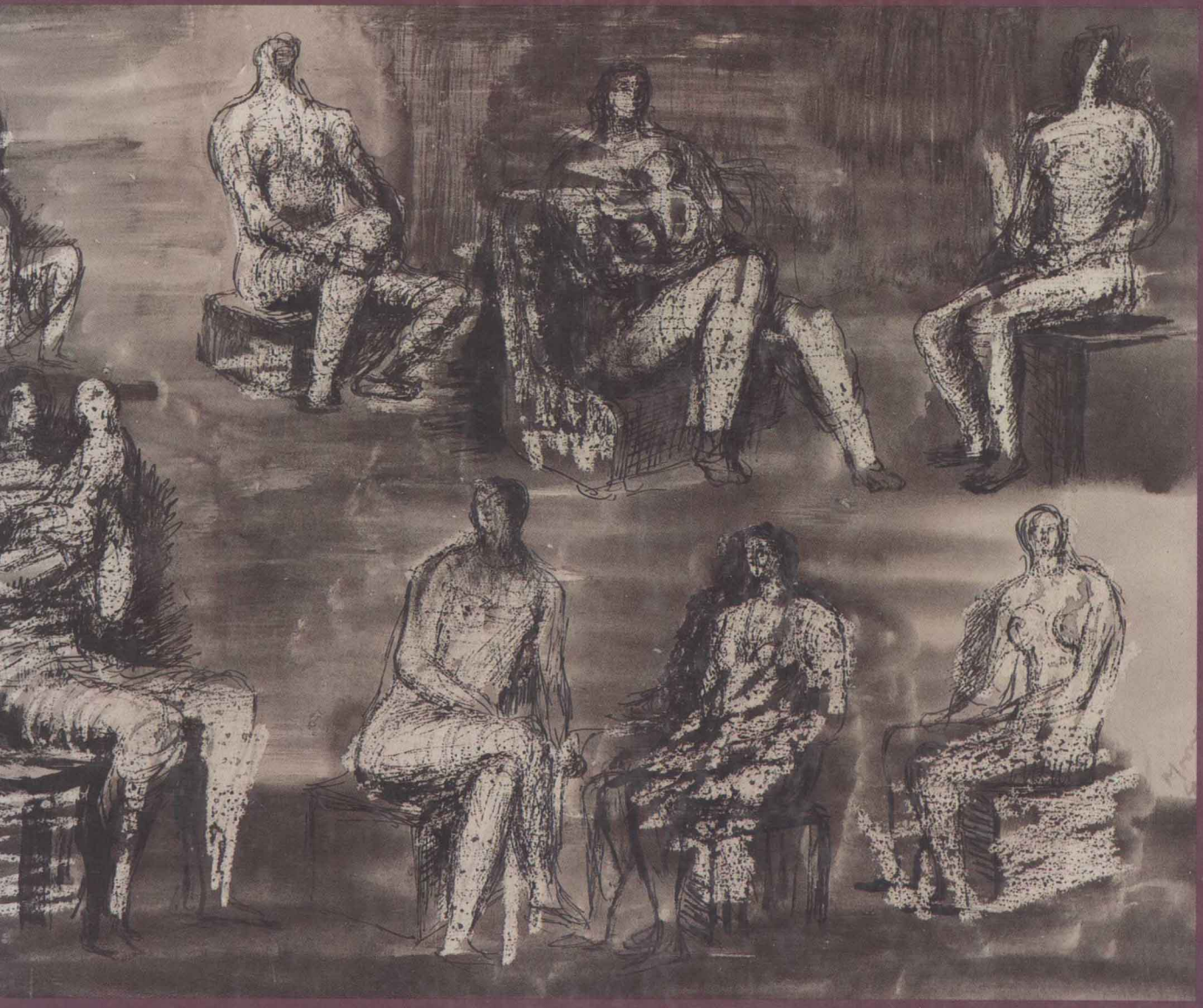
LIFE-SPAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



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LIFE-SPAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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LIFE-SPAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Our purpose in writing this overview of life-span human development has been to create the book that we would most want our students to read—one that piques and satisfies their curiosity about how and why human beings change (and remain the same) from their beginnings as fertilized eggs to their last years of life, and one that shares the best theories, research, and practical advice that developmentalists have to offer. We want our students to understand that human development is an incredibly complex process that grows out of the interactions between a changing person and a changing world and that continues throughout the entire life span. We want them to appreciate how major theories of human development guide researchers but can also help anyone analyze the "real-life" issues that developing persons face. And we would like them to appreciate that the best advice about such matters as raising children, working with troubled adolescents, and aiding nursing home residents is based on research reports rather than on armchair speculation.

Guided by these goals, we have written a text that delves into important theoretical issues and incorporates the best of both classic and contemporary research from the several disciplines concerned with understanding developmental processes. But we also recognize that solid scholarship is of little benefit to students unless they want to read it and can understand it. Fortunately, our own excitement about human development has made it easy for us to bring our subject to life. We have done all that we can to write in a straightforward and informal manner, to clarify concepts through concrete examples or analogies, to amuse, to provoke thought, and to point out the relevance of material to students' lives and to the work of teachers, psychologists, nurses, day-care workers, and other human service professionals. In short, we have aimed for a book that is both rigorous and readable, both scholarly and practical.

Our Topical/Chronological Approach

The large majority of life-span development textbooks adopt a chronological or "age/stage" approach, carving the life span into age ranges and describing the prominent characteristics of individuals within each age range. By contrast, we use a topical approach blended with a chronological approach within topics. We focus on domains of development such as physical growth, cognition, and personality as we trace developmental trends in each domain from infancy to old age.

Why have we bucked the tide? Like many other instructors, we have typically favored topically organized textbooks when teaching child, adolescent, or adult development courses. As a result, it seemed only natural to use that same topical approach in introducing students to the whole life span. More important, a topical organization allows us to convey more effectively the flow of development—the systematic, and often truly dramatic, *transformations* that take place in the course of human life, as well as the *continuities* in development that make each individual a reflection of his or her past self. The topical approach also lends itself to a strong emphasis on developmental processes, so that students come away with a firm grasp of how nature and nurture contribute over time to normal developmental changes, as well as to differences among individuals.

Finally, a predominantly topical approach facilitates adopting a *life-span perspective* on human development. Happenings within any one period of the life span can be viewed from the vantage point of what comes before and what is yet to come. In chronologically organized textbooks, many topics are discussed only in connection with the age group to which they seem most relevant—for example, attachment in relation to infancy, play in relation to the preschool years, or sexuality in relation to adolescence and adulthood. As we have pursued our goal of writing a topical life-span text, we have repeatedly found our-

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selves grappling with intriguing questions that we might otherwise not even have asked. Consider the topic of attachment: Could what we know about infants' attachments to their parents also be useful in analyzing the attachments that children form to their best friends or that adults form to their romantic partners? Do securely attached infants later have a greater capacity to form and sustain friendships or romantic partnerships than infants whose early social experiences are less favorable? What are the consequences at different points in the life span of lacking someone to whom one is closely attached? Attachments are important throughout the life span, and we try to make that clear. Similarly, we have found it fascinating and instructive to ask how the young child's capacity for play is channeled later in life, or how mature sexuality evolves from the sexual curiosity evident even during infancy.

In short, we have adopted a topical approach because we consider it the best way to introduce the how and why of human development. However, we also appreciate the strengths of the chronological approach, particularly its ability to portray "the whole person" in each period of the life span. For this reason, we have integrated the age/stage approach within our topical organization—to have the best of both worlds.

Each topical chapter contains major sections on infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. The very existence of these sections is proof that we have indeed traced development in each of the domains we cover across the *whole* life span, although we do, of course, vary our emphasis on each period of the life span depending on its significance for the domain of development under consideration. These age/stage sections aid students in appreciating the distinctive qualities of each phase of life and make it easier for them to find material on any age period of particular interest to them. Moreover, they allow instructors who wish to move further in the direction of an age/stage approach to cover infancy, childhood, and adolescence in the first portion of the course and save all the material on adulthood for the end of the course.

To further emphasize the interrelatedness of developments within each age range, we have written a concluding chapter that summarizes major developments in each of seven periods of the life span, as well as broad themes in life-span development. This chapter serves as a handy reference for students who want to consolidate what they have learned so far or to strengthen their grasp of the "big picture." Finally, we have seized every opportunity along the way to highlight the intimate interrelationships among physical, cognitive, personal, and social development.

Organization of the Text

The book begins by orienting students to the scientific study of life-span development (Chapter 1) and to the central issues and theoretical perspectives that have dominated the field (Chapter 2). It then explores developmental processes in some depth, discussing genetic influences (Chapter 3) and environmental influences (Chapter 4) on development from a life-span perspective, showing how genes contribute to maturational changes and individual differences throughout the life span and how people are also the products of a prenatal environment and of postnatal experiences that vary as a function of age, culture, and historical period.

Chapters on the growth and aging of body and nervous system (Chapter 5) and on the development of sensory and perceptual capacities (Chapter 6) launch our examination of the development of basic human capacities. Chapter 7 introduces the Piagetian perspective on cognitive development and describes the development of language in relation to the development of thought; Chapter 8 views learning, memory, and problem solving from an information-processing perspective; and Chapter 9 explores the psychometric approach to cognition, delving into individual differences in intelligence and creativity.

The next three chapters concern the development of the self—changes in self-conceptions and personality (Chapter 10), in gender roles and sexuality (Chapter 11), and in personal priorities as they are reflected in motives and moral standards (Chapter 12). The self is set more squarely in a social context as we trace life-span changes in relationships and social competencies (Chapter 13), in roles and relationships within the family (Chapter 14), and in lifestyles as they are expressed in play, school, and work activities (Chapter 15). Finally, we offer a life-span perspective on developmental problems and disorders (Chapter 16), examine why people die and how they cope with death (Chapter 17), and highlight key trends and issues in life-span development (Chapter 18).

Chapter Organization

To ease the student's task, each chapter has been written in a standard format (with some deviations, we confess, in the first two chapters and the last) and contains, in this order:

A chapter outline that orients students to what lies ahead.

Introductory material that stimulates interest, lays out the plan for the chapter, and introduces key concepts, theories, and issues relevant to the area of development to be explored.

Four developmental sections that describe key changes and continuities, as well as the mechanisms underlying them, during four developmental periods—infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

Applications, an examination of how knowledge has been applied to optimize development in the domain of development at issue. "Applications" sections deal with such topics as genetic counseling; recent innovations in care for premature babies; and programs designed to improve intellectual functioning, self-esteem, moral reasoning, social skills, and family functioning at different ages.

Reflections, a section in which we make some concluding observations and challenge students to step back from the material, appreciate its broader significance, or think about a chapter's themes in new ways. The "Reflections" sections help students see the larger picture—and contemplate the view.

Summary points that succinctly overview the chapter's main themes to aid students in reviewing the material.

Key terms, a list of the new terms introduced in the chapter. The terms are printed in boldface, defined when they are first presented in a chapter, and included in the glossary at the end of the book.

In addition, each chapter is sprinkled with photographs, tables, and figures. Although some of these are intended to stimulate interest or to entertain, they have a serious educational purpose as well: summarizing stage theories, presenting revealing research data, or illustrating concepts discussed in the chapter.

Similarly, the "boxes" in each chapter are integral parts of the text. They offer a closer look at selected topics, among them ways of combatting an infant's fear of strangers in the doctor's office, the effects of children on their parents, misconceptions about hyperactivity, the advantages and disadvantages of working part time during adolescence, cultural differences in the experience of menopause, problems facing middle-aged people who must care for their ailing parents, and interventions to increase the well-being of nursing home residents.

Finally, a word on referencing. Each chapter cites the authors and dates of publication for a large number of books and articles, which are fully referenced in the chapter-by-chapter bibliographies at the end of the book. Although some students may find these citations distracting, they are included for good reasons: because we *are* committed to the value of systematic research, because we believe in giving proper credit where credit is due, and because we want students to have the resources they need for pursuing their interests in human development.

Supplementary Aids

For the instructor, there is an instructor's manual that contains chapter outlines, learning objectives, and suggestions for class discussion, projects, films, videos, and additional readings. The test bank offers at least 60 multiple-choice and 10 true-or-false items for each chapter. The student study guide is designed to promote active learning by a guided review of the important principles and concepts in the text. The study materials for each chapter also include a comprehensive multiple-choice self-test and a number of "applications" exercises that challenge students to think about and to apply what they have learned.

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Finally, we thank our families for all that they have contributed to our development and to our understanding of development. There is simply no way to thank Lee Sigelman enough for enduring a preoccupied spouse and a precipitous decline in the quality of his life without filing for divorce.

Carol K. Sigelman
David R. Shaffer

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