Chapter 1 Outline

The Study of Child Development: Then and Now
- **Child development**: Scientific study of processes of change and stability from conception through adolescence.
- **Stability**: Consistent behaviors or characteristics that persist across time and situations.

A. Early Approaches
- *Baby biographies*: journals kept to record the early development of a single child.
- *Charles Darwin*

B. Developmental Psychology Becomes a Science
- *G. Stanley Hall*: A pioneer in child study, published a popular book called *Adolescence*.

C. Studying the Life Span
- *Human development*: Today, the study of child development is part of the broader study of human development, which covers the entire life span from conception to death.

D. New Frontiers
- *Basic research*: The kind of research undertaken purely in a spirit of intellectual inquiry.
- *Applied research*: This type of research addresses a practical problem.

II. The Study of Child Development: Basic Concepts

A. Domains of Development
- *Physical development*: Growth of the body and brain, sensory capacities, motor skills, and health are all part of physical development and may influence other aspects of development.
- *Cognitive development*: Change and stability in mental abilities, such as learning, memory, language, thinking, moral reasoning, and creativity constitute cognitive development.
- *Psychosocial development*: Change and stability in personality, emotional life, and social relationships together constitute psychosocial development.

B. Periods of Development
- *Social construction*: Concept about the nature of reality, based on shared perceptions or assumptions.

III. Influences on Development
• **Individual differences**: Differences among children in characteristics, influences, or developmental outcomes.

A. **Heredity, Environment, and Maturation**
   - **Heredity**: Inborn influences or traits inherited from biological parents.
   - **Environment**: Totality of nonhereditary or experiential influences on development.
   - **Maturation**: Unfolding of a natural sequence of physical and behavioral changes, including readiness to master new abilities.
   - **Inherited characteristics**: Innate characteristics that give each person a special start in life.
   - **Environmental factors**: Include family, neighborhood, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and culture.

B. **Contexts of Development**
   1. **Family**
      - **Nuclear family**: Two-generational kinship, economic, and household unit consisting of one or two parents and their biological children, adopted children, or stepchildren.
      - **Extended family**: Multigenerational kinship network of parents, children, and other relatives. Many or most people who are part of an extended family live in *extended-family households*, where they have daily contact with kin.
   2. **Socioeconomic Status and Neighborhood**
      - **Socioeconomic status (SES)**: Combination of economic and social factors describing an individual or family, including income, education, and occupation.
      - **Risk factors**: Conditions that increase the likelihood of a negative developmental outcome.
   3. **Culture and Race/Ethnicity**
      - **Culture**: A society’s or group’s total way of life, including customs, traditions, beliefs, values, language, and physical products—all learned behavior passed on from parents to children.
      - **Ethnic group**: Group united by ancestry, race, religion, language, and/or national origins, all of which contribute to a sense of shared identity.
      - **Ethnic gloss**: Overgeneralization about an ethnic or cultural group that obscures differences within the group.
   4. **The Historical Context**
      - Children of Immigrant families often have different contextual backgrounds
      - Examples of these differences are described in the text-box on page 13.

C. **Normative and Nonnormative Influences**
   - **Normative**: Characteristic of an event that is experienced in a similar way for most people in a group.
- **Normative age-graded influences**: Highly similar for people of a particular age group.
- **Normative history-graded influences**: Common to a particular cohort.
- **Historical generation**: Group of people strongly influenced by a major historical event during their formative period.
- **Cohort**: Group of people born at about the same time.
- **Nonnormative**: Characteristic of an unusual event that has an impact on a particular person or a typical event that happens at an unusual time of life.

D. **Timing of influences: Critical or Sensitive Periods**
- **Imprinting**: Instinctive form of learning in which, during a critical period in early development, a young animal forms an attachment to the first moving object it sees, usually the mother.
- **Critical periods**: Specific time when a given event, or its absence, has the greatest impact on development.
- **Plasticity**: Modifiability of performance.
- **Sensitive periods**: Times in development when a child is particular responsive to certain kinds of experiences.

IV. **An Emerging Consensus**
- **All domains of development are interrelated.**
- **Normal development includes a wide range of individual differences.**
- **Children help shape their own development and influence others’ responses to them.**
- **Historical and cultural contexts strongly influence development.**
- **Early experience is important, but children can be remarkably resilient.**
- **Development in childhood is connected to development throughout the rest of the life span.**