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Child Psychology

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Psychology

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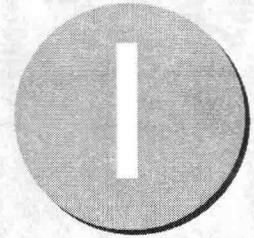
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CHAPTER



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2 Chapter 1

Child
Development

child development

A field of study that seeks to account for the gradual evolution of the child's cognitive, social, and other capacities first by describing changes in the child's observed behaviours and then by uncovering the processes and strategies that underlie these changes.

At two years, Mariela can put all her red blocks in one group and all the blue ones in another. By the time she is five years, she can sort and re-sort a collection of objects that have several different sizes, different shapes, different colours. And when Mariela is seven years or so, she can use this strategy of categorization in learning new information; for example, if her teacher gives her a list of words, including *shirt, eyes, carrot, apple, nose, shoes, pants, cereal, and mouth*, she can learn the words more efficiently by classifying them into groups: clothing, parts of the body, and foods.

Justin, who is a year and a half, plays with his toys next to another child but does not talk to the other child or interact with him except, perhaps, to grab one of his companion's toys or scream if the other child has taken one of his. When Justin is six or seven years old, he can and does engage in group play. He also understands that people have different points of view, although he believes that people act from their own self-interest. By the time he is in his mid-teens, Justin understands the need for positive human relationships, the desirability of being "good" rather than "bad," and the concept of societal law and order.

What accounts for this gradual but steady evolution in the child's ability to perceive and describe complex relations among things, to learn new things efficiently, and to relate to, interact with, and feel responsibility towards other people? The field of **child development**, or child psychology, seeks to answer this complex question in two major ways: first, by identifying and describing changes in the child's cognitive, emotional, motor, and social capacities and behaviours from the moment of conception through the period of adolescence; second, by uncovering the *processes* that underlie these changes and help explain how and why they occur. Moreover, child developmentalists are interested in the specific *strategies* that children use to help them achieve new skills and behaviours; for example, the cognitive strategy of categorization and the social strategy of cooperating with others offer children powerful aids in learning new information and in becoming successful participants in their social worlds.

Like the broader field of *developmental psychology*, which concerns itself with changes in human abilities and behaviour across the entire life span, child development takes both empirical and applied approaches to the study of growth and change. For some scientists, unraveling the mysteries of childhood is a goal in itself. We study children to increase our knowledge about how development evolves and about what processes further or impede this evolution. We can also derive information about adults from studies of children's development: understanding earlier forms of behaviour may help us understand later forms. Moreover, we can observe some processes in simpler forms in children than in adults.

Researchers who study children also undertake their work with many practical and policy implications in mind (Table 1-1 lists some of the issues that this book explores). Better information about child development can assist all members of society who care about the well being of children, including parents, teachers, health professionals, and legislators. Research findings can lead to helpful advice on a wide range of current issues, from creating and selecting effective daycare programs to handling children's temper tantrums, to dealing with the impact of busing and the effects of television violence on children. Finally, information on normal child development helps all those who work with and care for children to detect problems of both physical and mental development, thus facilitating both the prevention and the treatment of developmental difficulties.

Table 1-1

Some Interesting Facts about Children's Development

	Where Discussed in the Text
• A mother's single use of cocaine can adversely affect her developing fetus.	Chapter 3
• Waterbeds can help premature babies develop.	Chapter 4
• Newborns can recognize their own mothers by smell.	Chapter 5
• Babies can learn in the womb.	Chapter 5
• Even two-year-olds can be jealous.	Chapter 7
• Children learn a new language more easily than their parents.	Chapter 8
• Divorce affects boys' development more adversely than that of girls.	Chapter 12
• Aggressive behaviour in an eight-year-old can sometimes predict criminal behaviour at the age of 30 years.	Chapter 16

Throughout our exploration of contemporary child psychology, we will continue to keep these two levels of scientific inquiry in mind. Thus, we will repeatedly ask how specific processes and strategies account for different aspects of the child's development. In addition, we will seek to discover how we can use what we learn about these dynamics to improve children's functioning and self-confidence in all the important areas of their lives—their relations with family, friends, and peers; their academic pursuits; and their initial forays into the adult world of work, love, friendship, and societal responsibility.

A HISTORICAL INTERLUDE

The scientific study of child psychology is a relatively young enterprise that was initiated just a century ago with the pioneering work of Charles Darwin. In his research on infants' early sensory and perceptual capacities and children's emotions, Darwin (1872) clearly demonstrated that scientists could study infants and children. Later, in the United States, John Watson continued the formal analysis of children's learning capacities. And in Europe, Freud and Piaget, about whom you will read shortly in this chapter, were two other important early contributors to our understanding of children.

The scientific study of child psychology in Canada has about as long a history as it does in the United States, despite the fact that the Canadian Psychological Association—a national organization of Canadian psychologists—was not formed until 1938 (Dzinas, 2000), some 46 years after the American Psychological Association (Sokal, 1992).

One of the earliest, and most significant events in Canadian developmental psychology was the appointment of James Mark Baldwin to the University of Toronto in 1889 (Hoff, 1992). Although often remembered for establishing the first laboratory of psychology on British soil (Baldwin, 1930; Wright & Myers, 1982), Baldwin is also an important figure in the history of research on child development through his work on mental development. Using his own daughter as a subject, Baldwin examined, and published papers on, such topics as handedness (Baldwin, 1890), suggestion and will in infancy (Baldwin, 1891, 1892), and imitation (Baldwin, 1894).

As for other notable events in the history of developmental psychology in Canada, one important landmark was the opening of St. George's School for Child Study in Toronto in 1925 (which still operates today as the Institute for Child Study). St. George's school was initially headed by developmental psychologist William Emet Blatz (Winestock, 1994), who later became known for his three-year study of the Dionne quintuplets (Blatz et al., 1937; Blatz, 1938). The Dionne quintuplets were a group of five sisters, born in 1934, who were raised from two months to eight years in a special compound that was "on-display" to the general public (Prochner & Doyon, 1997).

Although some have argued that these detailed observations of the Dionnes failed to produce any dramatic insights into child development (Prochner & Doyon, 1997), others have suggested otherwise (Winestock, 1994). Regardless of the ultimate status of this work, the study of the Dionne quintuplets did a lot for promoting the study of child development generally and the work of developmental psychologists in Canada in particular.

Why is the field of child psychology so young? Part of the reason is that our appreciation of childhood as a unique period is a relatively modern phenomenon. As the French historian Philippe Ariès, in his classic work *Centuries of Childhood*, documents, for many years, people viewed children as miniature adults. Another reason is that people did not value children as we do today. This was, in part, because children often died very young. Many infants died at birth or in the first few months of life, owing largely to people's lack of understanding of germs and infection and to the limited medical knowledge of the times. Another indication of the undervaluation of children was the way adults treated them. Children were often labourers in factories and mines, and it was only in the 19th century that child labour laws were introduced to protect children from this kind of exploitation. Even today, child labour laws are not universal, and young children continue to be drafted into the workforce in many countries.

Since the early 1900s, the field of child psychology has been concerned not only with improving scientific knowledge about children but with using this knowledge to shape social policy on behalf of children (Sears, 1975, Sigel, 1998). Throughout this book, we will see many examples of this historically based commitment to both science and public policy.



THEMES OF DEVELOPMENT

As scientists have studied children's development, they have continued to confront and debate a number of significant themes. These themes generally pose basically conflicting views. For example, are children's behaviour and development the result of biological, or hereditary, influences, or are they formed by environmental forces? Today, scientists agree that both our biology and the social-physical environments that surround us affect our development, although they may influence different aspects of development in different degrees. Do children play an active role in their own development or only a passive role? Although the view of the active child is dominant among modern psychologists, some investigators still support the passive view. Does development take place in similar ways in children of all cultures and races, or is the experience of each culture distinct and separate? Here again, each view probably owns a little of the truth.

We will encounter these and other themes repeatedly as we discuss the many sides of development—biological, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and social. We will also see that different theories of child development—discussed in the next major section—emphasize one or more themes in differing degrees (Table 1-2). Thus, it is important to understand the issues reflected in these themes. The more we try to solve the puzzle of children's development, the more we learn about the nature and evolution of all human behaviour.

BIOLOGICAL VERSUS ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

Most modern viewpoints recognize that both biological and environmental factors influence human development, but they disagree about the relative importance of each of these factors for different aspects of development. Biological extremists of the past argued that biology is destiny and that development is merely a matter of **maturation**. They believed that the course of development was largely predetermined by genetic factors; these genetic or biological processes led to the naturally unfolding course of growth called maturation. One early advocate of this view was Arnold Gesell, who suggested, "All things considered, the inevitableness and surety of maturation are the most impressive characteristics of early development. It is the hereditary ballast which conserves and stabilizes the growth of each individual infant." (Gesell, 1928) Opposing this view, other early theorists, such as the behaviourist John B. Watson, placed their emphasis strictly on the environment. Watson (1928) assumed that genetic factors place no restrictions on the ways that environmental events can shape the course of a child's development and claimed that by properly organizing the environment, he could produce a Mozart, a Babe Ruth, or an Al Capone.

Today, no one supports either of these extreme positions. The challenge to modern developmentalists is to explore how biological and environmental factors interact to produce developmental variations in different children. The interplay between biology and environment is evident in many ways. For example, certain hormones as well as exposure to experiences of aggression influence an individual's development of aggressive behaviour; both genetic inheritance and nutrition affect physical and social development; and an infant's temperament as well as its early environment influence the child's social and personality development.

Thus, the question is not which factor is more important but how the expression of the biological program that we inherit is shaped, modified, and directed by our particular set of environmental circumstances. Anticipating our discussion of language development (Chapter 8), consider the fact that although infants around the world are biologically equipped to learn to recognize and produce language, before the end of their first year, they begin to "tune out" linguistic sounds to which they have not been exposed. For example, Dutch babies can discriminate sounds in both Dutch and English but gradually become unresponsive to English words (Kuhl et al., 1997). The environment clearly shapes the form that the infant's biologically based language capacity can assume. And, as we will see in Chapter 3, the child actually contributes to the environment, playing an active role in shaping his or her surroundings.

THE ACTIVE VERSUS THE PASSIVE CHILD

Although early developmentalists viewed the child as a passive organism shaped mainly by external forces in the environment, the prevailing view today is that the child is an

maturation

A genetically determined process of growth that unfolds naturally over a period of time.

Table 1-2

Some Interesting Facts about Children's Development

		Developmental Themes					
Theoretical Perspectives	Chapters in Which Discussed	Biology vs. Environment	Active vs. Passive Child	Continuity vs. Discontinuity	Situation vs. Individual	Cultural Universals vs. Cultural Relativism	Risk and Resilience
Learning Perspectives							
Behaviourism (classical and operant conditioning)	5, 7, 16	Environment	Passive child	Continuity (no stages)	High on situational influences	Cultural universals	Low on resilience
Cognitive social learning theory	5, 7, 14, 16	Environment	Moderately active child	Continuity (no stages)	High on situational influences	Cultural universals	Emphasizes both risk and resilience
Cognitive Developmental Perspectives							
Piagetian theory	9, 16	Interaction between biology and environment	Highly active child	Discontinuity (stages of development)	Emphasis on individual characteristics (cognitive frameworks)	Cultural universals	Low in focus on risk and resilience
Vygotsky's sociocultural theory	9, 10	Interaction between biology and environment	Active child	Discontinuity (stages of development)	Situation and context are important	Culture-bound principles	Emphasizes child's resilience
Information processing theory	10, 15, 16	Focus on environment but recognition of biology	Active, reflective child	Continuity (no stages)	Both characteristics of the person and the situation are important	Cultural universals but culture-bound products	No focus on this issue
Psychodynamic Perspectives							
Freudian theory	7, 12, 15	Interaction between biology and environment	Initially passive but increasingly active child	Discontinuity (stages of development)	High on individual traits	Cultural universals	Emphasis on risks and adaptive mechanisms
Erikson's theory	12	Interaction between biology and environment	Initially passive but increasingly active child	Discontinuity (stages of development across entire life span)	High on individual traits	Culture-bound principles	Emphasis on both risk and resilience
Systems Theory Perspectives							
Dynamic systems theory	6, 10, 12	Interactions among all systems—biological, psychosocial, environmental	Active child	Continuity (no stages)	Interaction between situation and individual	Both cultural universals and culture-bound principles	Emphasis on both risk and resilience
Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory	12, 13, 16	Focus on environment but recognition of biology	Highly active child	Continuity (no stages)	High on situational influences	Culture-bound principles	High on resilience
Ethological Theory	7, 12, 13	Emphasis on biology but environment plays role in eliciting and modifying behaviour patterns	Moderately active child	Discontinuity (stages of development)	High on situational influences	Cultural universals	Focus on adaptation and resilience
Life Span Perspective	12, 13, 16	Focus on environment but recognition of biological constraints	Highly active child	Continuity (no stages)	High on situational influences	Culture-bound principles	Emphasizes both risks (transitions) and resilience

active seeker of information and of ways to use it. Those modern theorists who do still hold to the passive view assert, for example, that children are either assertive or shy, largely as a result of parental childrearing practices. According to this view, a talented teacher encourages a child to become interested in history or geometry, or association with an anti-social peer group causes a child to become delinquent. In general, however, modern developmentalists disagree sharply with this view, holding instead that children are usually active agents who shape, control, and direct the course of their own development (Bell, 1968; Bugental & Goodnow, 1998). Children, they assert, are curious information seekers who intentionally try to understand and explore the world about them. Moreover, socializing agents, such as parents, peers, or teachers, do not simply mould the child; instead, influence is a two-way process. Children actively modify the actions of their parents and other people whom they encounter in their daily lives.

CONTINUITY VERSUS DISCONTINUITY

One of the major questions that confronts developmental psychologists is how to characterize the nature of developmental change. Some view development as a continuous process whereby, in an orderly way, each new event or change builds on earlier experiences. They see development as smooth and gradual, without any abrupt shifts along the path (Figure 1-1*a*). Others, however, view development as occurring in a series of discrete steps or stages and see the organization of behaviour as qualitatively different at each new stage or plateau. The concerns of each phase of development and the skills learned in that phase are different from those of every other phase. Consider, for example, the period of adolescence. In the discontinuous view, we should treat adolescence as a distinctive phase of development that marks an abrupt change in biological, social, and cognitive functioning. A little later in this chapter, we consider the theories of Jean Piaget and Sigmund Freud, both of whom proposed theories of stages of development (Figure 1-1*b* displays the Piagetian model). Each theorist proposed that at every stage, new strategies for understanding and acquiring knowledge and for managing interpersonal relationships come into play and displace the prior ways of dealing with the world. In contrast, scientists, such as Albert Bandura, who endorse the continuous view think of the changes in adolescence as part of an ongoing series of smaller shifts that have been going on throughout childhood.

Recently, some theorists (e.g., Siegler, 1998) have suggested that our judgment of continuity or discontinuity depends on the power of the lens we use in examining changes across development. If we look from a distance or over a fairly long period of time, it is clear that there are marked differences between, say, the young infant's tentative motor abilities and the toddler's motor gymnastics or between the fourth grader's and the adolescent's competence at solving problems of logic. Clearly, both level and quality of skill vary greatly in such comparisons. And as we will see in Chapter 10, younger and older children approach a memory task differently. Young children try to memorize a list of words by rehearsing the list as it is given to them; older children, on the other hand, tend to group the list into categories, just as the seven-year-old in our opening paragraph does. Categorizing words in order to remember them more efficiently is an illustration of a *qualitative* change in memory. Thus, there are, indeed, qualitative changes across development.

If we look more closely, however, we find that a change, such as a shift to a more efficient memory strategy, is not abrupt. In fact, when we examine the ways children solve problems, we find a great deal of variability in the strategies they use at the same point in time. For example, a child may sometimes use a developmentally advanced strategy and at other times a relatively primitive one. Through microscopic examination of this sort, we see a very different picture of development—one of gradual change in which the child only slowly learns to adopt the best and developmentally most advanced approach (Figure 1-1*c*). So, over time, qualitative changes proceed in a less coherent and linear way than the notions of developmental stages suggest.

Most contemporary child psychologists hold a more or less middle-of-the-road view of the continuity-discontinuity issue, seeing development as basically continuous but interspersed with periods of transition in which change may be quite sudden or pronounced. These transitional periods are important because developmental processes are often revealed most clearly during such times of change. And transitions come in a variety of forms. Some are biological, such as walking, which may result in a reorganization of house-

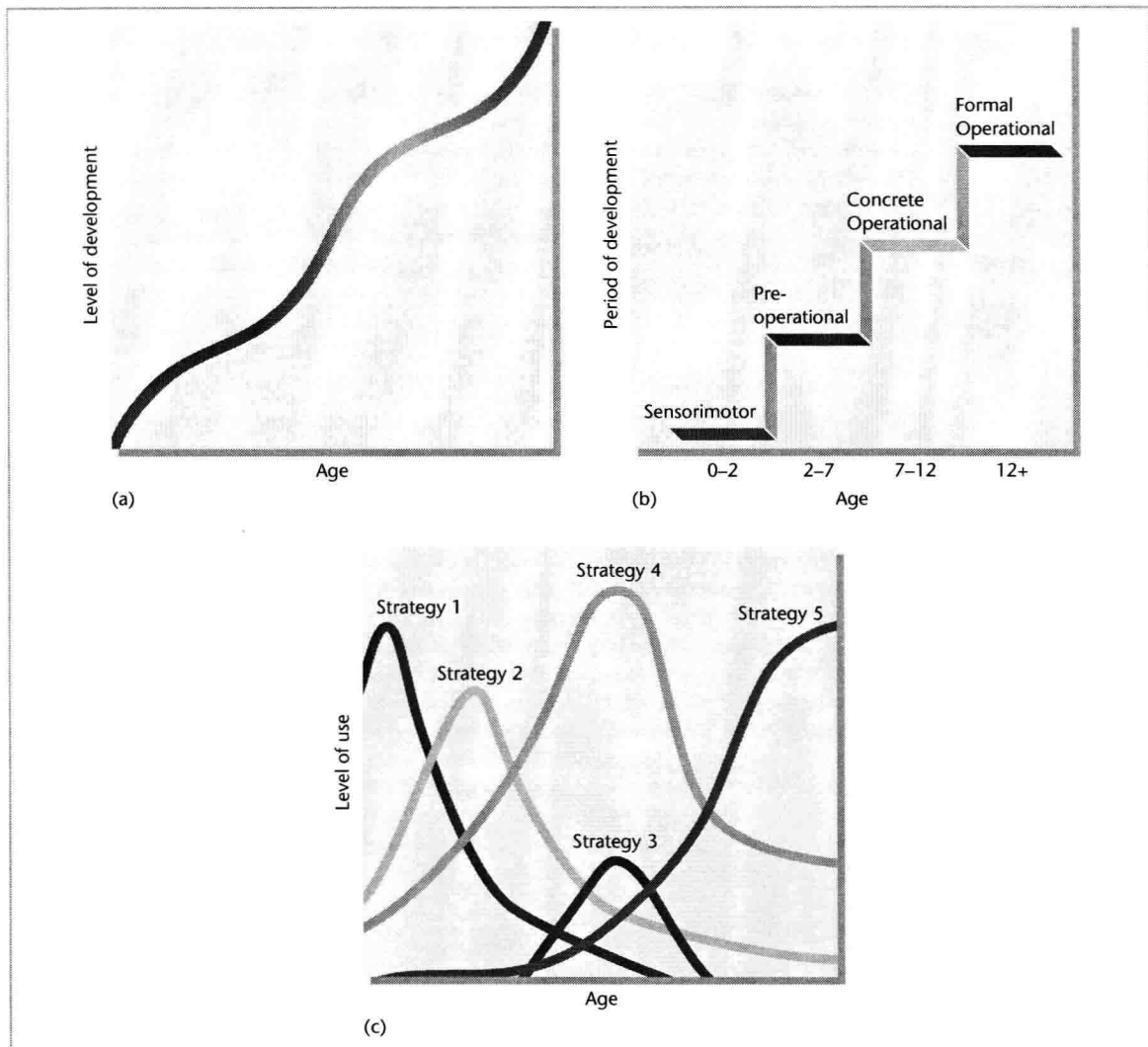


FIGURE 1-1

Continuity and discontinuity in the child's development.

The continuous view (a) sees development as a gradual series of shifts in capacities, skills, and behaviour without any abrupt changes. Those who hold the opposite perspective (b), in which development is discontinuous, propose just such abrupt, steplike changes, each qualitatively different from the one that precedes it. Most contemporary developmentalists believe a third view, which holds that development is fundamentally continuous but interspersed with transitions that may appear sudden, most accurately represents the progress of development over time. Siegler's "overlapping waves" model (c) suggests that children use a variety of strategies in thinking and learning and that cognition involves constant competition among different strategies, rather than the use of a single strategy at a given age. Although each strategy may take a qualitative step forwards in effectiveness, at any given point in time, the child uses several strategies of varying levels of sophistication. The use of each strategy ebbs and flows with increasing age and expertise, and it is only gradually that the most successful strategies predominate. As a result, from a macroscopic perspective, development appears generally continuous, but at a microscopic level, we can observe specific qualitative changes.

(Source: part (c) from *Children's Thinking*, 3rd ed. by Siegler, R., p. 92. Copyright © 1998 Prentice-Hall, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ. Reprinted with permission.)

hold items so that the child cannot reach breakable or dangerous items. Others may be both biological and psychological; the onset of puberty, for example, is often accompanied by changes in how adolescents think about their world and their relationships with family and peers (Caspi, 1998). Still other changes are culturally determined, like the timing of entry into junior high school when the child first confronts new academic subjects and the necessity to move among multiple classrooms and teachers. Moving to a new neighbourhood may constitute a major transition if it involves leaving old friends and making new ones. And the transitions posed by divorce or remarriage often present both children and adults with the need for major adjustments. Each transition the individual experiences offers both challenges and opportunities, and the success with which the person handles these challenges gives us insight into the nature of his or her development. We will explore many of these transitions in later chapters.

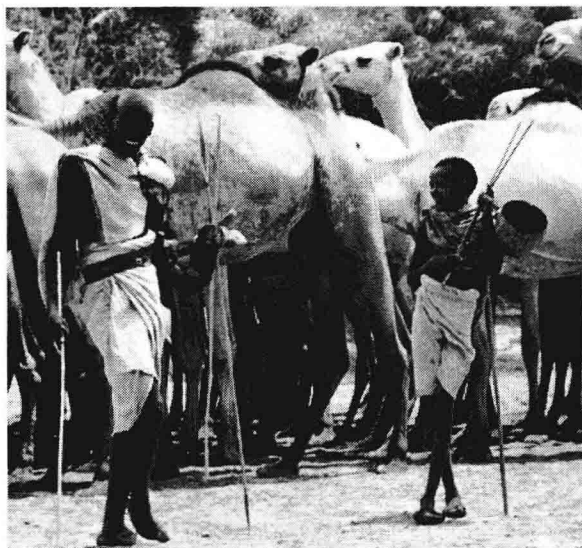
SITUATIONAL INFLUENCES VERSUS INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Children grow up in a variety of diverse settings, such as homes, schools, playgrounds, and streets. How much do the contexts in which we study children affect what we learn about them? Do children behave differently in certain settings than in others, or do their individual predispositions and personality characteristics cause them to behave similarly across a broad range of situations? Can we describe certain children as honest, dependent, aggressive, or helpful and expect them to exhibit these qualities at all times? How will these traits be manifested in different situations—a difficult test, a confrontation with an angry parent or teacher, a competitive game, or a friend in need? Developmental psychologists differ in terms of the importance they assign to personality or person factors in contrast to situational or setting variables. Many resolve the controversy by adopting an interactionist viewpoint, which stresses the dual role of personality and situational factors (Magnusson, 1996; Magnusson & Stattin, 1998). For example, children who have aggressive personality traits may often seek out contexts in which they can display these characteristics; thus, they are more likely to join a gang or enrol in a karate class than opt for the church choir or a stamp collector's club (Bullock & Merrill, 1980). But these same children may be friendly, reasonable, and cooperative in settings that do not allow or promote aggressive behaviour.

CULTURAL UNIVERSALS VERSUS CULTURAL RELATIVISM

Children who grow up on a farm in China or a kibbutz in Israel, in a village in Peru, or in a suburb in Canada have very different kinds of experiences. Developmental psychologists differ in how they view the importance of culture. Some argue that culture-free laws of development will be discovered to apply to all children in all cultures. Others argue that the cultural setting in which children grow up plays a major role in formulating the laws that govern development. Between these extreme views is one suggesting that development proceeds everywhere in the same orderly fashion but that the rates at which children in different societies progress may vary. For example, in some cultures, children are encouraged to walk very early and are given opportunities to exercise their new skills. In other cultures, infants are carried or swaddled for long periods of time, which reduces their chances to walk until they are older.

Cultures differ not only across national boundaries but within single countries. Canada, the United States, Australia, and Russia, for example, all contain a wide range of subcultural groups representing very diverse racial and ethnic traditions (Fisher, Jackson, & Villaruel, 1998). In Canada, it is not uncommon to find native and aboriginal children as well as children with African, Asian, West Indian, South American, and European backgrounds together in a single school or classroom. And, of course, in Canada another fundamental source of cultural variations arises from differences in the linguistic environments of anglophone and francophone homes and classrooms. In spite of the controversy about how culture influences development, most child developmentalists today recognize the importance of considering cultural contexts in their accounts of development (Rogoff, 1998). Later in this chapter, we will encounter a theorist, Lev Vygotsky, who placed special emphasis on the important role that culture plays in development.



In the world's many varied cultures, children begin, often at an early age, to develop specialized skills. In Somalia, a son learns the care and management of camels from his father.



And some behaviours are the same the world over. This mother is clearly quite attached to, and cares for, her child.

Cultures are, of course, constantly undergoing change. North America, for example, has seen dramatic changes since the 1950s. To mention just a few of these changes, divorce and remarriage are more common, delayed childbearing is on the rise, the majority of women work outside the home, and personal computers are becoming almost as common in households as the television set. Are the laws that govern children's behaviour affected by these changes, or do children develop in much the same way, regardless of shifts in the culture that surrounds them? Theories differ considerably in the seriousness with which they regard these kinds of shifts, but all recognize that such changes may play a part in influencing a child's development.

RISK AND RESILIENCE

Our final theme of child development is the role played by the combination of risk and resilience in children's development. As we grow and mature, we encounter a variety of risks that may alter our developmental trajectories for better or for worse. Such risks or challenges may alter a child's course of development from a normal to a non-normal course or from a non-normal to a normal one. And risk comes in many forms. Some risks are genetic or biological, for example, a serious illness, or having to live with a psychotic parent. Other risks are demographic, such as family income, education, or membership in a minority group. Other risks include divorce, the death or remarriage of a parent, physical accidents, multiple shifts in home or caregivers, and institutionalization or repeated hospitalization.

Individual children respond to such risks in very different ways. Many seem to suffer permanent developmental disruptions or delays. Others show "sleepers" effects; they seem to cope well initially but exhibit problems later in development. Still others, however, exhibit resilience even under the most difficult circumstances, and some not only are able to cope with risk but actually seem to be enhanced by it. Moreover, when they confront new risks later in life, these children seem better able to adapt to challenges than those who have experienced little or no risk; in a kind of inoculation effect, they appear to have learned from their experiences (Hetherington, 1991b; Rutter, 1987; Rutter & Rutter, 1993).

Researchers who have studied resilient individuals have identified three primary types of protective factors, or personal attributes and environmental conditions, that appear to buffer the child—and later, the adult—from the effects of risk and stress and to promote coping and good adjustment in the face of adversity. The first set of factors consists of positive individual attributes. Children who have easy temperaments and high self-esteem and who are intelligent, independent, and have better problem-solving skills are more adaptable in the face of stressful life experiences (Dumont & Provost, 1999; Hetherington, 1991b; Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1988). Girls and women seem to have a slight edge on resiliency in

comparison with boys and men. The second set of protective factors is found combined in a supportive family environment. For example, the presence of one warm supportive parent can help buffer the adverse effects of poverty, divorce, family discord, and child abuse (Luthar & Zigler, 1991). The final set of factors comprises people outside the family as well as societal agencies and institutions: for example, the school system, peer groups, and churches that support both children's and parents' coping efforts. The effects of these protective factors are not automatic, that is, it is only the individuals who actually make use of such potentially supportive resources who benefit from them.

Studies of risk and resilience show clearly that contrary to what traditional theories often proposed, development does not proceed along a single, common pathway. Contemporary viewpoints stress that as they develop, individual children often follow very diverse pathways. Differences in the types and the timing of experiences have profound influences on a child's course of development. A child who experiences serious health problems, fails a grade, reaches puberty early, and drops out of high school will have a radically different developmental pathway from the one traversed by the child who encounters, say, parental divorce and frequent changes in residence but no academic failure. At the same time, we know that children whose pathways are difficult may still mature into well-adjusted adults. Throughout our exploration of children's development, we will continually encounter both risk and protective factors, and by tracing how individual children, at different points in their development, respond to these challenges, we can increase our understanding of the process of development.

FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Are the various developmental themes we have discussed independent of one another, or are they inter-related in some fashion? For example, if you assume that the child plays an active role in his or her development, does this assumption have implications for continuity versus discontinuity or the importance of situation versus individual characteristics, and so on?
2. Are the different themes of development of equal significance? If not, why might some themes be more important than others?
3. What is the best characterization of these themes —as opposing positions (i.e., one versus the other), or as end points on a continuum? To put it differently, is it possible to come up with positions between the strong statements of either view, and if so, what might be some of the implications of these "middle-ground" positions?

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT

Theories about the way children grow and mature play a central part in the scientific process of understanding children's development. Theories serve two main functions. First, they help organize and integrate existing information into coherent and interesting accounts of how children develop. Second, they lead to testable hypotheses or predictions about children's behaviour. No theory is able to account for all aspects of human development, and as you will see, many of the theories we discuss try to explain and predict a limited area of behaviour. For example, the behavioural and cognitive social learning theories we discuss first have focused particularly on learning and on social and emotional behaviour; the perspectives of Piaget, Vygotsky, and those who study information processing tend to emphasize cognition, language, and social interaction; the theories advanced by Freud and Erikson place much more emphasis on emotional development and psychopathology. Systems theory perspectives tend to be rather eclectic, as is the life span perspective, which carries the concept of development beyond adolescence into adulthood. Ethological theory, too, endeavours to encompass all areas of behaviour, especially the biological and social aspects of development.