze what you're reading rather than simply taking in the facts. Each box begins with a practical problem and then illustrates how researchers used a particular approach to solve it. Some examples are “Descriptive Statistics: How harmful *Is* Secondhand Smoke?” “Ethics: Kangaroo Care for Low-Birthweight Infants,” and “Internal and External Validity: ‘Tuning Out’ Powerless Adults.” All together, the boxes cover all of the basic topics important for understanding the methodologies used by developmental researchers.

Organization of This Text

The book is divided into five parts: Foundations, Infancy and Toddlerhood, Early Childhood, Middle Childhood, and Adolescence. Each part contains three chapters: physical development, cognitive development, and psychosocial development. All chapters begin with an outline of the material that is to be covered. Each

chapter begins with a brief vignette or opening section designed to draw you into the chapter, and ends with a summary that describes the major points of the chapter. Key terms appear in a running glossary in the margins of the text, to highlight developmental concepts as you read. Also, each chapter contains Stop-and-Think questions that are designed to engage you with the material as you read.

Teaching and Learning Tools

- *Instructor's Manual and Test Bank.* This is a comprehensive resource for instructors. Part One of the manual includes, for each chapter: chapter outlines, summaries, and learning objectives; lecture organizers (the text of the PowerPoint slides available on the Instructor's CD and *The Child* Web site); lecture suggestions; discussion and critical thinking questions; suggested answers to the text's Stop-and-Think questions; activities; and student worksheets. Part Two offers Internet Resources, with suggested Web sites and worksheets to guide students through Internet-related assignments. Part Three, Video Resources, gives detailed descriptions and reviews of suggested videos for each chapter. The Test Bank contains over 1,500 questions in multiple choice, true-false, short answer, and essay formats. Answers with page references and topic identification are provided.
- *Computerized Test Bank.* MicroTest III, developed by Chariot Software Group, contains the complete test bank, including answers, topic identification and page references. MicroTest allows you to design tests using the questions included with *The Child* and/or to incorporate your own questions. The testing program is available in both Windows and Macintosh formats.
- *Transparency Acetates.* Provided to enhance lectures, the 50 acetates, many in full-color, include selected art and other images from the text. They are also available on the Instructor's CD and the Web site.
- *The Child Web Site* (<http://www.mayfieldpub.com/cobb>). Instructor's resources on the site include a syllabus builder (which allows instructors to customize a syllabus and post it at a unique Web address), the Instructor's Resource Guide, PowerPoint slides, an image bank, electronic transparencies, and Internet links. The entire instructor's section is password-protected. Student's resources on the site include an interactive study guide, Internet activities, and a Web tutorial.
- *The Mayfield Child and Adolescent Development Custom Video.* This video, developed to accompany *The Child*, contains more than 15 video clips ranging from 5 to 10 minutes in length. With at least one clip per chapter, the video is a valuable resource for encouraging class discussion. Topics include classical and operant conditioning, pediatric brain development, the diagnosis and treatment of Attention Deficit Disorder, differences between the sexes, memory, and depression in children and adolescents.
- *Instructor's CD-ROM.* This CD contains PowerPoint slides, electronic transparencies, an image bank of images from the text, and the Instructor's Resource Guide. The PowerPoint slides, as shown in the lecture organizers section of the Instructor's Manual, provide a lecture outline for each chapter and can be combined with the electronic transparencies for an integrated classroom presentation. The Instructor's Manual can be downloaded from the CD and materials customized to fit any course organization. This complete package of presentation resources can be used with both IBM-compatible and Macintosh computers.

- *Study Guide.* Written to coordinate with the materials found in the Instructor's Manual and Test Bank, this guide uses the SQ4R method and offers for each chapter: chapter outline, summary, and learning objectives; flash cards; questions for reflection and application; activities and observations; worksheets; and practice quizzes.

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*For I know the thoughts I think concerning you,
says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of hurt,
to give you a future and a hope.*

Jeremiah 29:11

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