

Child Development

Growing up is universal. Every culture distinguishes children from adults, and children across all cultures share developmental experiences. But a child's journey from conception to adulthood is guided by the culture or cultures in which the child grows up. How and when a child reaches adulthood varies widely across the world. Children in some cultures take on extensive work and household responsibilities at a young age, while in other cultures, these responsibilities and the sense of being an adult come only by the 20s. *Child Development: A Cultural Approach* highlights cultural diversity within and across nations.

Chapters 1 & 2 introduce today's signs of child development -- the different theories, questions, and methods that researchers rely on to gain knowledge of children's development and to help improve their lives. The chapters also introduce today's global human population and trace the history of how humans evolved to be a singularly cultural species—able to adapt to life in almost any part of the world. They show how a human child is born at a less mature stage of development than any other species. Humans are influenced by genetics, but our immaturity at birth means that brain maturation and early learning takes place within cultural environments, making us a uniquely adaptable species

But that early immaturity also makes us vulnerable. A child is most vulnerable during prenatal development, birth, and the first month of life, illustrated in chapters 3 and 4. Prenatal and postnatal care for mother and baby improve the likelihood that all will go well.

Chapter 5 looks at infancy that amazing first year when we go from bursting into the world to beginning to walk talk and love.

Toddlerhood, the second and third years of life, is covered in chapter 6. New synapses in the brain are produced at the astonishing rate of 2 million per second, and we become fluent speakers of our native language as the social world expands to include friends and peers.

Chapter 7 examines early childhood when children in many countries enter a school setting for the first time and gain a firm understanding of their cultures moral standards.

Middle childhood is the happiest and most carefree time of life for most children as chapter 8 shows. But it is also a time when children in some countries must go to work to help their struggling families.

Chapters 9 and 10 focus on early and late adolescence. The dramatic changes in the body, as sexual maturity is reached, along with heightened awareness of sexual and gender identity. it is also a time when media use fills a large part of daily life.

Emerging adulthood, from age 18 to 25, is explored in chapter 11. It's the new stage of life in economically developed countries when young people are still gaining experience in education, work, and relationships before making the enduring choices in love and work that will structure all of their adult lives.

Chapter 12 looks to the future of child development, predicting rises in intelligence, multilingualism, and individualistic values, as well as changing gender norms.

All of us share a common child development experience. No one can walk or talk in the early months of life. Everyone experiences puberty and reaches physical and sexual maturity in the second decade of life. But the

culture in which we are raised also influences everything about us; from who lives in the household during childhood, to how much education we receive, to the gender expectations that shape us.

Child Development: A Cultural Approach, delivers a deeper understanding of children's developmental journeys and a richer understanding of ourselves.