

Jeffrey Trawick-Smith



Early Childhood Development

A Multicultural
Perspective

 Pearson

seventh edition

Early Childhood Development

A Multicultural Perspective

Seventh Edition

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Preface

Early Childhood Development: A Multicultural Perspective, seventh edition, is a book about the development of all children in the world. It examines the physical, social, emotional, linguistic, and intellectual characteristics of children of diverse cultural backgrounds within and outside the United States. It discusses typical as well as atypical development; children with challenging conditions are profiled.

The book can be used as the primary text for child development or early child development courses in community colleges or 4-year programs in education or psychology. It can also be used as a supplementary text in graduate-level, life-span human development courses where a goal is to promote cultural understanding and sensitivity. Some of my colleagues have used it as a supplement in courses in multicultural education or the antibias curriculum. The book is intended to assist future teachers, child-care providers, and family service and mental health professionals in understanding and celebrating the rich diversity of development among children in all neighborhoods in the United States and around the globe.

Text Organization and Features

An initial examination of the contents will show that the book resembles other texts in child development. It includes current and important issues and topics. The book is organized in a conventional ages-and-stages format. A closer look, however, reveals several unique features. First, each topic is examined from a multicultural perspective. Sections on language development, for example, include descriptions of second-language learning and the linguistic development of non-English speakers. Chapters on intellectual development highlight cultural diversity in cognitive styles. Attachment patterns and peer relations among children of diverse backgrounds are explored. Cultural variations in motor play and development are examined.

A second unique feature is that topics in atypical development and special education are smoothly integrated into the core development chapters. For example, autism and serious emotional disturbance are fully examined in sections on social development, and learning disabilities are extensively described in chapters dealing with cognition. One purpose of the text is to assist professionals who work with children and families in understanding and appreciating the characteristics of children with challenging conditions, who will be increasingly integrated into regular classrooms.

A final important feature of the book is its real-life, practical orientation. It is intended as a hands-on guide, with suggestions for professional practice presented in each chapter. Each chapter ends with a **Research Into Practice** section that outlines practical classroom and parenting applications. A **Child Guidance** feature in most chapters highlights a proven research-based technique for enhancing children's social, emotional, cognitive, or language growth. The chapters include numerous stories drawn from diverse cultures within and outside the United States, which bring theory and research to life.

Why Study Child Development from a Multicultural Perspective?

Why is a multicultural focus in child development so important? During the 21st century, traditionally underrepresented groups—often called minorities—will constitute a new majority within the United States. Children from families of historically underrepresented groups

make up a growing percentage of the preschool and school-age population. Early childhood classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, and teachers and other professionals must be prepared to meet the unique needs of young children of varying backgrounds. Even teachers of monocultural classrooms must assist their students in understanding and appreciating other cultures. A primary goal of early childhood education today is to provide the skills, understanding, and sensitivity that children need in a pluralistic society. This textbook is designed to assist professionals in meeting that goal by providing a culturally sensitive account of developmental processes.

New to This Edition

This seventh edition has the following additions and updates:

- Each chapter now starts with a set of learning objectives that detail the concepts that the chapter will present. Each objective is tied to a main section of the text.
- Recent research in neuroscience is presented, which helps us better understand how children think, learn, feel, and behave.
- Greater emphasis is placed on newer or more culturally inclusive theories of development—neo-Piagetian, postmodern, and biological theories, for example.
- A more extensive examination of dual-language learners is included. Newly discovered advancements in how young children from bilingual homes learn and develop are profiled.
- The book contains discussions of more than 400 new research studies and articles on early childhood development that have been published since the last edition.
- An end-of-chapter feature titled **Applying Chapter Ideas** has been added. This feature provides real-world, hands-on exercises along with questions to ponder related to those exercises.

Supplementary Materials

The following supplements to the textbook are available for download on www.pearsonhighered.com. Simply enter the author, title, or ISBN, and then select this textbook. Click on the “Resources” tab to view and download the supplements detailed in the following sections.

Online Instructor’s Manual

The Online Instructor’s Manual (0-13-347812-2) includes a discussion of critical topics for each chapter and a set of cooperative learning activities that instructors can use in their classes. Two or more of these activities are provided for each chapter in the book. These creative, field-tested activities may be copied for classroom use.

Online Test Bank

The Online Test Bank (0-13-286936-5) contains three different types of items: recall, analysis and application, and essay questions.

Online TestGen

TestGen (0-13-286937-3), computerized test bank software, allows instructors to create and customize exams for classroom testing and for other specialized delivery options, such as over a local area network or on the Web. A test bank typically contains a large set of test items, organized by chapter and ready for your use in creating a test, based on the associated textbook material. The tests can be downloaded in the following formats:

- TestGen Test Bank file—PC
- TestGen Test Bank file—MAC
- TestGen Test Bank—Blackboard 9
- TestGen Test Bank—Blackboard CE/Vista (WebCT)
- Angel Test Bank
- D2L Test Bank
- Moodle Test Bank
- Sakai Test Bank

Online PowerPoint® Slides

The PowerPoint® slides (0-13-286934-9) highlight key concepts and summarize text content. These guides are designed to provide structure to instructor presentations and give students an organized perspective on each chapter’s content.

Correlation Guide to MyEducationLab®

MyEducationLab for Child Development includes many activities that can be used to supplement *Early Childhood Development: A Multicultural Perspective*, seventh edition. The Correlation Guide (0-13-315469-6) provides some guidance in aligning the activities with chapter content. You may find that additional materials in MyEducationLab, not listed in the guide, also fit within particular topics of your syllabus.

Acknowledgments

Writing a book of this kind is a challenge. Such an undertaking is not possible without support and encouragement from many individuals. I would like to thank my family—Nancy, Benjamin, and Joseph. They have always helped me know when it was time to step away from the computer, put down the manuscript, and take a moment to enjoy fully what is most important in life: their love.

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Jeffrey Trawick-Smith

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Studying Early Childhood Development in a Diverse World



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- 1.1** Define early childhood development and describe how views on how children develop have varied over time and across Eastern and Western cultures.
- 1.2** Describe ways that knowledge of early childhood development can guide classroom interactions, curriculum planning, and the identification of children with disabilities.
- 1.3** Identify the ways that early childhood development promotes an understanding and appreciation of diversity and guides advocacy and the shaping of public policy.
- 1.4** Discuss why professionals should study child development from a multicultural perspective.

The purpose of this text is to assist present and future teachers of young children in using knowledge of child development within child care, preschool, kindergarten, and primary-grade classrooms. It is a practical guide to what young children are like and how this knowledge can be used to enhance your professional practice. My focus in this text is on diversity and development. I emphasize that individual children learn and behave in different ways. Children of diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and those with challenging conditions and special needs

vary in their language, social style, self-perceptions, and physical competence because of unique life experiences. I will describe and celebrate this diversity. A significant message is that there is not just one way to grow up. Understanding development and its cultural variations is essential for effective teaching, as the following story reveals:

Three 4-year-olds—Sarah, Peter, and Alonzo—are working with clay at the art table in a child care center. Their teacher, Ms. Sekar, has placed individual balls of clay on small wooden boards so that each child can select one to work with. Knowing that children at this age have a difficult time sharing, she reasons that dividing the clay into individual portions will avert conflict. She quickly discovers, however, that her careful planning has just the opposite effect.

Peter looks over with an expression of concern at Sarah's clay. "She's got more than me!" he complains to Ms. Sekar.

"Oh, no, Peter, she doesn't," she assures him. "I put just the same amount of clay in all the balls. You have just as much as she does."

Peter is not satisfied. "No! Hers is fatter!"

Ms. Sekar notices that Sarah's clay ball is pushed flatter, giving it a wide appearance. "Oh! Hers is fatter, you're right. But yours is . . ."—she searches for the right word here—"taller." She sees immediately that this argument has gone over Peter's head.

As Peter continues to protest, Alonzo discovers that he needs more clay for a sculpture he is working on. Smiling, he casually leans over and pinches off a large chunk from Peter's ball. Alonzo's actions are more than Peter can bear. "No!" he screams, beginning to cry and trying to grab back some of his clay from Alonzo. Alonzo gives a look of total surprise at Peter's outburst.

After comforting Peter, Ms. Sekar engages all three children in an elaborate negotiation: "Peter seems to be upset because he doesn't have as much clay as everyone else. What can we do about this?"

"Give me back my clay," Peter offers, still angry.

"We could put all the clay together," Alonzo suggests. Sarah agrees.

"We could try that," Ms. Sekar responds with enthusiasm. "We could make a huge ball. Then you could tear off the clay you need. What do you think?"

"What if I can't have enough?" asks Peter tearfully.

"There is so much clay," the teacher answers. "I think you'll have plenty to use. Should we try it?"

Peter finally agrees. They combine their clay into one large chunk and place it in the center of the table. As the children work, they help themselves to more clay, as they need it. This seems to make everyone happy. Ms. Sekar is pleased at how cooperative these young children are in sharing from this "community" lump of clay.

This child care provider has resolved a classroom conflict by applying principles of child development. Because she has read about young children's thinking and social behavior, she is aware that 4-year-olds can be egocentric—that is, so self-oriented that they are unable to fully understand others' perspectives. Because she anticipates difficulties over sharing, she attempts to avoid conflicts by dividing the clay into individual balls. She quickly realizes, however, that she has created more problems than she has prevented.

She knows, again from child development research, that children's thinking is based on the appearance of things: What you see is what you get. From Peter's perspective, the ball that looks fatter must contain more clay. The caregiver immediately recognizes the futility of trying to convince him that the balls are of equal size.

In resolving the conflict between Alonzo and Peter, the teacher has relied on her knowledge of cultural diversity in child development. She knows that in Alonzo's family, sharing, working and playing together, and other collective behaviors are more common than individual activities and ownership. Alonzo's act of helping himself to others' clay is simply an innocent effort to share materials.

By involving the children in the resolution of this conflict, she has relied on new research showing that very young children can be quite cooperative and can resolve their own conflicts with adult assistance. Her final solution reflects her knowledge of the intellectual and social abilities and limitations of this age group.

This example shows that child development research and theory can be extremely useful in the classroom when applied in concert with careful observation and the wisdom of experience.

What Is Early Childhood Development?

Anyone who spends time with children knows that they change in many ways as they grow older. What may not be as obvious is that these changes are qualitative as well as quantitative. Children do not simply acquire more knowledge, social ability, or physical proficiency with age; their thinking and behavior become qualitatively different over time.

One way to understand qualitative change in development is to reflect on your own life experience. Think back to what you were like 10 years ago. Are you the same person? How have you changed? It is likely that you are quantitatively different; you have more knowledge, a broader repertoire of social skills, or even—like me—a few new gray hairs. But you are also likely to be qualitatively different. Your interests have probably changed. You probably solve problems differently or use new methods to learn. You may have a clearer picture of your career goals. Children also become very different human beings with each developmental period, as the following vignette illustrates:

Three-year-old Daisuke shows great anxiety every time the heater blower turns on in his child care center. His caregiver intervenes to help assuage his fears.

DAISUKE: I don't like that thing!

CAREGIVER: Yes. That heater is old and loud. It's just a heater, though. Let me show you. (Leads the child over to the heating unit) See? It's just a machine.

DAISUKE: Just an old machine.

CAREGIVER: That's right. Can you see down inside here? See the parts of the machine in there? That's what makes the noise.

DAISUKE: Yeah. The machine goes r-r-r-r. (Makes a blower noise)

CAREGIVER: Right. So when it comes on, you won't be afraid, right?

DAISUKE: Yeah.

Minutes later, the blower turns on again. Daisuke clings to the caregiver in terror.

Approximately a year later, the caregiver has another conversation about the blower with this same child.

DAISUKE: Remember that heater? (Points to the heating unit)

CAREGIVER: Sure. You didn't like the noise it made.

DAISUKE: I was afraid of it when I was little. I thought it was a . . . monster. (Laughs)

CAREGIVER: I remember that.

DAISUKE: It's just the machine inside that makes that awful racket!

Why is this child, at age 4, no longer afraid of the heater? It isn't just because he has more knowledge of how it works. Indeed, he learned a good deal about the heater from his caregiver when he was only 3. He could even verbalize that it was "just an old machine" that made a frightening noise. Yet his fear persisted. At age 4, he is able to think in a completely different way. His intellectual abilities have changed qualitatively as well as quantitatively. He is no longer completely fooled by how things look or sound (e.g., if the blower sounds like a monster, it must be a monster). He can now use a new kind of reasoning to overcome the misleading appearance of things (e.g., the blower may sound like a monster, but it is really a machine making noise).

In all areas of development, children gradually transform into unique individuals. At each stage, they pose new and fascinating challenges for parents and professionals. What we

expect of them, how we interact with them, what we plan for them to do, and how we meet their social and emotional needs and those of their families are all influenced by a knowledge of these qualitative changes in development.

In this text, **development** is defined as the process by which humans change both qualitatively and quantitatively as they grow older. It is not just adding more knowledge or ability with time; it is the process of transforming, of becoming completely new. **Early childhood development** is defined as the development of children from conception and birth through age 8.

How Have Views on Childhood Changed Over the Years?

We have not always viewed early childhood development in the same way over the years. Also, ideas about how children develop have varied from one part of the world to another. It is helpful for teachers and parents to learn about historical and cultural viewpoints on children. Some of the ways that parents interact with their children may stem from cultural traditions of the past. Teachers may find that some of their own classroom practices are shaped by historical viewpoints. The ways they teach, respond to children's behavior, or plan their curriculum may be influenced by views from long ago rather than current research.

Perspectives of Historically Underrepresented Groups

Many accounts have been written about how views of childhood have changed over the years. Many of these focus on perspectives in Western societies (Heywood, 2013). However, beliefs and attitudes about children of some cultural groups have been largely ignored. In this book, we will refer to such groups as **historically underrepresented**. The views on childhood of some underrepresented groups are distinct, having been shaped by significant historical events and circumstances. For example, African families of centuries past faced hardships that led to the formation of strong kinship and tribal bonds. Families and communities banded together to survive. Adults showed a high degree of concern and caring toward children, as they did toward all members of their families and communities (Franklin, Hale, & Allen, 2001; Hale-Benson, 1986; Nsamenang, 1995, 2004). Mother-child relationships were especially strong in early Africa. Nobles (1985) suggested that this special bond between children and mothers is still an important element in African American family life.

Early descriptions of Native American families also portray close familial and tribal ties (Adair & Braund, 2005; Joe & Malach, 1998). Once again, these formed as a result of challenges to survival, including harsh treatment by Europeans when they arrived. Although great diversity exists among tribes, a theme woven through the ancient stories, family histories, art, and music of most Native American cultures is the interdependence among and respect for all living things. Children were a significant part of the natural order and, therefore, were highly cherished and protected. Communities and families adopted a clear division of labor and a sense of social responsibility. Child rearing was a collective endeavor performed by mothers and fathers, older tribal members, and older and even same-age children. Children were socialized from the earliest days to become part of a group yet were afforded much opportunity for individual expression through art and music. Individual differences were accepted as part of the natural scheme. The high value placed on both social relationships and individual expression is fundamental to Native American life to this day (E. L. Blanchard, 1983; Swanton, 2006).

Early attitudes toward children in China and Japan were influenced by the writings of Confucius (551–479 B.C.). Confucianism's focus on interpersonal harmony led to the belief

in both societies that children are inherently good—a perspective that did not emerge in Europe until many centuries later. A respect for children can be found in descriptions of early Chinese and Japanese life. The education of children was a concern even in ancient times (Ho, 1994; E. Lee & Mock, 2005; Shibusawa, 2005). Between the 16th and 19th centuries, Japanese and Chinese children were encouraged to learn through observation and imitation; question asking was valued. In the 18th century, Japanese philosopher Kaibara Ekken wrote that children should be guided in self-directed learning. He recommended only moderate amounts of punishment or reinforcement.

In China, as early as the 13th century, infancy was recognized as a unique period in development. According to Chinese philosopher Wang Zhong-Yang, the first 60 days of life were a “sensitive period.” The emergence of smiling and walking represented milestones in human growth. It was proposed that the strength of parent–child bonds could lead to a successful transition from infancy to childhood.

Slavery and Colonialism. Views on childhood in some historically underrepresented cultures were strongly influenced by early experiences with slavery and colonialism. Ogbu (1992) argued that the experience of oppression added a new dimension to the lives of some cultural groups generally and children in particular. As families were enslaved or tribes and communities were conquered, new parental values and child-rearing practices emerged by necessity. There are several major ways that oppression has affected children and families (Garcia Coll & Pachter, 2002; McLoyd, Aikens, & Burton, 2006). These are presented in Table 1.1.

TABLE 1.1 The Influences of Oppression on the Lives of Children and Families

Characteristics of Historically Oppressed Families	Example
Collectivism	<p>Persons of historically oppressed groups more often have lived in extended families, which include parents, grandparents, and even aunts and uncles.</p> <p>Family members have often pooled resources and sacrificed individual goals for the good of the family. Collective child care has been common.</p> <p>Neighbors and “friends who are like family” have banded together in the face of adversity.</p> <p>Children have been taught “enmeshment”—strong attachment to family and culture.</p>
Firm and directive parenting	<p>Parents of historically underrepresented groups often have directly regulated children’s behavior in an effort to protect them from the dangers of racism and physical violence.</p> <p>Children have been encouraged to be obedient and not to “talk back” to those in authority—particularly slaveholders or powerful members of the dominant culture.</p>
Valuing or devaluing Western education	<p>Some children of historically oppressed groups have been urged to “exceed white children” in their achievement in Western schools.</p> <p>Some children of historically oppressed groups have been taught to reject the learning and values of Western schools.</p>

As shown in Table 1.1, families who were of oppressed cultures became more **collective** in their thinking and action. Family and nonfamily members banded together, often pooling resources and sharing caregiving tasks. For example, Puerto Rican families of the late 19th century became increasingly close-knit and mutually supportive as they adapted to the conditions of social and economic injustice of the time (Halgunseth, 2004; Sanchez-Ayendez, 1988). Strong kinship bonds were formed and extended beyond family lines. Early practices such as *compadrazgo* (coparenting by relatives and nonrelatives) and *hijos de crianza* (informal adoption of children by nonfamily members) reflected a commitment to shared child rearing among all community members. Close friendships among individuals living in proximity to one another were common. The phrase *como de la familia* (like one of the family) is used to this day to refer to these special mutually supportive nonfamily relationships. Similar kinship relationships were formed in African American culture during slavery (Hale, 1994; Franklin, Hale, & Allen, 2001). Nonfamily adults played a role in child rearing, particularly when families were separated by the sale of parents or by a slaveholder's death. To this day, "a strong desire exists among Black people to be related to each other" (Hale-Benson, 1986, p. 16).

As shown in Table 1.1, child-rearing techniques also changed as a result of oppression (Garcia Coll, 1990; Garcia Coll & Pachter, 2002). Parents often adopted **firm and directive socialization practices** to protect their children from dangers inherent in slavery or colonization. African slave parents, for example, needed to restrict their children's actions to avoid harsh punishment by slaveholders. They encouraged self-sufficiency at an early age; children needed to get along on their own, especially in cases in which parents were sold or the family was split up. Survival demanded that children become mature before their time. They were urged to work hard, complete required tasks, and never complain (L. B. Johnson & Staples, 2004). Slave parents did not hesitate to use the "switch" when children became dangerously insolent (Hale, 1994; Hale & Franklin, 2001).

Among the Plains Indians during western expansion, parents taught young children—even infants—not to cry. This was an adaptive practice designed to keep children from giving away their location to the enemy. Keeping children under control was, again, a necessity for survival among Native American cultures (R. John, 1988; Tafoya & Del Vecchio, 2005).

Beliefs about children's education and success in the dominant culture were also affected by colonization and slavery, as shown in Table 1.1. In some cultures, oppression led to **valuing Western education** and academic achievement within the dominant society. Hale-Benson (1986) noted a strong achievement orientation among African American families. Since the time of emancipation, parents have encouraged their children to be ambitious and hardworking and to "exceed white children's behavior and performance" (p. 48). In other cultures, a **devaluing of Western education** occurred, in which families rejected mainstream paths to success. To this day, some Native American families have encouraged children to actively reject the values and practices of schools of the dominant culture (Canino & Spurlock, 2000; Whitesell, Mitchell, Kaufman, & Spicer, 2006; Wise & Miller, 1983). These families tend to focus instead on teaching competencies that are more highly valued in Native American tradition. Lefly (1976) found that children of Seminole and Miccosukee tribes in Florida had significantly higher self-esteem when they had not been acculturated into the dominant society.

Western Perspectives on Childhood

Western views of childhood have also been influenced by historical events and beliefs. Until the Middle Ages, adults in Western cultures had no real concept of early childhood. Children were considered to be infants until they were 6 or 7 years of age—nonpersons who were sometimes uncared for and unwanted (Aries, 1962; Corsaro, 2005; M. L. King, 2007). They died in great numbers during this time, many at birth. Infanticide was not uncommon through the 17th century; healthy and unhealthy infants were drowned or abandoned. Once children reached the age of 7, they were often viewed as little adults. This perspective is reflected in the paintings of earlier centuries. Children are often shown with mature adult

faces, sitting calmly and piously alongside adult family members (Bjorklund & Bjorklund, 1992; deMause, 1995; M. L. King, 2007). With this perception came the expectation that children would behave like grown-ups. This attitude lingers among some adults to this day. High expectations for “proper” classroom behavior or unrealistic learning goals in early childhood are examples.

During the Renaissance in Western society, children came to be viewed, for the first time, as distinctly different human beings. Parents became preoccupied, however, with rooting out “inherent evil” (M. L. King, 2007; Pollock, 1987). Children were believed to have been born “bad,” and it was the role of adults to train them in the teachings of the church and to “beat the devil out of them” when they strayed. This belief that children are innately immoral persisted through the 18th century. Harsh training and a focus on “breaking the will” of children can be seen even today among some misguided parents and teachers (deMause, 1995).

In Europe and the United States, the 19th and 20th centuries were periods of relative enlightenment in regard to the treatment of children. A new emphasis was placed on socialization. “The raising of a child became less a process of conquering . . . than of training” (deMause, 1974, p. 52). Public schools and eventually child care programs were established to socialize children in every aspect of development. Improvements in health care led to a drastic reduction in childhood mortality. The late 20th century, generally, brought a growing concern for children’s physical, emotional, social, and intellectual needs. Western perspectives on childhood throughout history are presented in Figure 1.1, which shows that caring and concern for children have been relatively recent historical phenomena in Europe and America.

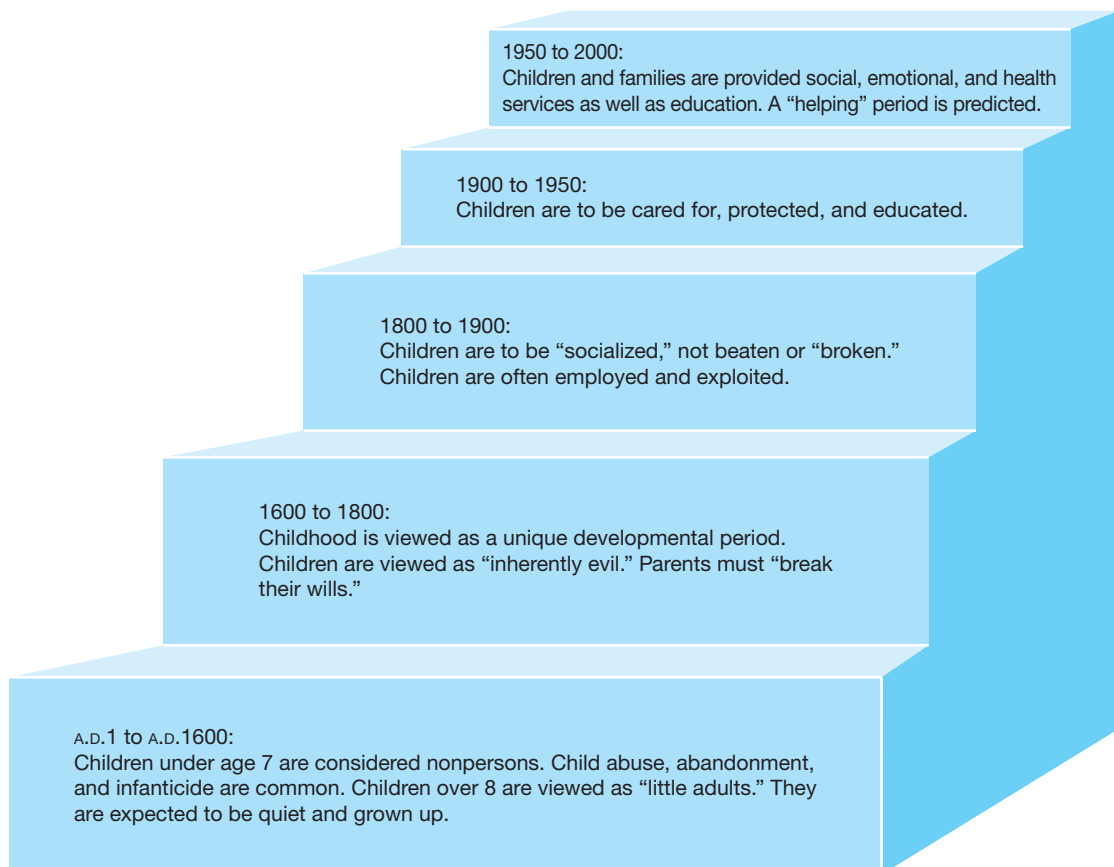


FIGURE 1.1 A history of perspectives on children in Western cultures is presented. The figure shows that caring and concern for children is a relatively new phenomenon in the United States and Europe.

Source: deMause, 1995; Pollock, 1987.

Advocacy and Public Policy

Raising Awareness of the Problems Faced by America's Children

As discussed in this chapter, historians report that we have entered a “period of helping” in which adults in our society recognize and fully meet the needs of children (deMause, 1995). Many Americans, including community leaders, believe that children are faring quite well in our country. However, research does not support such a positive view (Children’s Defense Fund, 2016). Professionals can play an important role in raising public awareness of the many ongoing problems faced by young children in our country: poor health care, malnutrition, low academic achievement, and even abuse and neglect. A message to be conveyed to the public is that we have a long way to go in fully meeting the needs of America’s children.

A common approach to raising awareness is to cite statistics in letters to the editor of local newspapers or presentations at public hearings. Numbers and tables can lack emotional impact, however, and may not convince community leaders of the severity of these problems. A more powerful advocacy method is to invite policymakers to visit children and families in their homes, neighborhoods, and schools to witness firsthand some of the challenges they face. Such is the approach of the Child Watch Visitation Program of the Children’s Defense Fund. This program “adds the faces and stories of real children to the statistics and reports . . . and moves executives, clergy, legislators, and other community leaders out of their offices,

corporate boardrooms, and legislative chambers, and into the world of the real children and families whose lives they affect every day with their decisions” (Children’s Defense Fund, 2016, p. 1).

In one community, program participants invited legislators and business executives to visit local soup kitchens, Head Start centers, and public assistance agencies to observe poverty close up. In another, Child Watch invited community leaders to hear the testimonials of parents living in poverty who discussed the importance of food and nutrition programs. In a particularly innovative strategy, Child Watch members in a third community invited civic leaders to a lunch with families receiving public assistance. Each leader was given an envelope of pretend money with which to buy a meal. Some received adequate funds, some received only half of what was needed to eat, and many received only empty envelopes. This was a powerful simulation of the day-to-day struggles of those without enough money to feed their families.

Professionals can plan such face-to-face encounters between policymakers and families in their local communities or become involved in the national Child Watch program (www.childrensdefense.org). It is important to note that such advocacy can address the needs of families in local communities. However, advocacy to end poverty within society as a whole is also critical.

Unfortunately, research on children in poverty and on traditionally underrepresented ethnic groups in Europe and America suggests that not all children have enjoyed these advances in care and understanding (Children’s Defense Fund, 2014; National Center for Children in Poverty, 2011; Woodhouse, 2010). Zigler and Finn-Stevenson (2007) have suggested that in recent years there has been a shift away from concern about children and families. They cite an increase in reports of child abuse and neglect cases since that time, accompanied by a decrease in family services to address these problems. They point to complex family stressors that may put children’s development in new jeopardy: divorce, substance abuse, and parental depression. A new concern is children’s exposure to violence; a growing number of children witness violent acts in their homes and neighborhoods (Children’s Defense Fund, 2016; Cohen, 2008; Garbarino, Hammond, Mercy, & Yung, 2004; Harpaz-Rotem, Murphy, Berkowitz, Marans, & Rosensheck, 2007). It can be concluded that not all children in modern Western society are receiving the care and support they deserve.

Why Study Early Childhood Development?

We have now defined early childhood development and noted how this definition has varied over time and across cultures. The focus of this section is on why studying early childhood development is important for teachers and other professionals who are working with young children. In other words: Why should you read this text? Table 1.2 presents five ways that it can guide your professional practice.

A Guide to Interactions with Children

We know that young children think and act differently from adults. They use a different form of language, interact with other people in distinct ways, and apply unique meanings to social events. The things that make them worry, cry, or laugh are unique and sometimes unpredictable. Their interests and motivations are peculiar to their developmental level. They have a great need to scream and run and play, to throw things, and to joke and giggle with peers. Without a deep understanding of what young children are like, adults will have difficulty communicating with and comforting them, challenging their thinking, and helping

TABLE 1.2 Five Ways This Text Can Guide Professional Practice

The text can guide	Example
Interactions with children	A teacher learns that the preschool years are a period of magical thinking and irrational fears. So, when a 4-year-old shows anxiety about going onto the playground, she understands the source of the problem and designs a sympathetic, cognitive-based strategy to alleviate the child's fear.
Curriculum planning	A teacher is designing a science activity to teach about seeds in a primary-grade classroom. He reads in Chapter 14 that most children of this age enjoy playing games with rules, so he develops a science board game. He also reads that there are cultural differences in regard to competition, so he designs the game so that all children win and competition is minimized.
Observation and identification of children with special needs	Based on information in Chapter 9, an infant caregiver accurately identifies a 7-month-old who has not become securely attached to her parents. Guided by research, she implements a warmth and responsiveness strategy to help the child bond to others.
Understanding and appreciation of diversity	A primary-grade teacher plans to have children read independent research reports to the whole class. However, he reads in Chapter 16 that children of some culture groups express themselves using a storytelling style. So, he gives students an option of telling the group about their projects.
Advocacy and the shaping of public policy	A kindergarten teacher is concerned about the problem of bullying on the playground and in the school bus. Citing research from Chapter 13 showing that this negative social behavior forms very early in life, she advocates for a preschool to grade 12 antibullying program at a local school board meeting.