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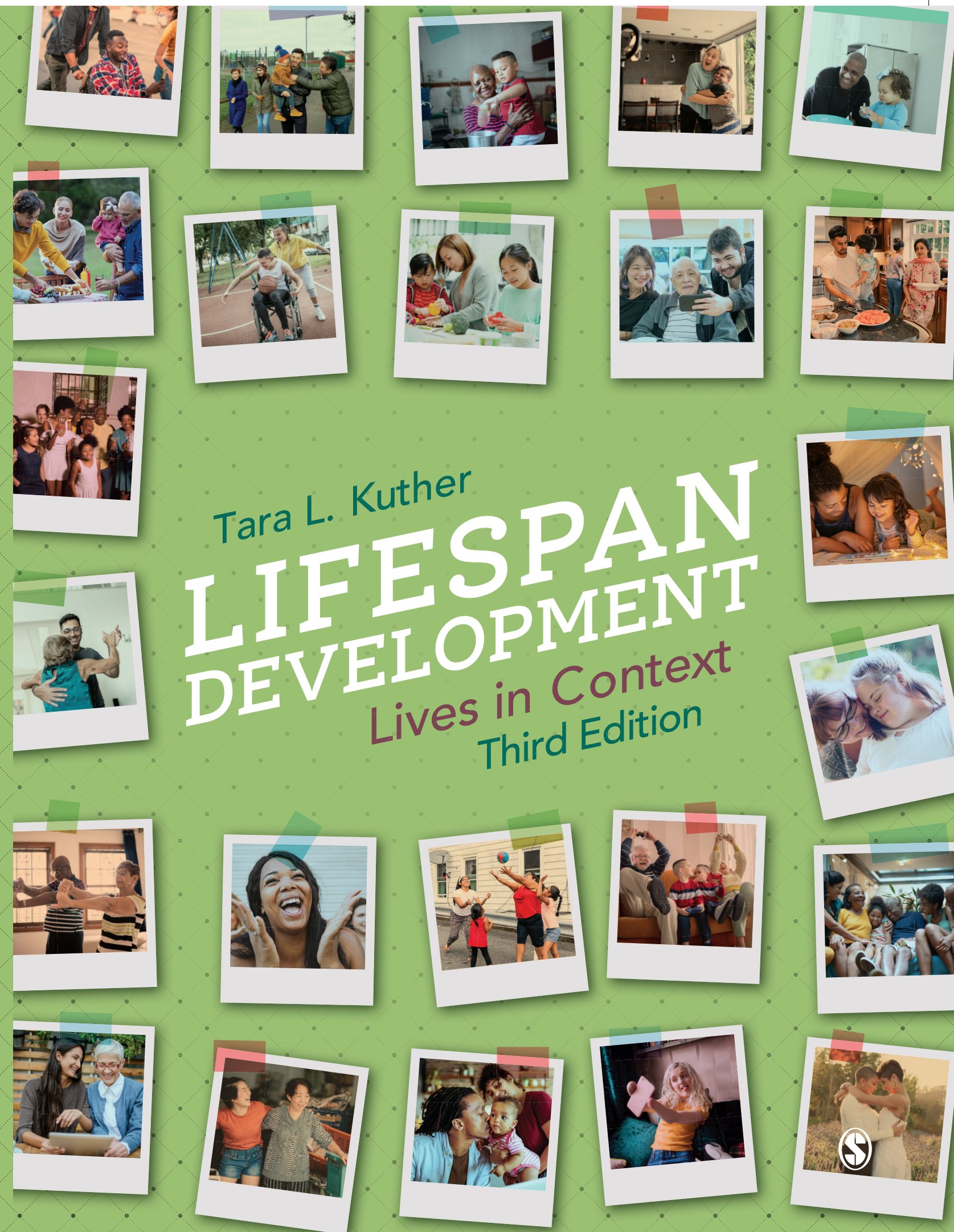
LIFESPAN DEVELOPMENT

Third
Edition

Tara L. Kuther

LIFESPAN DEVELOPMENT

Lives in Context
Third Edition



Lifespan Development

Third Edition

To my parents, Philip and Irene Kuther

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BRIEF CONTENTS

Preface	xxix
Acknowledgments	xxxix
About the Author	xliii

PART I FOUNDATIONS OF LIFESPAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Chapter 1	Understanding Human Development: Approaches and Theories	1
Chapter 2	Biological and Environmental Foundations of Development	43
Chapter 3	The Prenatal Period, Birth, and the Newborn	77

PART II INFANCY AND TODDLERHOOD

Chapter 4	Physical Development in Infancy and Toddlerhood	115
Chapter 5	Cognitive Development in Infancy and Toddlerhood	153
Chapter 6	Socioemotional Development in Infancy and Toddlerhood	191

PART III EARLY CHILDHOOD

Chapter 7	Physical and Cognitive Development in Early Childhood	223
Chapter 8	Socioemotional Development in Early Childhood	259

PART IV MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

Chapter 9	Physical and Cognitive Development in Middle Childhood	297
Chapter 10	Socioemotional Development in Middle Childhood	331

PART V ADOLESCENCE

Chapter 11	Physical and Cognitive Development in Adolescence	371
Chapter 12	Socioemotional Development in Adolescence	405

PART VI EMERGING AND EARLY ADULTHOOD

Chapter 13	Physical and Cognitive Development in Emerging and Early Adulthood	447
Chapter 14	Socioemotional Development in Emerging and Early Adulthood	477

PART VII MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

Chapter 15	Physical and Cognitive Development in Middle Adulthood	517
Chapter 16	Socioemotional Development in Middle Adulthood	549

PART VIII LATE ADULthood

Chapter 17 Physical and Cognitive Development in Late Adulthood	581
Chapter 18 Socioemotional Development in Late Adulthood	615

PART IX ENDINGS

Chapter 19 Death and Dying	641
Glossary	673
References	689
Name Index	927
Subject Index	977

DETAILED CONTENTS

Preface	xxix
Acknowledgments	xxxix
About the Author	xliii
PART I FOUNDATIONS OF LIFESPAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT	
Chapter 1 Understanding Human Development: Approaches and Theories	1
What Is Lifespan Human Development?	1
Development Is Multidimensional	3
Development Is Multidirectional	3
Development Is Plastic	4
Development Is Influenced by Multiple Contexts	4
<i>Sociohistorical Context</i>	5
<i>Cultural Context</i>	6
Developmental Science Is Multidisciplinary	7
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	7
Basic Issues in Lifespan Human Development	8
Development Is Characterized by Continuous and Discontinuous Change	8
Individuals Are Active in Development	9
Nature and Nurture Influence Development	10
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	10
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	10
Theoretical Perspectives on Human Development	11
Psychoanalytic Theories	11
<i>Freud's Psychosexual Theory</i>	11
<i>Erikson's Psychosocial Theory</i>	12
Behaviorist and Social Learning Theories	12
<i>Classical Conditioning</i>	14
<i>Operant Conditioning</i>	15
<i>Social Learning Theory</i>	16
Cognitive Theories	17
<i>Piaget's Cognitive-Developmental Theory</i>	17
<i>Information Processing Theory</i>	18
Contextual Theories	19
<i>Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory</i>	19
<i>Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory</i>	19
<i>Dynamic Systems Theory</i>	22
Ethology and Evolutionary Developmental Theory	22
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	25
Research in Human Development	25
The Scientific Method	25
Methods of Data Collection	26
<i>Observational Measures</i>	26
<i>Self-Report Measures</i>	27
<i>Physiological Measures</i>	28
Research Designs	30
<i>Case Study</i>	30

<i>Correlational Research</i>	30
<i>Experimental Research</i>	31
Developmental Research Designs	32
<i>Cross-Sectional Research Design</i>	32
<i>Longitudinal Research Design</i>	32
<i>Sequential Research Designs</i>	33
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	33
Research Ethics	34
Principles of Research Ethics	34
Ethical Issues in Studying Lifespan Human Development	35
<i>Informed Consent</i>	35
<i>Confidentiality</i>	36
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	37
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	37
Applied Developmental Science and Intersectionality	38
Applied Developmental Science	38
Intersectionality and Development	38
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	40
Apply Your Knowledge	40
Chapter Summary	40
Key Terms	42
Chapter 2 Biological and Environmental Foundations of Development	43
Genetic Foundations of Development	43
Genetics	44
<i>Cell Reproduction</i>	44
<i>Sex Determination</i>	44
<i>Genes Shared by Twins</i>	44
Patterns of Genetic Inheritance	46
<i>Dominant-Recessive Inheritance</i>	46
<i>Incomplete Dominance</i>	47
<i>Polygenic Inheritance</i>	48
<i>Genomic Imprinting</i>	48
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	49
Chromosomal and Genetic Problems	50
Genetic Disorders	50
<i>Dominant-Recessive Disorders</i>	50
<i>X-Linked Disorders</i>	51
Chromosomal Abnormalities	52
Mutation	54
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	54
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	55
Reproductive Choices: Genetic Counseling Assisted Reproductive Technology	55
Genetic Counseling	55
Assisted Reproductive Technology	56
<i>Artificial Insemination</i>	56
<i>In Vitro Fertilization</i>	56
<i>Surrogacy</i>	57
Assisted Reproductive Technology and Sex Selection	57
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	58
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	58
Reproductive Choices: Adoption	58
Adoption and Child Outcomes	59
Transracial Adoption	59

International Adoption	60
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	61
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	61
Prenatal Diagnosis	61
Methods of Prenatal Diagnosis	61
Prenatal Treatment of Genetic Disorders	64
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	64
Heredity and Environment: Behavior Genetics	64
Methods of Behavior Genetics	64
Genetic Influences on Personal Characteristics	65
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	66
Gene–Environment Interactions	66
Range of Reaction	66
Canalization	67
Gene–Environment Correlations	68
Gene–Environment (G x E) Interactions	69
Epigenetic Framework	70
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	72
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	72
Apply Your Knowledge	73
Chapter Summary	73
Key Terms	75
Chapter 3 The Prenatal Period, Birth, and the Newborn	77
Prenatal Development	77
Conception	78
Germinal Period (0 to 2 Weeks)	79
Embryonic Period (3 to 8 Weeks)	79
Fetal Period (9 Weeks to Birth)	81
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	81
Environmental Influences on Prenatal Development	82
Principles of Teratology	82
<i>Critical Periods</i>	82
<i>Dose</i>	82
<i>Individual Differences</i>	82
<i>Complicated Effects</i>	83
Types of Teratogens	83
<i>Prescription and Nonprescription Drugs</i>	83
<i>Alcohol</i>	84
<i>Cigarette Smoking and E-Cigarette Use</i>	85
<i>Marijuana</i>	86
<i>Cocaine</i>	86
<i>Opioids</i>	87
<i>Maternal Illness</i>	87
<i>Environmental Hazards</i>	88
Contextual Factors and Teratogens	89
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	90
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	90
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	90
Maternal and Paternal Characteristics and Prenatal Development	91
Maternal Characteristics	91
<i>Nutrition</i>	91
<i>Emotional Well-Being</i>	92
<i>Maternal Age</i>	93

Paternal Characteristics	94
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	94
Contextual and Cultural Influences on Prenatal Care	94
Barriers to Prenatal Care	95
Race, Ethnicity, and Prenatal Care	95
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	97
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	98
Childbirth	98
Labor	98
Medication During Delivery	98
Cesarean Delivery	99
Natural Childbirth	99
Home Birth	100
Cultural Differences in Childbirth	100
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	101
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	101
Low-Birthweight Infants: Preterm and Small-for-Date Babies	102
Contextual Risks for LBW	102
Characteristics of LBW Infants	102
Promoting Positive Outcomes of LBW Infants	104
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	104
The Newborn	105
Medical and Behavioral Assessment of Newborns	105
The Newborn's Perceptual Capacities	106
Newborn States of Arousal	106
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	107
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	107
Apply Your Knowledge	107
Chapter Summary	108
Key Terms	110
Lifespan Development at Work Part 1: Foundations of Lifespan Human Development	110
Careers in Genetics and Prenatal Development	113

PART II INFANCY AND TODDLERHOOD

Chapter 4 Physical Development in Infancy and Toddlerhood 115

Body Growth During Infancy and Toddlerhood	115
Growth Trends	116
Patterns of Growth	116
Nutrition and Growth	117
<i>Breastfeeding</i>	117
<i>Complementary Food</i>	119
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	119
Threats to Infant Health	119
Infant Mortality	120
Malnutrition	120
Growth Faltering	122
Failure to Vaccinate	123
Sudden Infant Death Syndrome	124
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	126
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	126
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	126
Brain Development During Infancy and Toddlerhood	126
The Neuron	126

Processes of Neural Development	127
The Cerebral Cortex	129
Experience and Brain Development	129
Sleep and Brain Development	130
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	131
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	131
Early Learning Capacities	132
Habituation	132
Classical Conditioning	133
Operant Conditioning	134
Imitation	134
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	135
Sensation and Perception During Infancy and Toddlerhood	135
Methods for Studying Infant Perception	136
Vision	137
<i>Face Perception</i>	137
<i>Object Exploration</i>	137
<i>Color Vision</i>	137
<i>Depth Perception</i>	138
Hearing	139
Touch	139
Smell and Taste	141
Intermodal Perception	141
Infant–Context Interactions and Perceptual Development	142
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	143
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	143
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	143
Motor Development During Infancy and Toddlerhood	143
Gross Motor Development	144
Fine Motor Development	145
Biological and Contextual Determinants of Motor Development	146
<i>Biological Influences on Motor Development</i>	146
<i>Contextual Influences on Motor Development</i>	146
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	150
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	150
Apply Your Knowledge	150
Chapter Summary	150
Key Terms	151
Chapter 5 Cognitive Development in Infancy and Toddlerhood	153
Piaget’s Cognitive-Developmental Theory: Sensorimotor Reasoning	153
Processes of Development	154
Sensorimotor Substages	155
<i>Substage 1: Reflexes (Birth to 1 Month)</i>	155
<i>Substage 2: Primary Circular Reactions (1 to 4 Months)</i>	155
<i>Substage 3: Secondary Circular Reactions (4 to 8 Months)</i>	156
<i>Substage 4: Coordination of Secondary Circular Reactions (8 to 12 Months)</i>	156
<i>Substage 5: Tertiary Circular Reactions (12 to 18 Months)</i>	157
<i>Substage 6: Mental Representation (18 to 24 Months)</i>	158
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	159
Evaluating Sensorimotor Reasoning	159
Methods for Studying Object Permanence	159
<i>Violation-of-Expectation Tasks</i>	159
<i>A-Not-B Tasks</i>	161
<i>Deferred Imitation Tasks</i>	161

Core Knowledge Theory	162
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	163
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	163
Information Processing Theory	163
Information Processing System	164
Attention	165
Memory	166
<i>Working Memory</i>	166
<i>Long-Term Memory</i>	166
Infants' Thinking	168
Culture and Cognitive Development	169
<i>New Contexts for Learning: Screens and Digital Media</i>	170
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	171
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	171
Individual Differences in Cognitive Abilities	172
Testing Infant Intelligence	172
Information Processing as Intelligence	173
Child Care and Cognitive Development	173
Poverty and Cognitive Development	174
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	176
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	176
Language Development in Infancy and Toddlerhood	176
Early Preferences for Speech Sounds	177
Prelinguistic Communication	177
Putting Words Together	178
<i>First Words</i>	178
<i>Learning Words: Semantic Growth</i>	179
<i>Two-Word Utterances</i>	180
Infant Gesture and Sign Language	181
Language Development in Bilingual Infants	182
Language Development in Deaf Infants	182
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	183
Influences on Language Development: Interactionist Perspective	183
Nativism	183
Evolution and Brain Development	184
Social Learning	185
Infant-Directed Speech	185
Cultural Differences in Infant-Directed Speech	186
Parental Responsiveness	187
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	188
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	188
Apply Your Knowledge	188
Chapter Summary	188
Key Terms	189
Chapter 6 Socioemotional Development in Infancy and Toddlerhood	191
Psychosocial Development in Infancy and Toddlerhood	191
Trust Versus Mistrust	192
Autonomy Versus Shame and Doubt	192
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	193
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	193
Emotional Development in Infancy and Toddlerhood	193
Infants' Emotional Experience	193
<i>Basic Emotions</i>	194
<i>Self-Conscious Emotions</i>	195

Emotion Regulation	195
Social Interaction and Emotional Development	196
<i>Sensitive Caregiving</i>	196
<i>Parent–Infant Interaction</i>	196
<i>Social Referencing</i>	197
<i>Exposure to Early Life Stress</i>	198
Cultural Influences on Emotional Development	198
<i>Caregiver Responsiveness</i>	198
<i>Emotional Socialization</i>	199
<i>Stranger Wariness</i>	200
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	201
Temperament in Infancy and Toddlerhood	201
Styles of Temperament	201
Context and Goodness of Fit	203
Cultural Differences in Temperament	204
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	205
Attachment in Infancy and Toddlerhood	206
Bowlby’s Ethological Theory of Attachment	207
<i>Infants’ Signals and Adults’ Responses</i>	207
<i>Phases of Attachment</i>	207
<i>Secure Base, Separation Anxiety, and Internal Working Models</i>	208
Ainsworth’s Strange Situation	208
Influences on Attachment	210
<i>Maternal Depression and Attachment</i>	211
<i>Father–Infant Attachment</i>	212
Stability of Attachment	212
Cultural Variations in Attachment Classifications	213
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	215
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	215
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	215
The Self in Infancy and Toddlerhood	215
Self-Awareness	216
Self-Recognition	216
Emerging Self-Concept	217
Self-Control	217
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	218
Apply Your Knowledge	219
Chapter Summary	219
Key Terms	220
Lifespan Development at Work Part 2: Infancy and Toddlerhood	221

PART III EARLY CHILDHOOD

Chapter 7 Physical and Cognitive Development in Early Childhood 223

Growth and Motor Development in Early Childhood	223
Body Growth	224
Motor Development	224
<i>Gross Motor Skills</i>	224
<i>Fine Motor Skills</i>	225
Brain Development	227
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	228
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	228
Health and Threats to Health in Early Childhood	228
Nutrition and Eating Habits	228
Physical Activity	230

Sleep	230
Screen Use	231
Illness and Toxins	232
Unintentional Injuries	233
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	234
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	234
Cognitive-Developmental and Sociocultural Reasoning in Early Childhood	234
Piaget's Cognitive-Developmental Perspective: Preoperational Reasoning	234
<i>Characteristics of Preoperational Reasoning</i>	235
<i>Evaluating Preoperational Reasoning</i>	236
Vygotsky's Sociocultural Perspective	238
<i>Guided Participation and Scaffolding</i>	238
<i>Zone of Proximal Development</i>	239
<i>Private Speech</i>	240
<i>Evaluating Vygotsky's Sociocultural Perspective</i>	241
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	241
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	241
Information Processing in Early Childhood	241
Attention	242
Working Memory and Executive Function	242
Memory	242
<i>Memory Strategies</i>	243
<i>Autobiographical Memory</i>	243
<i>Memory Suggestibility</i>	244
Theory of Mind	245
<i>False Belief</i>	245
<i>Context, Culture, and Theory of Mind</i>	246
<i>Metacognition</i>	247
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	248
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	248
Young Children's Language Development	248
Vocabulary	249
Grammar	250
Bilingual Language Learning	250
Context and Language Development	251
<i>Socioeconomic Status and Language Development</i>	251
<i>Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Language Development</i>	252
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	252
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	252
Early Childhood Education	253
Child-Centered and Academically Centered Preschool Programs	253
Early Childhood Education Interventions	254
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	256
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	256
Apply Your Knowledge	256
Chapter Summary	256
Key Terms	257
Chapter 8 Socioemotional Development in Early Childhood	259
Emerging Sense of Self	259
Psychosocial Development in Early Childhood	260
Self-Concept	260
Self-Esteem	261
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	261

Emotional Development in Early Childhood	262
Emotional Understanding	262
Emotion Regulation	263
Empathy	263
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	263
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	264
Moral Development and Behavior in Early Childhood	264
Theories of Moral Reasoning and Behavior	264
<i>Social Learning Theory</i>	264
<i>Cognitive-Developmental Theory</i>	265
<i>Children's Conceptions of Moral, Social, and Personal Issues</i>	265
Prosocial Behavior	266
<i>Influences on Prosocial Behavior</i>	267
Aggressive Behavior	269
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	270
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	270
Families in Early Childhood	270
Parenting Styles	271
<i>Authoritarian Parenting Style</i>	271
<i>Permissive Parenting Style</i>	272
<i>Uninvolved Parenting Style</i>	272
<i>Authoritative Parenting Style</i>	272
Discipline	272
<i>Physical Punishment</i>	273
<i>Inductive Discipline</i>	274
Culture, Context, and Parenting	275
Child Maltreatment	276
<i>Effects of Child Maltreatment</i>	276
<i>Risk Factors for Child Maltreatment</i>	277
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	279
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	279
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	280
Gender Stereotypes, Gender Differences, and Gender Typing	280
Sex Differences	280
Gender Stereotypes and Gender Typing	281
Biological Influences on Gender Typing	281
Cognitive Influences on Gender Role Typing	282
<i>Gender Identity and Gender Constancy</i>	282
<i>Gender Schema</i>	282
Contextual Influences on Gender Role Typing	283
<i>Parents</i>	283
<i>Peers</i>	284
<i>Media</i>	284
Transgender Identity	285
Reducing Gender Stereotyping	286
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	287
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	287
Play and Peer Relationships in Early Childhood	287
Play and Development	287
<i>Cognitive and Emotional Development</i>	288
<i>Social Development and Early Friendships</i>	288
Sociodramatic Play	289
Rough-and-Tumble Play	289
Imaginary Companions	290
Culture and Play	291

Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	291
Apply Your Knowledge	291
Chapter Summary	292
Key Terms	293
Lifespan Development at Work Part 3: Early Childhood	294

PART IV MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

Chapter 9 Physical and Cognitive Development in Middle Childhood 297

Physical and Motor Development in Middle Childhood	297
Body Growth	298
Brain Development	298
Adrenarche	299
Motor Development	299
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	300
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	300
Health in Middle Childhood	301
Physical Activity in Middle Childhood	301
Childhood Injuries and Mortality	302
Childhood Obesity	303
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	304
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	305
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	305
Developmental Disabilities in Middle Childhood	305
Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder	306
Autism Spectrum Disorders	306
Specific Learning Disorder	307
Context and Disability: Race and Socioeconomic Status	308
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	309
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	309
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	309
Cognitive Development in Middle Childhood	309
Piaget's Cognitive-Developmental Theory: Concrete Operational Reasoning	309
<i>Classification</i>	310
<i>Conservation</i>	310
<i>Culture and Concrete Operational Reasoning</i>	311
<i>Implications of Cognitive-Developmental Theory for Education</i>	312
Information Processing and Cognition	312
<i>Working Memory and Executive Function</i>	312
<i>Metacognition and Metamemory</i>	313
<i>Memory Strategies</i>	313
<i>Context and Cognition</i>	314
<i>Implications of Information Processing for Education</i>	314
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	315
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	315
Intelligence in Middle Childhood	316
Intelligence Tests	316
Individual and Group Differences in IQ	317
Contextual Influences on IQ	317
<i>SES and IQ</i>	317
<i>Sociohistorical Context and IQ</i>	317
<i>IQ and the Majority Culture</i>	318
<i>Stereotypes and IQ</i>	318

Alternative Views of Intelligence	319
<i>Multiple Intelligences</i>	319
<i>Triarchic Theory of Intelligence</i>	320
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	321
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	321
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	321
Language Development in Middle Childhood	321
Vocabulary	321
Grammar	322
Pragmatics	323
Bilingual Language Learning	323
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	324
Learning and Schooling in Middle Childhood	325
Approaches to Education	325
Reading and Mathematics Instruction	325
Access to Digital Technology and Learning	326
Educating Children With Special Needs	327
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	328
Apply Your Knowledge	328
Chapter Summary	329
Key Terms	330
Chapter 10 Socioemotional Development in Middle Childhood	331
Psychosocial Development in Middle Childhood	331
Self-Concept	332
Self-Esteem	332
Body Image	333
Achievement Motivation	334
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	336
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	336
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	336
Moral Development in Middle Childhood	336
Reasoning About Rules: Piaget's Theory	336
Conceptions of Justice: Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Reasoning	337
<i>Preconventional Reasoning</i>	337
Distributive Justice: Reasoning About Sharing	337
Conceptions of Moral, Social, and Personal Issues	339
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	340
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	340
Gender Differences and Gender Typing	340
Boys and Girls: Similarities and Differences	340
Gender Stereotypes and Gender Beliefs	341
Gender Constancy and Gender Typing	342
Gender Identity	342
<i>Perceived Same-Gender Typicality and Perceived Other-Gender Typicality</i>	342
<i>Gender Contentedness</i>	343
<i>Perceived Pressure to Conform to Gender Roles</i>	343
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	343
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	343
Peer Relationships in Middle Childhood	344
Friendship	344
Peer Acceptance, Popularity, and Rejection	346
<i>Popularity</i>	346
<i>Peer Rejection</i>	346

Bullying	348
<i>Children Who Bully</i>	348
<i>Victims of Bullying</i>	348
<i>Contextual Approaches to Bullying Intervention</i>	350
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	351
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	351
Families in Middle Childhood	351
Parent–Child Relationships	351
Siblings	352
Only Children	353
Same-Sex Parented Families	355
Single-Parent Families	356
Cohabiting Families	357
Divorced and Divorcing Families	357
Blended Families	358
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	359
Risk and Resilience in Middle Childhood	359
Parental Incarceration	359
Parental Deployment	360
Exposure to Community Violence	360
Child Sexual Abuse	361
Resilience in Middle Childhood	363
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	364
Apply Your Knowledge	364
Chapter Summary	365
Key Terms	366
Lifespan Development at Work Part 4: Middle Childhood	367

PART V ADOLESCENCE

Chapter 11 Physical and Cognitive Development in Adolescence 371

Puberty	371
Changes in Body Shape and Size	372
Emergence of Secondary Sex Characteristics	373
Maturation of Primary Sex Characteristics	373
<i>Menarche</i>	373
<i>Spermarche</i>	374
Pubertal Timing and Adolescent Development	375
<i>Early Maturation</i>	375
<i>Late Maturation</i>	375
<i>Context and the Effects of Pubertal Timing</i>	376
Biological and Contextual Influences on Pubertal Timing	376
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	378
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	378
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	379
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	379
Health in Adolescence	379
Nutrition	379
Physical Activity and Exercise	380
Sleep	380
Adolescent Mortality	381
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	383
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	383

Brain Development in Adolescence	383
Changes in Brain Volume and Structure	384
Changes in Brain Structure and Function	385
Experience and the Adolescent Brain	385
<i>Stress</i>	385
<i>Substance Use</i>	386
Brain Development and Behavior	387
<i>Socioemotional Perception</i>	387
<i>Reward Perception</i>	388
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	388
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	388
Cognitive Development in Adolescence	389
Piaget's Cognitive-Developmental Theory: Formal Operational Reasoning	389
<i>Formal Operational Reasoning</i>	389
<i>Evaluating Formal Operational Reasoning</i>	390
Information Processing	391
<i>Attention</i>	391
<i>Working Memory and Executive Function</i>	391
<i>Processing Speed</i>	392
<i>Metacognition</i>	392
Social Cognition	393
<i>Perspective Taking</i>	393
<i>Adolescent Egocentrism</i>	394
<i>Decision-Making</i>	395
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	396
School Context in Adolescence	396
Shifting Contexts	396
Stage–Environment Fit	397
Contextual Influences on Academic Achievement	398
<i>Teachers</i>	399
<i>Parents</i>	399
<i>Peers</i>	399
School Dropout	400
Adolescent Employment	401
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	402
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	402
Apply Your Knowledge	402
Chapter Summary	403
Key Terms	404
Chapter 12 Socioemotional Development in Adolescence	405
Psychosocial Development: The Changing Self	405
Self-Concept	406
Self-Esteem	406
Identity	407
<i>Identity Statuses</i>	408
<i>Influences on Identity Development</i>	409
<i>Outcomes Associated with Identity Development</i>	409
Ethnic–Racial Identity	410
Gender Intensification and Transgender Identity	411
Spirituality and Religiosity	412
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	413
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	413

Moral and Civic Development in Adolescence	413
Moral Reasoning	414
<i>Changes in Moral Reasoning</i>	414
<i>Influences on Moral Reasoning</i>	415
<i>Gender and Moral Reasoning</i>	415
<i>Culture and Moral Reasoning</i>	415
<i>Moral Reasoning and Behavior</i>	416
Civic Development	416
<i>Civic Engagement</i>	416
<i>Critical Consciousness</i>	417
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	418
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	418
Adolescents and Their Parents	418
Parent-Adolescent Conflict	418
Parenting and Adjustment	420
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	421
Adolescents and Their Peers	421
Friendships	421
Cliques and Crowds	422
Peer Conformity	423
Peers, Social Media, and Cyberbullying	424
Dating	426
<i>Developmental Shifts in Dating</i>	426
<i>Dating and Psychosocial Adjustment</i>	426
Dating Violence	427
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	427
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	427
Adolescent Sexuality	428
Sexual Activity	428
Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adolescents	430
Sexting	431
Contraceptive Use	431
Sexually Transmitted Infections	431
Adolescent Pregnancy	432
Sexuality Education	434
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	435
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	435
Problems in Adolescence	435
Depression and Suicide	435
Eating Disorders	436
<i>Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa</i>	436
<i>Binge Eating Disorder</i>	438
Alcohol and Substance Use	438
Delinquency	440
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	442
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	442
Apply Your Knowledge	442
Chapter Summary	442
Key Terms	444
Lifespan Development at Work Part 5: Adolescence	444

PART VI EMERGING AND EARLY ADULTHOOD**Chapter 13 Physical and Cognitive Development in Emerging and Early Adulthood 447**

Physical Development in Emerging and Early Adulthood	447
Theories of Aging: What Causes Aging?	448
Physical Changes	449
Fertility and Reproductive Capacity	450
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	451
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	452
Health and Fitness During Emerging and Early Adulthood	452
Overweight and Obesity	452
Physical Activity	454
Substance Abuse	454
<i>Alcohol</i>	455
<i>Marijuana</i>	457
<i>Tobacco</i>	457
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	458
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	458
Cognitive Development in Emerging and Early Adulthood	458
Postformal Reasoning	459
Pragmatic Thought and Cognitive-Affective Complexity	461
Evaluating Cognitive-Developmental Approaches to Adult Development	461
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	462
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	462
Education in Emerging and Early Adulthood	462
Developmental Impact of Attending College	462
First-Generation College Students	463
Nontraditional College Students	464
Students With Developmental Disabilities	465
Not Attending College	466
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	467
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	467
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	467
Career Development in Emerging and Early Adulthood	467
Occupational Stages	468
Influences on Vocational Choice	469
Transition to Work	470
Intersectionality and the Workplace	471
Work-Life Balance	473
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	474
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	474
Apply Your Knowledge	475
Chapter Summary	475
Key Terms	476

Chapter 14 Socioemotional Development in Emerging and Early Adulthood 477

Emerging Adulthood	478
Characteristics of Emerging Adulthood	478
<i>Demographic Instability</i>	478
<i>Subjective Sense of Feeling In-Between</i>	479
<i>Identity Exploration, Self-Focus, and Optimism</i>	479

Contextual Nature of Emerging Adulthood	479
Emerging Adulthood and Culture	480
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	482
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	483
Psychosocial Development	483
Identity Versus Role Confusion	483
<i>Moral Identity</i>	483
<i>Religious Identity</i>	484
<i>Political Identity</i>	484
<i>Gender Identity and Sexual Identity</i>	484
<i>Ethnic-Racial Identity</i>	484
Intimacy Versus Isolation	485
Attachment	486
The Social Clock	486
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	487
Sexual Activity	487
Sexual Activity	488
Casual Sex	488
Sexual Coercion and Assault	489
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	490
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	490
Relationships and Psychosocial Development	490
Friendship	490
Romantic Relationships	492
<i>Mate Selection</i>	492
<i>Technology and Mate Selection</i>	492
<i>Components of Love</i>	493
Intimate Partner Violence	496
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	498
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	498
Romantic Partnerships and Lifestyles	499
Singlehood	499
Cohabitation	500
Marriage	501
Same-Sex Marriage	503
Divorce	503
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	505
Parenthood	505
Becoming a Parent	506
Nonmarital Childbearing	507
Same-Sex Parents	508
Stepparents	509
Childlessness	510
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	511
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	511
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	511
Apply Your Knowledge	511
Chapter Summary	512
Key Terms	513
Lifespan Development at Work Part 6: Early Adulthood	513

PART VII MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

Chapter 15 Physical and Cognitive Development in Middle Adulthood 517

Physical Development in Middle Adulthood	517
Sensory Aging	518
<i>Vision</i>	518
<i>Hearing</i>	518
Skin	519
Body Composition	520
Reproductive Aging	522
<i>Reproductive Changes in Women</i>	522
<i>Reproductive Changes in Men</i>	523
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	524
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	524
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	524
Health	524
Mortality	525
Common Illnesses	526
<i>Cancer</i>	526
<i>Cardiovascular Disease</i>	527
<i>Diabetes</i>	529
Stress and Health	531
<i>Stress</i>	531
<i>Stress Reactivity</i>	531
<i>Hardiness and Stress</i>	532
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	533
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	533
Intellectual Abilities	533
Fluid and Crystallized Intelligence	533
Intellectual Abilities Over the Adult Years	534
Cohort Effects in Intelligence	535
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	536
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	537
Cognitive Development in Middle Adulthood	537
Attention	537
Memory	538
Processing Speed	539
Expertise	540
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	542
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	542
Careers in Middle Adulthood	542
Job Satisfaction	542
Age Discrimination	543
Planning for Retirement	544
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	545
Apply Your Knowledge	545
Chapter Summary	546
Key Terms	547

Chapter 16 Socioemotional Development in Middle Adulthood 549

Psychosocial Development in Middle Adulthood	550
Is Midlife Characterized by Crisis?	550
Generativity Versus Stagnation	551
Seasons of Life	552

Search for Meaning	553
Sexuality	554
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	554
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	555
The Self	555
Self-Concept and Self-Esteem	555
Subjective Age	556
Perceived Control	557
Gender Identity	558
Life Satisfaction and Well-Being	559
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	559
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	560
Personality	560
Personality Stability and Change	560
Individual Differences in Stability and Change	561
Influences on Personality	563
Personality and Adjustment	563
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	564
Friendships and Romantic Relationships	564
Friendships	564
Marriage	565
Divorce	565
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	566
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	567
Intergenerational Relationships	567
Parent–Child Relationships	567
<i>Parents to Infants and Young Children</i>	567
<i>Parents to Adolescents</i>	568
<i>Parents to Adult Children</i>	568
Grandparenthood	570
<i>Grandparent–Grandchild Relationships and Adjustment</i>	570
<i>Grandparents Raising Grandchildren</i>	572
Relationships With Aging Parents	573
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	575
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	575
Apply Your Knowledge	575
Chapter Summary	576
Key Terms	577
Lifespan Development at Work Part 7: Middle Adulthood	578

PART VIII LATE ADULTHOOD

Chapter 17 Physical and Cognitive Development in Late Adulthood 581

Physical Development	581
Appearance	582
The Senses	582
<i>Vision</i>	582
<i>Hearing</i>	583
<i>Smell and Taste</i>	584
Cardiovascular, Respiratory, and Immune Systems	584
Motor Aging	585
The Aging Brain	586
<i>Neural Compensation</i>	586
<i>Promoting Brain Health</i>	588

Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	588
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	589
Atypical Brain Development: Dementia	589
Alzheimer's Disease	590
<i>Diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease</i>	590
<i>Progression of Alzheimer's Disease</i>	592
<i>Risk Factors for Alzheimer's Disease</i>	592
Vascular Dementia	593
Parkinson's Disease	593
Lewy Body Dementia	595
Race, Ethnicity, and Dementia	595
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	597
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	597
Health	597
Ages of Adulthood	597
Nutrition	598
Exercise	599
Chronic Illness	600
<i>Arthritis</i>	600
<i>Osteoporosis</i>	601
Injuries	602
<i>Motor Vehicle Accidents</i>	602
<i>Falls</i>	604
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	604
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	604
Cognitive Development	605
Attention	605
Working Memory	605
<i>Context, Task Demands, and Memory Performance</i>	606
<i>Emotion and Working Memory</i>	606
<i>Long-Term Memory</i>	607
Language	607
Problem-Solving and Wisdom	609
Influences on Cognitive Change in Adulthood	610
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	611
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	612
Apply Your Knowledge	612
Chapter Summary	612
Key Terms	613
Chapter 18 Socioemotional Development in Late Adulthood	615
Psychosocial Development	615
Self-Concept and Self-Esteem	616
Subjective Age	616
Reminiscence and Life Review	617
Ego Integrity	618
Personality	619
Sexuality	620
Religiosity	621
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	622
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	622
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	622
Relationships	623
Friendships	623

Sibling Relationships	623
Marriage, Divorce, and Cohabitation	624
<i>Marriage</i>	624
<i>Divorce and Remarriage</i>	625
<i>Cohabitation</i>	625
Relationships With Adult Children and Grandchildren	626
Elder Maltreatment	626
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	627
Social Contexts	628
Changing Social World	628
<i>Disengagement, Activity, and Continuity Theories</i>	628
<i>Socioemotional Selectivity Theory</i>	629
Neighborhoods	629
Aging in Place	630
Residential Communities	633
Nursing Homes	633
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	634
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	634
Retirement	635
Deciding to Retire	635
Transition to Retirement and Adjustment	636
Influences on Retirement Adjustment	637
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	637
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	637
Apply Your Knowledge	638
Chapter Summary	638
Key Terms	639
Part 8 Lifespan Development at Work: Late Adulthood	639

PART IX ENDINGS

Chapter 19 Death and Dying 641

Patterns of Mortality and Defining Death	641
Mortality and Life Expectancy	642
Leading Causes of Death	643
Thinking in Context: Intersectionality	646
Death and End-of-Life Issues	646
Defining Death	646
Advance Directives	648
Euthanasia	649
Physician-Assisted Suicide	649
Hospice	651
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	651
Conceptions of Death Across the Lifespan	651
Cultural Rituals and Views of Death	652
Children's Understanding of Death	653
Adolescents' Understanding of Death	655
Adults' Understanding of Death	655
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	656
Dying and the Experience of Death	656
The Dying Process	657
Emotional Reactions to Dying	658

The Experience of One's Death	659
<i>The Dying Child</i>	659
<i>The Dying Adolescent</i>	659
<i>The Dying Adult</i>	660
Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science	660
Bereavement and Grief	661
Grief Process	661
Models of Grieving	662
Contextual Influences on the Grief Process	663
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	664
Thinking in Context: Biological Influences	664
Adjusting to the Death of a Loved One	664
Losing a Spouse	664
Losing a Child	666
Losing a Parent	667
Bereavement in Childhood and Adolescence	667
<i>Bereavement in Childhood</i>	667
<i>Bereavement in Adolescence</i>	668
Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development	669
Apply Your Knowledge	669
Chapter Summary	670
Key Terms	671
Part 9: Lifespan Development at Work: Death	672
Glossary	673
References	689
Name Index	927
Subject Index	977

PREFACE

Lifespan Development: Lives in Context is the result of 25 years of classroom discussions with students about the nature of development during our lifetime. Many students find lifespan development inherently interesting as they have observed, experienced, or anticipate experiencing the topics we discuss. Sharing observations and personal experiences is fun and engaging. But sometimes our individual experiences don't completely match the theoretical and research conclusions we discuss. How do we make sense of the differences? In class, as well as in this text, I adopt a contextual perspective to help students understand variability in development and to make sense of the growing body of findings in lifespan development.

THEMES: CONTEXT AND APPLICATION

Lifespan Development: Lives in Context focuses on two key themes that promote understanding of how humans develop through the lifespan: the centrality of context and the applied value of developmental science. These two themes are highlighted throughout the text as well as in critical thinking features. In addition, an accessible writing style helps students to grasp these complex issues.

Contextual Perspective

The most central tenet of development is that it occurs in context. At all points in life, human development is the result of dynamic transactions among individuals, their physical, cognitive, and socioemotional capacities, and the web of interacting contexts in which they are immersed, such as family, peers, school, neighborhood, society, culture, and history. *Lifespan Development: Lives in Context* discusses these processes, emphasizing how individual factors combine with the people, places, circumstances, and time in which we live to influence development. A contextual approach can provide the backstory to development and help us understand why individuals vary. In addition, the emerging body of research on intersectionality in development offers opportunities to shed light on these complex processes and their role in development.

This contextual theme is infused throughout the text and highlighted specifically in critical thinking questions that appear at the end of each section. *Thinking in Context: Biological Influences* items ask students to consider how biological factors, such as brain development, physical development, and health, interact with context to produce developmental outcomes. *Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development* items examine developmental theory and themes, including applying Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory to understand real-world problems, as well as the role of culture in development. New to this third edition is an expansion of discussions of diversity to consider intersectionality and its impact on the development of children, adolescents, and adults. *Thinking in Context: Intersectionality* calls attention to the ways in which race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status overlap to determine opportunities and outcomes.

Applied Emphasis

The field of lifespan developmental science is unique because so much of its content has immediate relevance to our daily lives. Students may wonder: Do the first 3 years shape the brain for a lifetime of experiences? Is learning more than one language beneficial to children? Do people's personalities change over their lifetimes? Do adults go through a midlife crisis? How common is dementia in older adulthood? Moreover, findings from lifespan developmental science have been applied to inform social policies that affect us all. *Lifespan Development: Lives in Context* engages students by exploring these

and many more real-world questions. This theme is integrated throughout the text and highlighted specifically in a fourth type of end-of-section critical thinking question. *Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science* items ask students to apply the course content by considering cases, designing research studies, and explaining the material to different audiences and contexts. An *Apply Your Knowledge* case appears at the end of each chapter. These cases invite students to consider how the content may be applied to a realistic scenario.

Accessible Writing Style

Having taught at a regional public university since 1996, I write in a style intended to engage diverse undergraduate readers like my own students. I attempt to write in the same voice as I teach, carefully structuring sections to build explanations and integrating content with examples that are relevant to students. I regularly use my own texts in class, students work with me in preparing elements of each text, and my students' responses and learning guide my writing. My experience teaching 12 courses during the COVID-19 pandemic in Spring 2020 and the 2020–2021 academic year reinforced (for me) the importance of accessible, concise textbooks. Like many faculty, I was able to record only so many videos for my asynchronous classes, so I relied heavily on my text, asynchronous discussion posts, and, for the classes where available, SAGE Vantage, which enabled students to interactively read the text.

PEDAGOGICAL FEATURES

My day-to-day experiences in the classroom have helped me to keep college students' interests and abilities at the forefront. Unlike many textbook authors, I teach four classes each semester (and have done so for 25 years). I taught my first online course in 2002. My daily exposure to multiple classes and many students helps keep me grounded in the ever-changing concerns and interests of college students. I teach a diverse group of students. Some live on campus but most commute. Most of my students are ages 18 to 24, but my classes also include many so-called adult learners over the age of 24. Many are veterans, a rapidly increasing population at my institution with unique perspectives and needs. I have many opportunities to try new examples and activities. I believe that what works in my classroom will be helpful to readers and instructors. I use the pedagogical elements of *Lifespan Development: Lives in Context* in my own classes and modify them based on my experiences.

Critical Thinking Questions

In March 2020, my institution, like most in the United States, suddenly transitioned to an entirely online campus. Like many faculty across the country and world, I taught my four-course load entirely online during the 2020–2021 academic year. Interacting with students in many asynchronous courses (sprinkled with a small handful of classes that met partially on Zoom) inspired the expansion of my critical thinking feature *Thinking in Context* to include four types of items that highlight critical themes in developmental science. *Thinking in Context* items encourage readers to compare concepts, apply theoretical perspectives, and consider applications of the research findings presented. They appear at the end of each main section within each chapter and highlight the following previously described themes:

- Thinking in Context: Biological Influences
- Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development
- Thinking in Context: Applied Developmental Science
- Thinking in Context: Intersectionality

Case-Based Application

Each chapter closes with a case scenario, *Applying Your Knowledge*, followed by in-depth questions that require students to apply their understanding to address a particular situation or problem.

Learning Objectives and Summaries

Core learning objectives at the beginning of each section provide clear goals for readers. The end-of-chapter summary returns to each Learning Objective, recapping the key concepts presented in the chapter related to that objective. In this third edition, many learning objectives were revised to guide students' reading more closely. In some chapters, learning objectives were added to break material down into more manageable chunks for students as well as to highlight new material.

Careers Related to Developmental Science

To say that my students are interested in careers—what they will do after college—is an understatement. Students often don't know where to begin in considering possible careers. This third edition includes a new applied feature, *Lifespan Development at Work*, which introduces students to over 35 careers that are related to or benefit from an understanding of developmental science. Beginning with a discussion of transferrable skills and fields, this feature appears at the end of each part: Beginnings, Infancy, Early Childhood, Middle Childhood, Adolescence, Early Adulthood, Middle Adulthood, Late Adulthood, and Death.

WHAT'S NEW IN LIFESPAN DEVELOPMENT: LIVES IN CONTEXT, 3E?

I approached writing the third edition of *Lifespan Development: Lives in Context* with three goals:

1. **Increase the coverage of context, examine development through an intersectional lens, and present an integrated view of development.**

I addressed this multifaceted goal by adding findings and sections covering contextual and intersectional influences, as available, throughout each chapter. A new section of Chapter 1 defines intersectionality and its value for understanding development. I explain that the developmental science literature on intersectionality is in its infancy but rapidly growing. I include information about the interrelations of ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and more, as available. The *Thinking in Context: Intersectionality* critical thinking items encourage students to examine development through an intersectional lens.

Also, I have removed thematic boxes from this third edition in the interest of presenting an integrated view of development. Boxed content, set apart from the text, can send the unintended message that it is not as important as the text and can be skipped. When boxed features cover themes such as the role of culture, biology, or intersectionality, it may imply that these concepts are not part of "normal" development. In this third addition, context, culture, biology, intersectionality, and application are all infused throughout the text rather than relegated to boxes. To call students' attention to these critical themes, an expanded set of *Thinking in Context* items focus on biology, context, intersectionality, and application and appear within each chapter, as previously described.

2. **Update the text to include the most current research to date.**

Our knowledge of human development is rapidly expanding. My goal was to select, highlight, and integrate cutting-edge findings with existing theory and research. Because new research has its foundation in classic work, I integrate the two to present a unified story of what is currently known in developmental science. The third edition includes over 2,000 references published since 2018, including over 700 published since 2020.

3. Increase coverage while retaining length.

My goal for this third edition was to increase coverage of current research and expand several sections in each chapter to better cover relevant developmental issues (such as the opioid epidemic, spirituality, civic development and critical consciousness, and the experience of discrimination). Despite these additions, the overall length of most chapters has remained the same. I worked to streamline discussions by carefully integrating new material with old, selecting the most appropriate examples and details to include, and paring down excess.

Below I list some of the major revisions reflected in this third edition of *Lifespan Development: Lives in Context*. Each chapter contains many other changes that are not documented here. It is my hope that this volume will improve instructors' and students' experiences in and out of class—and that students will be inspired to apply the findings of developmental science to their lives.

Chapter 1

- New learning objective: 1.6 Describe the field of applied developmental science and the role of intersectionality in development.
- New section:
 - Sociohistorical Context
 - Cultural Context
 - Ethical Issues in Studying Lifespan Human Development
 - Applied Developmental Science and Intersectionality
 - Dynamic Systems Theory
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - History Graded Influences
 - Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory
 - Research Ethics

Chapter 2

- New learning objectives:
 - 2.4 Compare and contrast characteristics and outcomes of adoption, transracial adoption, and international adoption.
 - 2.5 Summarize prenatal diagnostic methods and how genetic disorders may be treated prenatally.
 - 2.6 Provide an introduction to the field of behavior genetics, including representative findings.
- New section:
 - Adoption
 - Prenatal Diagnosis
 - Assisted Reproductive Technology and Sex Selection
 - Gene–Environment Interactions
- Reorganized/substantive revision: Epigenetic Framework

Chapter 3

- New learning objectives:
 - 3.3 Compare the influence of maternal and paternal characteristics on prenatal development.
 - 3.4 Identify barriers to prenatal care and intersectional influences on access to prenatal care.

- 3.6 Examine risks for low birthweight, characteristics of low-birthweight infants, and ways of supporting positive outcomes of low-birthweight infants.
- New section:
 - Opioids
 - Contextual Factors and Teratogens
 - Maternal and Paternal Characteristics and Prenatal Development
 - Low-Birthweight Infants: Preterm and Small-for-Date Babies
 - Contextual and Cultural Influences on Prenatal Care
 - Lifespan Development at Work: Introduction to Careers; Genetic Counselor; Nurse Midwife; Doula
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - Maternal Illness
 - Maternal Emotional Well-Being
 - Cultural Influences on Development
- New Apply Your Knowledge case

Chapter 4

- New learning objective: 4.2 Examine threats to infant and toddler health.
- New section:
 - Infant Mortality
 - SIDS
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - Body Growth
 - Growth Faltering
 - Touch
 - Failure to Vaccinate

Chapter 5

- New opening vignette
- New learning objectives:
 - 5.2 Evaluate Piaget's sensorimotor reasoning stage in light of research evidence.
 - 5.6 Compare and contrast influences on language development.
- New section:
 - Evaluating Sensorimotor Reasoning
 - Culture and Cognitive Development
 - Contexts for Learning: Screens and Digital Media
 - Child Care and Cognitive Development
 - Poverty and Cognitive Development
 - Infant Gesture and Sign Language
 - Language Development in Bilingual Infants
 - Language Development in Deaf Infants
 - Cultural Differences in Infant-Directed Speech
- New Apply Your Knowledge case

Chapter 6

- New section:
 - Exposure to Early Life Stress
 - Maternal Depression and Attachment
 - Father–Infant Attachment
 - Lifespan Development at Work: Child Care Director; Social Worker; Pediatric Nurse; Pediatrician
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - Social Interaction and Emotional Development
 - Emotional Socialization
 - Context and Goodness of Fit
 - Cultural Variations in Attachment Classifications

Chapter 7

- New learning objective: 7.2 Examine the influence of nutrition, physical activity, sleep, and screen use on young children’s health as well as risks to health.
- New section:
 - Health: Physical Activity; Sleep; Nutrition and Eating Habits
 - Health Threats: Screen Use; Illness and Toxins; Unintended Injuries
 - Language: Bilingual Language Learning; Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Language Development
 - Suggestibility
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - Growth
 - Motor Development
 - Private Speech

Chapter 8

- New section:
 - Transgender Gender Identity
 - Reducing Gender Stereotyping
 - Culture and Play
 - Lifespan Development at Work: Early Childhood Educator; Speech/Language Pathologist; Developmental Psychologist; Toy and Media Research
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - Moral Development (from Chapter 7)
 - Emotional Development
 - Gender Stereotypes, Gender Differences, and Gender Development
 - Play and Peer Relationships in Early Childhood

Chapter 9

- New learning objectives:
 - 9.2 Examine health behaviors and concerns during middle childhood, including physical activity, injury, and obesity.
 - 9.3 Compare common developmental disabilities and discuss the relevance of contextual influences for disability.

- New section:
 - Developmental Disabilities, with subsections on Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Specific Learning Disorder, and Context and Disability: Race and Socioeconomic Status
 - Brain Development
 - Adrenarche
 - Physical Activity in Middle Childhood
 - Childhood Injuries and Mortality
 - Context and Cognition
 - Bilingual Language Learning
 - Approaches to Education
 - Access to Digital Technology and Learning
 - Implications of Cognitive Developmental Theory for Education
 - Implications of Information Processing Theory for Education

Chapter 10

- Revised opening vignette
- New learning objective: 10.3 Discuss gender differences, gender stereotypes and beliefs, and gender identity in middle childhood.
- New section:
 - Gender Development
 - Parental Incarceration
 - Parental Deployment
 - Body Image
 - Only Children
 - Lifespan Development at Work: Elementary Education; Special Education; Child Life Specialist; Applied Behavior Analyst; School Psychologist
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - Moral Development (from Chapter 9)
 - Risk and Resilience in Middle Childhood (revised and expanded; was: Common Socioemotional and Developmental Problems in Middle Childhood)

Chapter 11

- Updated opening vignette
- New learning objective: 11.2 Identify influences on health and recommendations to improve adolescents' health.
- New section:
 - Experience and the Adolescent Brain
 - Social Cognition
 - Adolescent Health
 - Adolescent Employment
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - Pubertal Timing and Adolescent Development
 - Biological and Contextual Influences on Pubertal Timing
 - Brain Development and Behavior
- New Apply Your Knowledge case

Chapter 12

- New learning objective: 12.2 Describe the progression of and influences on the development of moral reasoning, civic engagement, and critical consciousness.
- New section:
 - Gender Intensification and Transgender Identity
 - Spirituality and Religiosity
 - Moral and Civic Development in Adolescence
 - Peers, Social Media, and Cyberbullying
 - Binge Eating Disorder
 - Sexuality Education
 - Lifespan Development at Work: Secondary Education; School Counselor; Recreation Worker; Intervention Research; Applied Developmental Psychologist
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - Self-Esteem
 - Ethnic–Racial Identity
 - Parenting
 - Dating

Chapter 13

- New learning objective: 13.2 Discuss common health concerns and the effects of physical activity in early adulthood.
- New section:
 - Students With Developmental Disabilities
 - Intersectionality and the Workplace
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - Theories of Aging: What Causes Aging? (from Chapter 15)
 - Not Attending College (was Forgotten Third)
 - Transition to Work
 - Work–Life Balance (replaces Work and Family)

Chapter 14

- New learning objective: 14.3 Review the nature of sexual activity in early adulthood and the problem of sexual assault.
- New section:
 - Sexuality
 - Attachment
 - Lifespan Development at Work: ESL Teacher; Substance Counselor; Clinical and Counseling Psychologist; Professor; Resident Director
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - Emerging Adulthood (from Chapter 13)
 - Identity Versus Role Confusion, revised to include subsections on Moral Identity, Religious Identity, Political Identity, Gender and Sexual Identity, and Racial-Ethnic Identity
 - Becoming a Parent
 - Nonmarital Childbearing
 - Gay and Lesbian Parents

Chapter 15

- New learning objective: 15.5 Discuss career-related concerns of middle-aged adults, including influences on job satisfaction, experiences with age discrimination, and planning for retirement.
- New section:
 - Mortality
 - Cohort Effects in Intelligence
 - Age Discrimination
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - Stress
 - Planning for Retirement
 - Job Satisfaction

Chapter 16

- New learning objectives:
 - 16.3 Analyze patterns of stability and change in personality in middle adulthood.
 - 16.4 Examine friendship and spousal relationships in middle adulthood.
 - 16.5 Contrast adults' relationships and roles as parents to young children, adolescents, and adults; as grandparents; and as parents to adult children.
- New section:
 - Personality
 - Search for Meaning
 - Subjective Age
 - Perceived Control
 - Divorce
 - Lifespan Development at Work: Marriage and Family Therapist; Physical Therapist and Assistant; Occupational Therapist and Assistant; Human Resources; Health Psychologist
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - Is Midlife Characterized by Crisis?
 - Expanded and broke into two sections: Friendship and Romantic Relationships and Intergenerational Relationships
 - Sexuality (from Chapter 15)
 - Expanded and updated Parent–Child Relationships to include subsections on Parenting Infants, Parenting Adolescents, and Parenting Adult Children
 - Grandparents

Chapter 17

- Revised opening vignette
- New section:
 - Race, Ethnicity, and Dementia
 - Ages of Adulthood
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - Exercise
 - Atypical Brain Aging (was Dementia)
 - Updated and expanded The Aging Brain to include Neural Compensation, Promoting Brain Health

Chapter 18

- New section:
 - Friendships
 - Lifespan Development at Work: Audiologist; Geriatric Nurse; Geriatrician; Geropsychologist; User Design and Usability
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - Sexuality
 - Socioemotional Selectivity Theory
 - Aging in Place
 - Retirement: Deciding to Retire; Transition to Retirement and Adjustment

Chapter 19

- New learning objectives:
 - 19.1 Identify the leading causes of death and patterns of mortality and life expectancy.
 - 19.6 Describe patterns of adjustment after bereavement.
- New section:
 - Mortality and Life Expectancy
 - Death and End-of-Life Issues
 - Lifespan Development at Work: Grief Counselor; Hospice Services
- Reorganized/substantive revisions:
 - Cultural Rituals and Views of Death
 - Expanded into a new section: Adjustment After the Loss of a Loved One

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1

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: APPROACHES AND THEORIES



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Think back over your lifetime. How have you grown and changed through the years? Do your parents describe you as a happy baby? Were you fussy? Do you remember your first day of kindergarten? What are some of your most vivid childhood memories? Did you begin puberty early, late, or at about the same time as others your age? Were your adolescent years a stressful time? What types of changes do you expect to undergo in your adult years? Where will you live? Will you have a spouse? Will you have children? What career will you choose? How might these life choices and circumstances influence how you age and your perspective in older adulthood? Will your personality remain the same or change over time? In short, how will you change over the course of your lifespan?

WHAT IS LIFESPAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1.1 Outline five principles of the lifespan developmental perspective.

This is a book about **lifespan human development**—the ways in which people grow, change, and stay the same throughout their lives, from conception to death. When people use the term **development**, they often mean the transformation from infant to adult. However, development does not end with adulthood. We continue to change in predictable ways throughout our lifetime, even into old age. Developmental scientists study human development seeking to understand these lifetime patterns of change.

Table 1.1 illustrates the many phases or stages of life through which we progress from conception to death. The stages may have different labels and different sets of developmental tasks, but all have value and influence each other. The changes that we undergo during infancy, for instance, influence how we

TABLE 1.1 ■ Stages in Human Development		
Life Stage	Approximate Age Range	Description
Prenatal	Conception to birth	Shortly after conception, a single-celled organism grows and multiplies. This is the period of the most rapid physical development as basic body structures and organs form, grow, and begin to function.
Infancy and toddlerhood	Birth to 2 years	The newborn is equipped with senses that help it to learn about the world. Physical growth occurs and motor, perceptual, and intellectual skills develop. Children show advances in language comprehension and use, problem- solving, self-awareness, and emotional control. They become more independent and interested in interacting with other children and form bonds with parents and others.
Early childhood	2 to 6 years	Children grow steadily, their muscles strengthen, and they become better at coordinating their bodies. Memory, language, and imagination improve. Children become more independent and better able to regulate their emotions. Family remains children’s primary social tie, but other children become more important and new ties to peers are established.
Middle childhood	6 to 11 years	Growth slows, but strength and athletic ability increase dramatically. Children show improvements in their ability to reason, remember, read, and use arithmetic. As children advance cognitively and gain social experience, they understand themselves in more complex ways compared with younger children. As friendships develop, peers and group memberships become more important.
Adolescence	11 to 18 years	Adolescents’ bodies grow rapidly. They become physically and sexually mature. Although some immature thinking persists, adolescents can reason in sophisticated and adult-like ways. Adolescents are driven to learn about themselves and begin the process of discovering who they are, apart from their parents. Peer groups increase in importance.
Early adulthood	18 to 40 years	Physical condition peaks and then shows slight declines with time. Lifestyle choices play a large role in influencing health. Most young adults join the workforce, marry or establish a long-term bond with a spouse, and become parents. The timing of these transitions varies. Adolescents in Western industrialized societies often experience an extended transition to adulthood (called emerging adulthood), spanning from ages 18 to 25, and as late as age 29.
Middle adulthood	40 to 65 years	In middle adulthood, people notice changes in their vision, hearing, physical stamina, and sexuality. Basic mental abilities, expertise, and practical problem-solving skills peak. Career changes and family transitions require that adults continue to refine their understandings of themselves. Adults help children to become independent, adapt to an empty nest, and assist elderly parents with their own health and personal needs.
Late adulthood	65 years and beyond	Most older adults remain healthy and active. Reaction time slows, and most older adults show a decline in some aspects of memory and intelligence, but an increase in expertise and wisdom compensates for losses. Most older adult friendships are old friendships, and these tend to be very close and a source of support. Adults adjust to retirement, changes in health, and personal losses (such as the death of a loved one), as well as search for meaning in their lives.
Death		Death itself is a process entailing the stopping of heartbeat, circulation, breathing, and brain activity. A person’s death causes changes in his or her social context—family members and friends must adjust to and accept the loss.

experience later changes, such as those during adolescence and beyond. Each stage of life is important and accompanied by its own demands and opportunities.

Change is perhaps the most obvious indicator of development. The muscle strength and coordination needed to play sports increases over childhood and adolescence, peaks in early adulthood, and begins to decline thereafter, declining more rapidly from middle to late adulthood (Gabbard, 2018). There also are ways in which we change little over our lifetimes. Some personality traits are highly stable over the lifespan, so that we remain largely the “same person” into old age (Schwaba & Bleidorn, 2018; Wortman et al., 2012).

Lifespan human development can be described by several principles. Development is: (1) multidimensional, (2) multidirectional, (3) plastic, (4) influenced by multiple contexts, and (5) multidisciplinary (Baltes et al., 2006; Overton & Molenaar, 2015).

Development Is Multidimensional

Consider the many changes that mark each period of development and it is apparent that development is *multidimensional*. That is, development includes changes in multiple areas or **domains of development**. **Physical development** refers to body maturation and growth, such as body size, proportion, appearance, health, and perceptual abilities. **Cognitive development** refers to the maturation of thought processes and the tools that we use to obtain knowledge, become aware of the world around us, and solve problems. **Socioemotional development** includes changes in personality, emotions, views of oneself, social skills, and interpersonal relationships with family and friends. These areas of development overlap and interact. The onset of walking precedes advances in language development in infants in the United States and China (He et al., 2015; Lücke et al., 2019). Brain maturation, a physical development, underlies advances in cognitive development, which might enable adolescents to become better at understanding their best friend’s point of view and show more prosocial helpful behavior (Tamnes et al., 2018). In turn, adolescents might become more empathetic and sensitive to their friends’ needs and develop a more mature friendship, influencing socioemotional development (Tamnes et al., 2018). Figure 1.1 illustrates how the three areas of development interact.

Development Is Multidirectional

Development is commonly described as a series of improvements in performance and functioning, but in fact development is *multidirectional*, meaning that it consists of both gains and losses, growth and decline, throughout the lifespan (Baltes et al., 2006; Overton & Molenaar, 2015). For example, infants are born with a stepping reflex, an innate involuntary response in which they make step-like movements when held upright over a horizontal surface (for more on infant reflexes, see Chapter 4). The stepping reflex disappears by about 2 months but reemerges as a voluntary action at 8 to 12 months of age as infants begin walking with support (Adolph & Franchak, 2017). Throughout life, there is a shifting balance between gains, improvements in performance (common early in life), and

FIGURE 1.1 ■ Domains of Development

Advances in physical, cognitive, and socioemotional development interact, permitting children to lay sports, learn more efficiently, and develop close friendships.



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We are born with a stepping reflex, an innate involuntary response. When this infant is held under the arms in a standing position on a flat surface, his legs move in a stepping motion.

Phanie/Alamy Stock Photo



Some plasticity is retained throughout life. Practicing athletic activities can help older adults rebuild muscle and improve balance.

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declines in performance (common late in life) (Baltes et al., 2006; Zacher et al., 2019). At all ages individuals can compensate for losses by improving existing skills and developing new ones (Boker, 2013). The speed at which people think tends to slow in late adulthood, but increases in knowledge and experience enable older adults to compensate for the loss of speed when completing everyday tasks (Krampe & Charness, 2018; Margrett et al., 2010).

Development Is Plastic

Development is characterized by **plasticity**: It is malleable, or changeable. Frequently the brain and body can compensate for illness and injury. In children who are injured and experience brain damage, for instance, other parts of the brain may take on new functions (Petranovich et al., 2020). The plastic nature of human development allows people to modify their traits, capacities, and behavior throughout life (Baltes et al., 2006; Overton & Molenaar, 2015). Older adults who have experienced a decline in balance and muscle strength can regain and improve these capabilities through exercise (McAuley et al., 2013; Sañudo et al., 2019). Plasticity tends to decline as we age, but it does not disappear entirely. Short instruction, for instance, can enhance the memory capacities of very old adults, but less so in younger adults (Brehmer et al., 2012; Willis & Belleville, 2016). Plasticity makes it possible for individuals to adjust to change and to demonstrate **resilience**, the capacity to adapt effectively to adverse contexts and circumstances (Luthar et al., 2015; Masten, 2016). The brain naturally adapts to a lifetime of sensory experiences in order to portray the world around us efficiently and accurately as we age into older adulthood (Moran et al., 2014; Zanto & Gazzaley, 2019).

Development Is Influenced by Multiple Contexts

Context refers to where and when a person develops. Context encompasses many aspects of the physical and social environment, including family, neighborhood, country, and historical time period. It includes intangible factors, characteristics that are not visible to the naked eye, such as values, customs, ideals, and culture. To understand individuals' development, we must look at their context, including the subtle, less easily viewed factors.

Were you encouraged to be assertive and actively question the adults around you, or were you expected to be quiet and avoid confrontation? How large a part was spirituality or religion in your family's life? How did religious values shape your parents' childrearing practices and your own values? How did your family's economic status affect your development? These questions examine a critical context for our development: home and family. However, we are embedded in many more contexts that influence us, and that we influence, such as peer group, school, neighborhood or community, and culture. Our development plays out within the contexts in which we live, a theme that we will return to throughout this book.

Sociohistorical Context

The multitude of contextual factors that interact over the life course can be organized into three categories: age-graded influences, history-graded influences, and non-normative influences (Elder & George, 2016; Elder et al., 2016).

Age-Graded Influences. *Age-graded influences* are closely tied to chronological age and are largely predictable. Most individuals walk at about a year of age and reach puberty in early adolescence. Similarly, most women reach menopause in the late 40s or early 50s. Age-graded influences tend to be most influential early and late in life. Although these influences are often tied to biology, social milestones can also form age-graded influences. Most people in the United States enter school at about 5 years of age, graduate high school and enter college at about age 18, and retire during their 60s. Some age-graded influences are context dependent. Adolescents in suburban and rural contexts commonly get driver's licenses at age 16, but this may not be true of adolescents in urban settings where driving may be less common.

History-Graded Influences. *History-graded influences* refer to how the time period in which we live and the unique historical circumstances of that time period affect our development. History-graded influences include wars, epidemics, advances in science and technology, and economic shifts such as periods of depression or prosperity (Baltes, 1987). The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 may shape individuals' health behaviors, such as by wearing face coverings, standing further away from others, and refraining from particular social behaviors, such as handshakes and hugs. School closures during the pandemic posed risks to children's and adolescents' academic and social development as well as their mental health (Golberstein et al., 2020; Lee, 2020). Even temporary changes, such as these, are contextual influences that shape our world and our development. The effect of historical events on development depends in part on when they occur in a person's life (Elder et al., 2015). Older adults may experience the COVID-19 pandemic differently than younger people, given their lifelong experiences as well as their heightened risk for infection (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020). For many older adults, the pandemic is a period of great loneliness.

Contextual influences tied to specific historical eras explain why a generation of people born at the same time, called a **cohort**, is similar in ways that people born at other times are different. Adults who came of age during the Great Depression and World War II are similar in some ways that make them different from later cohorts; they tend to have particularly strong views on the importance of the family, civic mindedness, and social connection (Rogler, 2002). Yet the same historical event may be experienced differently by successive cohorts relatively close in age, reflecting the fact that they are in different life stages, with different social roles, levels of maturity, and life experiences. Researchers examined the influence of the Great Depression (1929–1941) and World War II (1939–1945) on two cohorts of California-born Americans born just 8 years apart in Oakland and Berkeley, and who were followed from childhood to older adulthood, over a 70-year period (Elder & George, 2016).

Boys in the older Oakland cohort (born in 1920–1921) were children during the affluent 1920s, a time of economic growth in California, and they experienced a prosperous and relatively stress-free childhood. They entered adolescence during the Great Depression, a period of severe economic stress in which unemployment skyrocketed and people's savings were depleted. As adolescents during the Great Depression, the Oakland boys tended to behave responsibly and assist their families in coping, such as by working jobs outside the home, which enhanced their independence



The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of a sociohistorical influence that contributes to cohort, or generational, differences in development.

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and sense of **responsibility** and reduced their exposure to family stress. The Oakland cohort completed high school just prior to the onset of World War II and over time nearly all the young men entered the armed forces.

Unlike the Oakland cohort, boys in the Berkeley Guidance Study (born in 1928–1929) experienced the Great Depression in early childhood, at a time when they were vulnerable and very dependent on family. The Berkeley cohort entered adolescence during World War II, a period of additional economic and emotional stress resulting from empty households (as both parents worked to support the war effort) and the military service and war trauma of older brothers. As adolescents, the Berkeley boys' outlook was bleaker than the boys in the Oakland cohort. Berkeley boys experienced emotional difficulties, poor attitudes toward school, and less hope, self-direction, and confidence about their future.

However, the Berkeley boys were not doomed. Their outlook improved in adulthood, largely because of their experiences in military service. Three-quarters of the Berkeley sample served in the military between 1945 and the end of the Korean War in the early 1950s. The most disadvantaged young men tended to join the military early, and early entry into the military predicted personal growth because of opportunities, such as structure, travel, and to take advantage of the GI Bill of Rights, which enabled them to expand their education and acquire new skills after the war.

These two cohorts of young people offer striking examples of how sociohistorical context influences development. Although boys in both cohorts tended to develop into mature productive adults, they took different paths. Context always plays a role in development—not only in times of social upheaval but every day and for every generation.

Take a moment to think about what role larger historical events have played in your development. Consider the Black Lives Matter movement, begun in 2013; the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2015; the school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012; the election of the first African American president of the United States in 2008; and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. How have historical events influenced you and those around you? Can you identify ways in which, because of historical events, your cohort may differ from your parents' cohort? Your grandparents' cohort?

Non-Normative Influences. Whereas age-graded and history-graded influences are common to all people, or all members of a cohort, individuals also have experiences that are unique to them. *Non-normative influences* are experiences or events that happen to a person or a few people. Examples of non-normative influences include experiencing the death of a parent in childhood, widowhood in early adulthood, winning the lottery, or illness. Non-normative events are not predictable and are not easily studied, as they are not experienced by most people—and the nature of non-normative events varies widely. With age, non-normative influences become more powerful determinants of development.

Cultural Context

Like sociohistorical context, the cultural context is a broad influence on the development of all people at all ages in life. **Culture** refers to a set of customs, knowledge, attitudes, and values that are shared by members of a group and are learned early in life through interactions with group members (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). We are immersed in culture, which influences all of our contexts and includes the processes used by people as they make meaning or think through interactions with group members (Mistry et al., 2016; Yoshikawa et al., 2016).

Early studies of culture and human development took the form of *cross-cultural research*, comparing individuals and groups from different cultures to examine how these universal processes worked in different contexts (Mistry & Dutta, 2015). Yet research that defines normative development based on Western samples leads to narrow views of human development that do not consider the variety of contexts in which people live. At the extreme, differences in human development within other cultural groups might be viewed as abnormal and harmful (Cole & Packer, 2015).

Most classic theories and research on human development are based on Western samples because researchers once believed that the processes of human development were universal. More recent observations suggest that development varies dramatically with cultural context (Keller, 2017). Consider milestones, such as the average age that infants begin to walk. In Uganda, infants begin to walk at about 10 months of age, in France at about 15 months, and in the United States at about 12 months. These differences are influenced by parenting practices that vary by culture. African parents tend to handle infants in ways that stimulate walking, by playing games that allow infants to practice jumping and walking skills (Hopkins & Westra, 1989; Super, 1981). The cultural context in which individuals live influences the timing and expression of many aspects of development, even physical developments, such as walking, long thought to be a matter of biological maturation (Mistry, 2013). Applying principles of development derived from Western samples to children of other cultures may yield misleading conclusions about children's capacities (Keller, 2017).

There is a growing trend favoring *cultural research*, which examines how culture itself influences development, over cross-cultural research, which simply examines differences across cultures (Cole & Packer, 2015). Cultural research examines development and culture as fused entities that mutually interact, with culture inherent in all domains of development and a contributor to the context in which we are embedded, transmitting values, attitudes, and beliefs that shape our thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors (Miller et al., 2020; Mistry & Dutta, 2015). The shift toward cultural research permits the examination of the multiple subcultures that exist within a society (Oyserman, 2016, 2017). North American culture is not homogeneous; many subcultures exist, defined by factors such as ethnicity (e.g., African American, Asian American), religion (e.g., Christian, Muslim), geography (e.g., southern, midwestern), and others, as well as combinations of these factors. Current trends in cultural research document diversity and emphasize understanding how the historical, cultural, and subcultural contexts in which we live influence development throughout our lives.

Developmental Science Is Multidisciplinary

Psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, biologists, neuroscientists, and medical researchers all conduct research that is relevant to understanding aspects of human development. Consider cognitive development. Children's performance on cognitive measures, such as problem-solving, are influenced by their physical health and nutrition (Anjos et al., 2013; Biddle et al., 2019), interactions with peers (Holmes et al., 2016), and neurological development (Stiles et al., 2015), findings from the fields of medicine, psychology, and neuroscience, respectively. To understand how people develop at all periods in life, developmental scientists must combine insights from all of these disciplines.

Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development

1. Describe your own development. Provide personal examples that illustrate the multidimensional nature of your own development. In what ways has your development illustrated multidirectionality? Plasticity?
2. Consider the societal and cultural events that your parents may have experienced in their youth. What technology was available? What historical events did they experience? What were the popular fads of their youth? What influence do you think these sociohistorical factors may have had on your parents' development? Compare their sociohistorical context with the one in which you were raised. What historical and societal events may have influenced you? What events have shaped your generation?
3. Consider your own experiences with culture. With which culture or subculture do you identify? How much of a role do you think your cultural membership has had in your own development? Why might some people say that the United States has no culture? What do you think?

BASIC ISSUES IN LIFESPAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1.2 Explain three basic issues in developmental science.

Developmental scientists agree that people change throughout life and show increases in some capacities and decreases in others, from conception to death. Yet they sometimes disagree about how development proceeds and what causes developmental changes. Developmental scientists' explanations of how people grow and change over their lives are influenced by their perspectives on three basic issues, or fundamental questions, about human development:

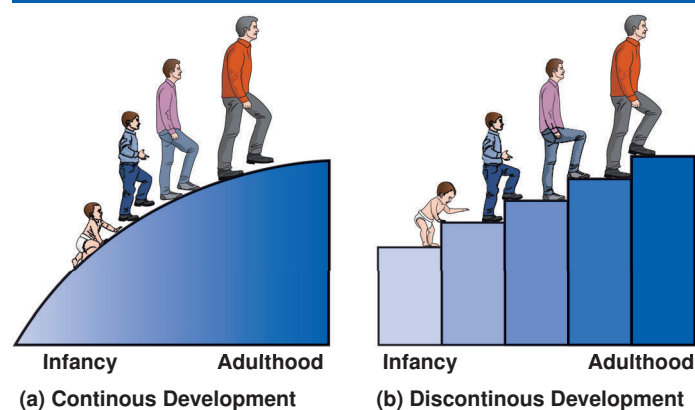
1. Do people change gradually, often imperceptibly, over time, or is developmental change sudden and dramatic?
2. What role do people play in their own development—how much are they influenced by their surroundings, and how much do they influence their surroundings?
3. To what extent is development a function of inborn genetic characteristics, and to what extent is it affected by the environment in which individuals live?

The following sections examine each of these questions.

Development Is Characterized by Continuous and Discontinuous Change

Do children slowly grow into adults, steadily gaining more knowledge and experience and becoming better at reasoning? Or do they grow in spurts, showing sudden, large gains in knowledge and reasoning capacities? Some aspects of development unfold slowly and gradually over time, demonstrating **continuous change**. Children slowly gain experience and learn strategies to become quicker at problem-solving (Siegler, 2016). Similarly, middle-aged adults experience gradual losses of muscle and strength (Keller & Engelhardt, 2013). Other aspects of development are best described as **discontinuous change**, characterized by abrupt change with individuals of various ages dramatically different from one another. Puberty transforms children's bodies into more adult-like adolescent bodies (Wolf & Long, 2016), infants' understanding and capacity for language is qualitatively different from that of school-aged children (Rudman & Titjen, 2018), and children make leaps in their reasoning abilities over the course of childhood, such as from believing that robotic dogs and other inanimate

FIGURE 1.2 ■ Continuous and Discontinuous Development



Source: Adapted from End of the Game (2014). "Child Development 101 – History and Theory," <https://endofthegame.net/2014/04/15/child-development-101-history-and-theory/3/>.

objects are alive to understanding that life is a biological process (Beran et al., 2011; Zaitchik et al., 2014). As shown in Figure 1.2, a discontinuous view of development emphasizes sudden transformation, whereas a continuous view emphasizes gradual and steady changes.

It was once believed that development was either continuous or discontinuous—but not both. Today, developmental scientists agree that development includes both continuity and discontinuity (Lerner et al., 2014). Whether a particular developmental change appears continuous or discontinuous depends in part on our point of view. Consider physical growth. We often think of increases in height as involving a slow and steady process; each month, an infant is taller than the prior month, illustrating continuous change. However, as shown in Figure 1.3, when researchers measured infants' height every day, they discovered that infants have growth days and nongrowth days, days in which they show rapid change in height interspersed with days in which there is no change in height, illustrating discontinuous change (Lampl et al., 2001). In this example, monthly measurements of infant height suggest gradual increases, but daily measurements show spurts of growth, each lasting 24 hours or less. Thus, whether a given phenomenon, such as height, is described as continuous or discontinuous can vary depending on perspective. Most developmental scientists agree that some aspects of development are best described as continuous and others as discontinuous (Miller, 2016).

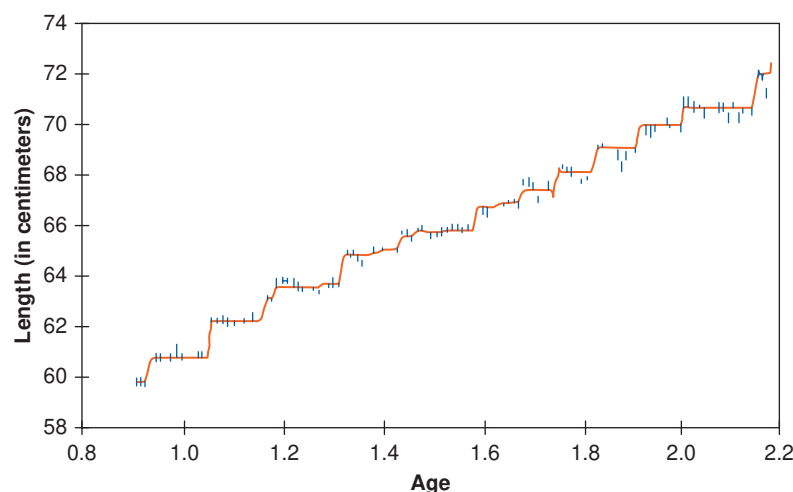
Individuals Are Active in Development

Do people have a role in influencing how they change over their lifetimes? That is, are people active in influencing their own development? Taking an active role means that they interact with and influence the world around them, create experiences that lead to developmental change, and thereby influence how they themselves change over the lifespan. Alternatively, if individuals take a passive role in their development, they are shaped by, but do not influence, the world around them.

The prevailing view among developmental scientists is that people are active contributors to their own development (Lerner et al., 2014; Overton, 2015). People are influenced by the physical and social contexts in which they live, but they also play a role in influencing their development by interacting with, and changing, those contexts (Elder et al., 2016). Even infants influence the world around them and construct their own development through their interactions. Baby Joey smiles at each adult he passes by as his mother pushes his stroller in the park. Adults often respond with smiles, use “baby talk,” and make faces. Baby Joey's actions, even simple smiles, influence adults, bringing them into

FIGURE 1.3 ■ Infant Growth: A Continuous or Discontinuous Process

Infants' growth occurs in a random series of roughly 1-centimeter spurts in height that occur over 24 hours or less. The overall pattern of growth entails increases in height, but whether the growth appears to be continuous or discontinuous depends on our point of view.



Source: Lampl et al. (1992).



It's easy to see how this baby can influence the world around her and construct her own development through her interactions. By smiling at each adult she sees, she influences her world because adults are likely to smile, use "baby talk," and play with her in response.

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close contact, making one-on-one interactions, and creating opportunities for learning. By engaging the world around them, thinking, being curious, and interacting with people, objects, and their environment, infants and children are "manufacturers of their own development" (Flavell, 1992, p. 998). That is, they play an active role in influencing their own development.

Nature and Nurture Influence Development

Perhaps the oldest question about development concerns its origin. Referred to as the **nature–nurture debate**, researchers once asked whether development is caused by nature (genetics) or nurture (environment). Explanations that rely on nature point to inborn genetic traits and maturational processes as causes of developmental change. Most infants take their first steps at roughly the same age, suggesting a maturational trend that supports the role of nature in development

(Payne & Isaacs, 2020). An alternative explanation for developmental change emphasizes nurture, the environment. From this perspective, although most begin to walk at about the same age, environmental conditions can speed up or slow down the process. Infants who experience malnutrition may walk later than well-nourished infants, and those who are given practice making stepping or jumping movements may walk earlier (Siekerman et al., 2015; Worobey, 2014). Individuals are molded by the physical and social environment in which they are raised. Many infants may walk at about the same age because they experience similar environmental circumstances and parenting practices.

Today, developmental scientists generally agree that the nature–nurture debate is, in fact, not a debate. Instead, most now agree that *both* nature and nurture are important contributors to development and the question has changed to how do genetics and environment work together to influence child development (Rutter, 2014; Sasaki & Kim, 2017). Thus, walking is heavily influenced by maturation (nature), but experiences and environmental conditions can speed up or slow down the process (nurture). Today, developmental scientists attempt to determine *how* nature and nurture interact and work together to influence how people grow and change throughout life (Bjorklund, 2018a; Lickliter & Witherington, 2017).

Thinking in Context: Lifespan Development

1. Identify ways in which you have changed very gradually over the years. Are there times in which you showed abrupt change, such as in physical growth, strength and coordination, thinking abilities, or social skills? In other words, in what ways is your development characterized by continuity? Discontinuity?
2. What role did your physical and social environment play in your growth?
3. Identify examples of how a child might play an active role in his or her development. How do children influence the world around them?

Thinking in Context: Biological Influences

1. How are nature and nurture reflected in your own development? What traits, abilities, or behaviors do you believe are influenced by inborn factors? What role did the physical and social environment play in your development?
2. Consider similarities and differences among family members. How might they reflect the interaction of nature and nurture?