Chapter One
Introduction

Human Development

The study of human development is the science that seeks to understand:
- how and why all kinds of people change over time from conception to death
- how and why they remain the same

Life-span perspective
- Recognizes reciprocal connection of one chronological period to another

The Life Span Perspective

- Five Characteristics of Development
  - Multidirectional
  - Multicontextual
  - Multicultural
  - Multidisciplinary
  - Plasticity
Multidirectional (1)
- Refers to nonlinear progression
  - Gains & losses, compensations & deficits
  - Predictable growth & unexpected changes
  - It is dynamic, not static
  - Physical health, intellectual growth, and social interaction
  - Up, down, stable or erratic

Multicontextual (2)
- Each life takes place in a number of contexts
  - Physical - climate, noise, urbanization
  - Family - structure
  - Social
    - Historical, socioeconomic, and cultural

Three Broad Contexts Within the Social Context
- The Social Context
- Economic
- Social
- Cultural
The Socioeconomic Context

- Socioeconomic Status (SES)
  - Social class
  - Education
  - Income
  - Neighborhood
  - Occupation of head of household
- Includes all advantages & disadvantages associated with status

The Cultural Context

- Culture affects every aspect of life
- Design for living developed over years
- Provides a social structure
- Includes—set of values, assumptions, customs, clothes, dwellings, cuisine, and patterns of behavior etc.

Multicultural (3)

- There are many cultures within each nation
- Each with a multitude of values, traditions, and tools for living
- Ethnicity can be an important cultural category
Ethnicity, Race, and Income

- **Ethnic group**
  - Share certain attributes, almost always ancestral heritage and often including national origin, religion, customs, and language
  - Has a culture based on history, sociology, and psychology, not biology
- People can belong to more than one culture

Ethnicity, Race, and Income, cont.

- **RACE**
  - Term intended to categorize people biologically based on genetic differences
  - No clear-cut racial groups
  - Is a distorted concept, a social construction
- SES variations tend to follow ethnic variations

Multidisciplinary (4)

- Dozens of academic disciplines contribute data & insights
- Simultaneous development of body, mind, and spirit
- Three domains of biosocial, cognitive, psychosocial
**Plasticity (5)**
- Every person including personality, body & mind change throughout life span
- Characteristics can be molded
- Change is ongoing, neither random nor easy
  - A durability can be maintained
  - Provides hope and realism

**The Person Within the Context**
- Person is guided in divergent directions by many contextual influences
- No one is "average"—each person unique
- Each may defy easy predictions

**Developmental Study as a Science**
- Based on objective evidence (objective)
- Laden with personal implications and applications (subjective)
- Most dynamic, unpredictable, & interdisciplinary
Scientific Method
- General way to seek evidence to answer question, involving four basic steps and sometimes a fifth.
  1. formulate a research question
  2. develop a hypothesis
  3. test the hypothesis
  4. draw conclusions
  5. make findings available

Research Methods
- Four Methods of Testing Hypotheses
  - observations
  - experiments
  - surveys
  - case studies

Studying Changes over Time
- Developmental research must be able to deal with changes that continue over time
- three basic designs:
  - cross-sectional
  - longitudinal
  - cross-sequential
- Ecological-Systems Approach