

# Human Development

Across the Life Span



Fergus P. Hughes

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# Human Development Across the Life Span

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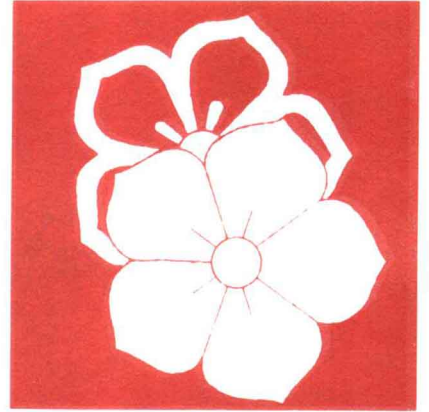
# Introduction to the Study of Human Development

*Introductions often pose a problem, because students may be tempted to decide that they understand the basic nature of the subject they are about to study and ask, Why can't we skip the preliminaries and get right to the heart of the matter? There are several purposes, however, for the inclusion of the first three chapters of this text.*

*In the first place, human development is a frequently misunderstood concept. Chapter 1 discusses the nature of human development and all its essential*

*characteristics. It explains how human development differs from other related fields of study and why a knowledge of developmental principles is important for any well-educated person.*

*The history of human development is discussed in Chapter 2. The reader will discover that there are few totally new ideas under the sun, but that people today have a more sophisticated framework for organizing those ideas than their ancestors did. Finally, Chapter 3 deals with the wide variety of research approaches used by those who study human development today. To make sense of the findings offered in this book, an understanding of the techniques used to obtain them is essential.*





# The Concept of Human Development

## CHAPTER 1

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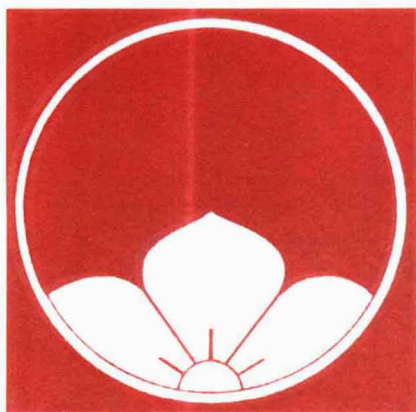


### CHAPTER OUTLINE

**Development Is Individual**  
**Heredity and Environment**  
**Development and Change**  
**The Span of Life**

**Development Is Interdisciplinary**  
Contributions of the Anthropologist  
Contributions of the Sociologist  
Contributions of the Psychologist  
Contributions of the Biologist  
**Summary**





*One day two men who were total strangers to one another met and discovered that they had the following amazing similarities in their lives: Both men were thirty-nine years old. Both worked part-time as deputy sheriffs. Both drove Chevrolet automobiles. Both were initially married to women named Linda, but both were now divorced and remarried to women named Betty. One had a son called James Alan, and the other had a son called James Allen. Both had a dog named Toy. Both liked math but had hated spelling while at school. Both chewed their fingernails excessively and had migraine headaches (Holden, 1982).*

*The two men actually were identical twins, but they had been separated at four weeks of age and adopted by different families. They finally met thirty-nine years later, when they became participants in a major study of reunited twins being conducted by a seventeen-member research team at the University of Minnesota. Thus far, the findings are astonishing: striking similarities are being noted in the personalities and life styles of genetically identical people raised in completely different environments. The implication? Genetic factors may play a much greater role in human development than experts in the field have ever imagined. A parallel implication is that many assumptions about environmental influences on human behavior might have to be reevaluated.*

*The Minnesota twin study, however, provides no final answer to the question of genetic influences on human development. Before we decide that the tendency to buy Chevrolets is genetically controlled, we should remember that (1) the number of reunited twins who have been studied is quite small, (2) the environments of the separated twins could have been very similar, and (3) some of the similarities might be nothing other than amazing coincidences. Nevertheless, the Minnesota study illustrates a major characteristic of the study of human development: none of the thousands of scholars, philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, biologists, anthropologists, and others who have set their hands to the task has been able to understand completely the complexity of the human developmental process. Theories, hypotheses, and conjectures abound, but the truth is elusive. Therefore, those who look for easy answers often find human development to be a frustrating study. Those who enjoy struggling with as yet unanswered questions recognize that the area of human development can provide an exciting challenge.*