CHAPTER 4
by Lea Pulkkinen

POSITIVE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: A SPONTANEOUS OR GUIDED PROCESS?

POLICY LESSONS FROM 45 YEARS OF LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH IN FINLAND

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Editors: Michiel Matthes, Lea Pulkkinen, Luis Manuel Pinto, Christopher Clouder
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INTRODUCTION

Positive human development as an area of study

A longitudinal study refers to a research method that studies individuals' development across time with measurements at periodic intervals. I have been interested in human development since childhood. I used to entertain myself by imagining what kind of adults the children I knew were going to become in the future. This interest predicted my career as a longitudinal researcher.

I collected the first data for the *Jyväskylä Longitudinal Study of Personality and Social Development (JYLS)* for my doctoral dissertation in 1968 with pupils who were in 12 randomly selected school classes in different schools. They were eight years of age. I have followed their development up to the age of 50 years (Table 1). Many kinds of research methods have been used: in childhood, teacher ratings and peer nominations were used, and in adulthood methods such as inventories, personal interviews and medical examinations were utilized. The latest data were collected in 2009, and the new data will be collected when the participants turn 60 years. The project has been productive in terms of publications. To validate our findings, our team has made cross-national comparisons with Swedish, Canadian, U.S., and British samples. Comparative studies have confirmed our findings. Psychological processes in human development are largely universal.

TABLE 1. THE JYVÄSKYLÄ LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (JYLS)

YEAR	1968	1974		1980	1986	1992	1995	2001	2009
AVERAGE AGE	8	14		20	27	33	36	42	50
MALE PARTICIPANTS	196	189	77	68	166	123	161	151	144
FEMALE PARTICIPANTS	173	167	77	67	155	126	152	134	127
METHOD									
Peer nomination	●	●							
Teacher rating	●	●							
Personality tests	●					●	●	●	●
Interview			●	●	●		●	●	●
Parental interview			●						
Life Situation Questionnaire					●		●	●	●
Inventories				●			●	●	●
Medical examination								●	●

In 1968, when I prepared my doctoral dissertation on the study of children's social behaviour I was critical of psychological studies which were focused on negative aspects of people's social behaviour, and which ignored positive development and factors which promote it. I noticed that the vocabulary and theories which described children's differences in positive behaviour were very limited. I was only able to find a couple of studies on positive, prosocial behaviour. Most studies focused on aggression, anxiety and other problem behaviours. The study of prosocial

behaviours, such as empathy, altruism, interpersonal skills, and moral behaviour emerged only in the 1970s. Due to a lack of theoretical ideas and empirical studies on both positive and negative behaviours, I constructed my own framework in which to integrate them.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, behaviourist psychology dominated psychology. Behaviourism is mainly based on animal learning studies. I felt that I could not apply knowledge of animal behaviour to children, because human beings, even when they are small children, are more aware of their behaviour than animals. Human beings have the capacity to make decisions between behavioural alternatives through their cognitive processes. Instead of 'fight or flight' which characterizes animals' behaviour in a threatening situation, the child may find more creative solutions to the situation through negotiating and trying to understand another person's motives and behaviour. Cognitive control (or self-control) over one's emotions and behaviour became the core idea of my study. One of the strengths of the JYLS is its pioneering study of self-control that explains both positive development and problem behaviours (Pulkkinen, 2014).

Self-control and socioemotional behaviour

Self-control is associated with emotion regulation that refers to the redirection, control, and modification of negative emotional arousal to enable an individual to function adaptively in emotionally arousing situations. Self-control starts to develop in children just after birth (Cicchetti et al., 1991). The baby tries to regulate his/her ill-being by sucking a pacifier or his or her own fingers. Regular and good care and adequately responding to children's needs helps the baby in homeostatic regulation and later in more conscious regulation. By age three, the child has learned the basics of self-control if his/her upbringing has been consistent and supports the development of self-control – and if the child has no developmental delays due to neurological problems.

By middle childhood the child's way of regulating his/her behaviour and emotions, in the other words, the child's socioemotional behaviour becomes typical of his/her way of behaving. 'Socioemotional' refers to the significance of emotions and emotional regulation for the process of socialization which takes place in the interaction of an individual's temperament and external influences, particularly, upbringing.

Differences in children's behaviour are nowadays often described in terms of temperament, highlighting the biological basis of personality. Rothbart and her colleagues argued in the 1980s that differences in temperament result from the *self-regulation of reactivity* to external stimuli (see Rothbart, 2011). When I started my study on socioemotional behaviour in the 1960s, Rothbart's temperament theory was not available, but I argued, correspondingly, that differences in socioemotional behaviour result from the *self-control of behavioural activity*. Recent studies have shown that both temperament and socioemotional behaviour are affected by genetic and environmental factors, and that there is much similarity between them. Children's behavioural activity predicts temperamental and social activity in adulthood (Pulkkinen, Kokko & Rantanen, 2012). The constructs of self-regulation and self-control, in turn, are used interchangeably in the literature (Vohs & Baumeister, 2004).

A two-dimensional model

I devised a model to describe children's differences in socioemotional behaviour (see Figure 1, p. 49, in Pulkkinen, 2012). It is formed by two dimensions, behavioural activity versus passivity and high versus low self-control. Both active and passive behaviour may appear in high-controlled or low-controlled forms. Low-controlled activity may be indicated by *aggressive* behaviour and low-controlled passivity may be indicated by being overwhelmed by a negative emotion such as *anxiety*. High-controlled activity, in turn, may be indicated by *constructive* behaviour where an individual controls the display of negative emotions, takes other people into consideration, and negotiates in a conflict situation. High-controlled passivity may be indicated by *compliant* behaviour where the person controls the expression of negative emotions and avoids an active engagement in the situation. I assessed self-control using teacher ratings and peer nominations.

Results that I published in my doctoral dissertation in 1969 confirmed my hypothesis about the significance of these differences in children's self-control for the quality of their socioemotional behaviour at age 8. Therefore, I wanted to study whether these differences had predictive value for their future development. So the cross-sectional study (a study at one point in time) expanded to become a long-standing longitudinal study (i.e. a study taking place at several time points).

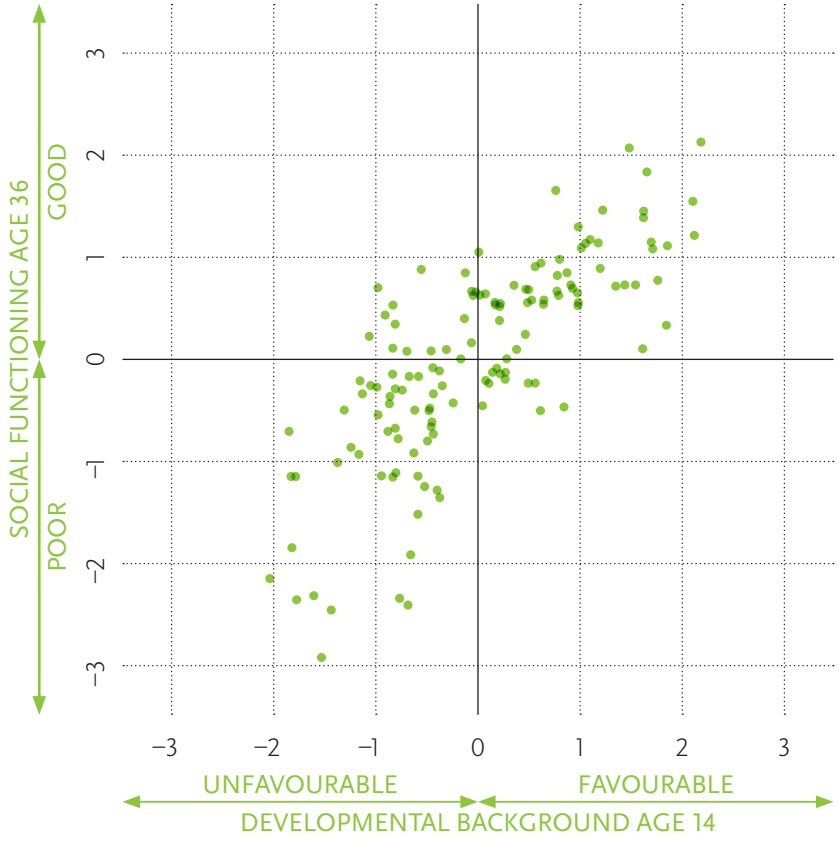
I also had a personal motive to conduct a longitudinal study. I wanted to know how much the child's development is dependent on spontaneous growth and how much parents can or should direct the child's development. What roles do upbringing, peer group activities, education, and socioeconomic conditions play in the child's developmental outcomes – in good and bad ways? I had studied psychology and education, but my studies had not provided an answer to these questions. I was a young mother – my daughters were born when I was 21 and 24 years of age, and I wanted to know how to help them develop positively.

RESULTS

Antecedents of positive social functioning

We defined the quality of social functioning at age 36 in terms of socialization into the norms of society, controlled drinking of alcohol, and a stable career path, and looked for factors from the preceding years that would explain the differences in social functioning between individuals. We found that positive social functioning was highly predicted by a *favourable developmental background* (Pulkkinen et al., 2002). Good social functioning in adulthood (i.e. no delinquency, no drinking problems, and a stable career) was likely if the person's developmental background was favourable, whereas poor social functioning in adulthood (delinquency, drinking problems, and problems with employment) was likely if the individual's developmental background was unfavourable. No one who had a very favourable developmental background was very poor in terms of social functioning, and no one who had a very unfavourable developmental background was very good in terms of social functioning (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. DEVELOPMENTAL BACKGROUND AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONING IN ADULTHOOD; MEN (THE FIGURE IS SIMILAR FOR WOMEN)



Favourable developmental background consisted of (1) high self-control at age 8; (2) school success and school motivation at age 14; and (3) good family circumstances. Thus both individual development (self-control) and orientation towards school work contributed to social functioning in adulthood, in the interaction with family circumstances. The quality of family circumstances, in turn, was formed by the quality of the atmosphere in the family, the parents' use of alcohol, and socioeconomic status. The weight of socioeconomic status was lower than that of the other components which means that socioeconomic status did not explain children's future social functioning to the extent that it is often expected to do. Psychological factors at home were more influential for the child's social development.

A good family atmosphere was formed by a good relationship between the parents and the child's good relationship with the father. Relationships between the parents and between the child and the father are often threatened by divorce, the rate of which is high in Finland. A divorce is not a causal factor affecting the child's development, but it may increase the risks for poor social development. The mother was also important for the child, but her role came out in child-centred vs. adult-centred parenting. Child-centred parenting supports the development of the child's self-control; adult-centred parenting leaves the child's emotional regulation and social skills underdeveloped (Pulkkinen, 1982).

Child-centred parenting means that the parents trust the child, are aware of the child's leisure activities (www = where, with whom, and what he/she is doing), encourages school attendance, provides support to the child to help him/her cope with emotional problems, considers the child's opinion, is fair in setting and carrying out restrictions and sanctions, and communicates daily with the child (Table 2).

What tends to be typical of the opposite type of parenting, known as *adult-centred parenting*, is that the parent's behaviour depends more on the parent's mood and time and other resources than on the child's needs. The parent may be indifferent to the child, inconsistent, and unfair, and pay little attention to the child. The child is left emotionally alone which provokes aggression and anxiety in him/her. Furthermore, adult-centred parenting was characterized by the use of corporal punishment. Several studies have shown that corporal punishment is a risk factor for the child's development.

TABLE 2. CHILD-CENTRED VS. PARENT-CENTRED PARENTING IS A COMPONENT OF THE CHILD'S DEVELOPMENTAL BACKGROUND THAT CONTRIBUTES TO HIS/HER SOCIAL FUNCTIONING IN ADULTHOOD

CHILD-CENTRED PARENTING	ADULT-CENTRED PARENTING
Parents trust the child	Parents are sometimes or often distrustful
Parents know child's free-time company	Parents don't know or know sometimes
Parents know where child spends his leisure	Parents don't know or know sometimes
Parents encourage child's school attendance	Parents are indifferent or nagging
No spanking	Spanking still in teenage
Parents sympathetic in child's failure at school	Parents are punitive or indifferent
Parents consider the child's opinion	Parents don't consider or consider sometimes the child's opinion
Just restrictions and sanctions	Unjust restrictions and sanctions
Conversation between Parents and child daily	Parents are inconsistent in upbringing
Parents approve child's leisure	Parents are authoritarian
Promotes high self-control in a child	Promotes low self-control in a child

It was interesting to note that it is the child's experience of upbringing that is influential on his or her development (Pulkkinen, 1982). The parents may say, for instance, that they know about the child's whereabouts or consider the child's opinion, but the child may not concur with this view. The child's experience is decisive. Children have different needs, and even in the same family children may experience their parents' behaviour differently.

High self-control predicts positive outcomes in adulthood

Results of the JYLS have shown (Pulkkinen, 2014) that higher self-control in childhood, indicated by constructive and compliant behavior, predicts many aspects of the individuals' future lives, as summarized below:

- personality characteristics known as conformity (in men) and conscientiousness (in women)
- higher educational and occupational status
- a higher level of income in middle age
- better spousal relationship
- larger social networks
- lower substance use
- less criminal behaviour.

Low self-control predicts the accumulation of problems in adulthood

Lower self-control in childhood, indicated by aggressive and anxious behaviour, predicts:

- aggressiveness and neuroticism as personality characteristics
- a cycle of maladjustment at school, attaining lower levels of education, and long-term unemployment
- early onset of smoking and drinking which tend to lead to later problem drinking
- spousal conflicts and divorce
- delinquency
- depressive symptoms
- lower levels of psychological and physical well-being

In general, high self-control in childhood is an important antecedent of positive development in adulthood, whereas low self-control is a risk for the child's future development.

Developmental paths

Children's developmental paths can be presented schematically based on statistically significant associations (see Figure 2, p. 166, in Pulkkinen, 2013). In individual cases, connections may be different, because individuals have the capacity to strive to achieve new goals and change track.

Children's aggressive behaviour tended to lead to an undercontrolled lifestyle including an early onset of smoking and drinking and norm-breaking behaviour. Anxious behaviour tended to lead to an overcontrolled lifestyle including social anxiety and an inclination to depressive symptoms. Constructive behaviour tended to lead to a resilient lifestyle characterized by optimism and planning for the future, and compliant behaviour tended to lead to a reserved lifestyle characterized by abstinence and home-oriented activities.

About 10% of our sample had experienced lengthened or accumulated problems. The highest risks for social exclusion were caused by alcoholism and persistent criminal behaviour. By persistent criminal behaviour we mean the committing of offences both in adolescence and in adulthood.

Well-being

Well-being in adulthood was studied from different perspectives such as emotional well-being, consisting of an individual's positive evaluation of and overall satisfaction with his or her life; positive affect and absence of negative affect; and psychological well-being. Psychological well-being describes an individual's positive functioning in different areas of his/her life (Ryff & Keyes, 1995):

- self-acceptance which can be seen, for instance, in the person experiencing a positive mood
- a sense of the meaning of life which can be seen in the person's enthusiasm and goal-directed behaviour
- personal growth which can be seen in personal interests in new things and learning
- positive relationships which can be seen in the individual's friendliness
- autonomy which can be seen in self-control and the capacity to resist temptation
- environmental mastery which can be seen in an individual's use of facilities such as recreation in nature and visiting cultural institutions.

Psychological well-being is associated with physical and social well-being. Physical well-being can be seen in the person's level of energy. A healthy lifestyle strengthens physical well-being. Social well-being, in turn, is based on the sense of belonging and social acceptance.

Well-being, covering emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and low levels of depression, shows high continuity in adulthood (Kokko et al., 2013). It means that individuals who are higher in well-being at one time point, tends to be higher in it also at another time point in comparison to other individuals. Psychological well-being in adulthood is associated with the high level of social functioning (cf. Figure 1), the length of education and stable career development (Pulkkinen et al., 2006), and the breadth and depth of social networks (Pulkkinen et al., 2011). These phenomena have their roots in self-control in childhood, but self-control in childhood also directly predicts adult psychological well-being.

The well-being of a child and the well-being of the people around him/her are interdependent. The child's well-being increases the parents' well-being and the parents' well-being affects children. We do not live as isolated beings but we are a part of the whole social system through our mutual relationships (Sameroff, 2010).

WHAT POLICY LESSONS CAN BE DRAWN FROM THE LONGITUDINAL STUDY?

1 Economic equality

Finland is known as a country where economic equality is high. Wilkinson (2011) defines inequality with the following measure: how much richer are the richest 20 percent than the poorest 20 per cent in each country. In more equal countries like Finland, the top 20 percent are 3.5-5 times as rich as the bottom 20 per cent but in the more unequal countries, such as the USA and Australia, they are 8-9 times as rich. Inequality is associated with many well-being problems.

In the JYLS, the parents' socioeconomic status was not highly significant for their children's future, and this is due to the economic equality in Finland. From studies conducted in economically less equal countries it is known that economic inequality is the source of many problems related to child well-being, such as failing at school or college, poor health, violence, drug abuse, and teenage pregnancy. Therefore, economic equality is number one in child-friendly politics. Families also need services for health care, day care, education, and so on, and maternity and paternity leave benefits. Low-threshold services which should offer the kind of service that would be accessible for everyone in a simple way, and early interventions prevent the escalation of problems. Low-threshold services may be targeted at a specific group such as youth, alcohol or drug users, and victims of domestic violence or be available more generally in a service place, but the idea is that individuals who need help could make the first contact easily without an appointment. The service may also include temporary domestic help when there is, for example, parental sickness.

2 Parental education and support

Parents are the most important people for the child, and parenting has a significant effect on the development of children's self-control and life paths. Therefore, special attention needs to be paid to parental education. It should be arranged as a preparation for parenthood complemented by parenting support once the child is born. Information could be provided on various topics, for example:

- child development and the factors affecting it
- risks during pregnancy, such as the effects of the mother's substance use on the foetus
- child-centred parenting, and the risks of adult-centred parenting on the child's development
- the child's self-control and other capacities for positive development
- maintenance of a good spousal relationship that forms an important pillar of the child's sense of security, and caring for the home and handling finances.
- adult development generally and in terms of the parents' interaction with the child.

In a society where people are expected to undertake training for all occupations, it is amazing that in the most important task that people have, that of bringing up the new generation, they are left to cope on their own.

3 Child-centred orientation at school and in society

During the child's school years, a cycle of maladaptation which means, for example, that the child's aggressive behaviour leads to school maladjustment, which in turn leads o problem drinking and long-term unemployment (Kokko & Pulkkinen, 2000), as well as a continuum in positive development start to emerge. The school is the institution which connects with every child and family. The school could help the child break the cycle of maladaptation, and increase his/her positive orientation. Therefore, special attention needs to be paid to the ways in which the school interacts with children.

> *When I interviewed the study participants at age 14, I noticed that adolescents with high self-control answered my question: What is a good teacher like? by saying: A good teacher is good at teaching. In contrast, adolescents with low self-control answered: A good teacher understands children.*

Children with low self-control may not have as much energy for attending school due to many problems in their lives compared to children with high self-control and good home circumstances. Unfortunately, children who experience problems in adjusting to school often receive punishment or indifference at school instead of support and care. The child may experience at school in a teacher's behaviour the same features of adult-centredness such as indifference, unfairness, punishment, and lack of encouragement, that he or she is experiencing at home with adult-centred parents. It is known that a child needs at least one adult who really cares about him or her in order to develop successfully.

A three-year intervention study at schools on integrated or flexible school days, which refers to a school day structure in which extracurricular activities and children's care are organized in the school before and after lessons, and sometimes between lessons (Pulkkinen, 2012) showed that the atmosphere at school could be improved by extracurricular activities at school, particularly in music, art and handicrafts. These activities increase children's working and social skills. They also reduce children's loneliness and depressive symptoms, and decrease the level of bullying taking place at the school.

An educative approach for all children would help antisocial children who are at risk of social exclusion. Half of juvenile delinquents are normal adolescents, in the other words they do not differ from non-offenders in personality (Pulkkinen et al., 2009), but are delayed in their maturity. Their offending could be reduced by supporting maturation, for instance, by reorganizing school work to include extracurricular activities; and by improving the supervision of adolescents' activities.

Half of all juvenile delinquents have serious problems with self-control. These problems can be detected at an early age. Remedial work is needed with the child and the family. Punishment-based treatment, such as putting young people in prison, creates an identity that the person is antisocial person and this perception is difficult to change. Attention should be educative; and this does not mean remaining in the dark about what the children or young people are getting up to.

The use of alcohol in adolescence increases the risks of maladjustment through the accumulation of problems. It is important to control the availability and use of alcohol among under-aged adolescents. Parents should understand the risks and work together towards the same goal.

4 Pay more attention to positive behaviour: human strengths and their development

Philosophers, theologians, educators, and psychologists have long been interested in what positive development and a good life consist of. Classification systems exist for the study of people's mental health problems, but there is nothing comparable for positive development. Since 2000, an orientation towards positive psychology has grown rapidly. The evidence for this is the number of researchers studying *positive subjective experiences* (positive emotions such as happiness), *positive traits* (human strengths), as well as *positive institutions* which promote positive development.

As a result of a large international team working together to analyse research which attempts to categorize or discuss human virtues, strengths, or morality, a list of 24 character strengths was drawn up by Seligman and Peterson (see Niemic, 2013). These character strengths are grouped under six universally acknowledged virtues:

1. Wisdom and knowledge – Cognitive strengths
2. Courage – Emotional strengths
3. Humanity – Interpersonal strengths
4. Justice – Civic strengths
5. Temperance – Strengths that protect against excess (includes self-control)
6. Gratitude – Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen

One of these 24 character strengths, self-control, is something I have studied for 45 years. The development of other character strengths also deserves to be studied longitudinally.

5 Be aware of the image of the child that you hold

In empirical studies, the assumptions about the basic nature of the child (i.e., the image or conception of the child) are rarely discussed. However, the image of the child that is held affects the way adults function with children, and the image of the child that an organization holds determines the actions that the organization will undertake (Matthes, 2010a). It is important for collaboration between stakeholders that differences in the conception of the child are clarified. In fact, the image of the child should

be included in the strategy formulations of an organization, in addition to its goals and expected outcomes. Some aspects of a possible image of the child are outlined below.

5.1 Is human development a spontaneous or guided process?

The question in the title of this paper: Is human development a spontaneous or guided process? is related to the nature versus nurture controversy in science that was phrased by Francis Galton in the late 19th century. It means the problem of determining the relative importance of inborn – biological or spiritual – givens which affect the child's growth (through nature), and psychological experiences such as upbringing which affect the child's development (through nurture). Galton regarded inherited characteristics as the origins of human nature in accordance to the theory of evolution developed by Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin (see Chung & Hyland, 2012). The Western scientific view of the nature of the human being does not include assumptions about spiritual givens through incarnation and karma that are core ideas concerning the nature of human being in some Eastern philosophies. These Eastern philosophies expand the concept of nature from biological inborn givens to also include the spiritual aspects of a human being.

The aspect of nurture, in turn, was proposed by philosopher John Locke in the 17th century. He argued that at birth the mind is a blank sheet (tabula rasa). Experience leads to ideas and ideas associated with each other make up the human mind. In psychology, the nurture view was highly emphasized in the work of John Watson who introduced in the 1920s a new approach called behaviorism. He explained individual differences by learning processes based on the reinforcement of a response to a stimulus. For almost 50 years, learning theory dominated research on human development.

The rise of behavioral genetics shifted researchers' attention to the nature view. The effects of genes and environment on twins' behavior could be differentiated with statistical methods, and it was found that genetic differences explained the large proportions of behavioral differences. In general, advances in biological science such as ethology, neuroscience, and molecular biology have promoted the nature view, whereas advances in social sciences such as social ecology by Bronfenbrenner (1977), the study of economic circumstances, and cultural psychology have promoted the nurture view, as reviewed by Sameroff (2010).

Sameroff (2010, p. 9) argues that "the more recent swings between nature and nurture have been getting shorter and their intermingling has been increasing," and that "they mutually constitute each other." Both nature and nurture are needed for development. According to his dialectical perspective on this issue, relationships between the opposite units are more fundamental than the units themselves. Also genes react to environment. There is "a growing emphasis on gene-environment interactions, epigenome-experience transactions, and brain plasticity" (p. 19).

The nature-nurture debate has been solved by Western researchers by accepting an interactional view. Human characteristics are formed in the interaction of inborn givens and psychological experiences (prenatal and postnatal). Almost all biological and psychological traits are formed by the interaction of genes and environment, and their growth or development depends on both aspects. High heritability is found in a person's physical characteristics such as eye color and blood type, whereas low heritability is found, for instance, in a person speaking his or her native language. A child is genetically predisposed to learn a human language, but environmental factors affect his or her learning a native language, because he or she learns to speak the language that is spoken to him or her.

Genes make a substantial contribution to the child's intelligence, but the level and manifestation of intelligence depends on life conditions. Genes also contribute to self-regulation, but environmental factors strengthen or modify the child's inclinations. In an environment where personal choices are limited, environmental factors affect behaviour more highly than in an environment where individuals have opportunities to make individual choices. In the school setting, the environment is more uniform than when one has completed one's schooling. Therefore, genetic factors explain cognitive performance more highly after the school age than during the school age.

As a whole, my answer to the question in the title: "is development spontaneous or should it be guided?" is that it is *spontaneous and it should be guided*. Both inborn givens and psychological experiences are involved in the process of human development. Human development can be seen as a process of unfolding an individual's uniqueness in which mutually interacting biological, psychological, social, cultural, and societal factors are involved.

5.2 The conception of the child and children's upbringing

From the childrearing perspective, the viewpoints of nature and nurture lead to different approaches being taken. The nature viewpoint means that parents do not have much influence on their children as the child's growth is determined by his/her inborn givens, whereas the nurture viewpoint means that parenting plays a crucial role in human development, because children have to learn everything through experience. Nurture was traditionally defined in terms of upbringing, but this narrow view has since been abandoned. It has been found that already before the child's birth there are forces from the physical and social world that influence the child's biological makeup, such as the mother's nutrition, drug use, lifestyle, and the language she speaks. Also, after the child's birth, upbringing is not the only source of psychological experiences for children. Siblings, peers, school, media and other experiences affect the child's development. Subsequently, the definition of nurture has been expanded to include all environmental influences on development from prenatal experiences to postnatal influences.

Besides the nature-nurture controversy, the conception of the child/human being has different philosophical, religious, and cultural backgrounds. A

couple of examples from different cultures demonstrate differences in children's upbringing.

Western child rearing is affected by the idea of 'original sin' which suggests that people are basically bad (due to the fall of Adam), argues Professor Murray A. Strauss (1994), a famous researcher into family violence. The concept of original sin has led to the idea of the child being possessed by the devil. A harsh upbringing and the use of corporal punishment in some religious circles have been justified in terms of the perceived need to "beat the devil out of the child". Evidence by the 1990s showed that more than 90 percent of American parents hit toddlers and most of them continued to hit their children for years. Spanking children may also be part of other religious and cultural traditions. Spanking has been, and still is, common in schools in many countries. Many studies show that corporal punishment is harmful for children. It is associated with children's aggressiveness and delinquent behaviour as well as with mental health problems. In Finland, corporal punishment at school was forbidden by legislation 100 years ago and in the home 30 years ago.

Another example is from West Africa where three basic dimensions of personhood have traditionally been recognized: spiritual, social and ancestral (Nsamenang, 1992). Spiritual self-hood begins at conception and ends with the naming of the child. Giving the child a name is an ontogenetic event of primal importance. Traditionally, West African names address an inherent force that transcends human biology and consciousness. Naming is a moment of incorporating the child into the community of the living and this is when the child's social self-hood begins. Social self-hood has several stages and ends with death. The third, ancestral self-hood begins after the biological death, and extends to the ritual initiation of the ancestral spirit into a higher spiritual realm. In child-rearing, the main aim is to prepare children for adulthood through socializing children from one stage to the next until the assumption of adult roles. Caring for the child is the task of the mother, siblings and the whole community. The sharing and exchange of norms bind siblings and the entire social system together. Training is pragmatic. The respect for seniority and obeying one's elders and superiors is one of the keys to West African behaviour.

Other differences in the conception of child include, for instance, seeing the child as a miniature adult or as qualitatively different from an adult (Hirsjärvi, 1981). Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud saw that the instinctive infantile sexual energy of the infant continued into adulthood as qualitatively unchanged, whereas Jean Piaget, a famous developmental psychologist, had a belief in qualitative differences between the child and the adult, particularly, in thinking. If the child is seen as a miniature adult, it is not understood that the child needs protection and age-appropriate experiences. Viewing the child as a miniature adult is very common nowadays, for instance, in the commercial view of the child.

One more example of differences in the conception of the child is in seeing the child as passive or active. In psychology, behaviorism sees the child as passive and this is reflected in practice when parents and other adults (such as school authorities) set goals for the child's development, and his or her behaviour is shaped by rewards and punishments. In more recent

learning theories, the child is seen as more active. The belief that the child is an active initiator starts from a holistic assumption, and this belief is found in self-actualizing theories such as those by Rogers and Maslow. If the active model of the child is held, a parent or an adult functions as a resource individual, as a facilitator of the child's pursuit of his/her own objectives, and as an expander of those objectives. This view is found in alternative pedagogics such as Rudolf Steiner's Waldorf pedagogics.

5.3 The image of the child

The conception of the child has an impact on children's upbringing and, therefore, it would be necessary to increase awareness of it. The formulation of the image of the child within the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group fits well with my research-based conception of the child.

The child is endowed with his/her inner potential to grow, learn and communicate, and to participate in his/her own way and with his/her own rights in our human society.
The child is an agent of his or her own life, but in relation with others. He/she is not an object that must be pushed and modeled into a shape that pleases the adult.
Adults who are sensitive to the child's needs help him/her to unfold his/her uniqueness.

Subsequently, a good quality childhood is based on the following principles and attitudes (Matthes, 2010b):

- The child's aspirations child is respected with his/her aspirations to to develop his/her inner potential are respected
- The quality of relationships that the child has with important adults such as his/her parents and teachers is a key element for his/her growth as a human being.

In general, most children develop positively and are resilient when meeting with some risks in their lives. They have the inner potential to grow individually, learn new things and communicate with others, and they have a need for agency over their own behaviour and life. But there are critical factors that affect the accumulation of risks. Children and young people may react to the risks in dysfunctional ways. Our task is to reduce and eliminate those risks such as poverty and poor parenting and lack of educational opportunities.

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BIOGRAPHY

Lea Pulkkinen, Professor Emerita of Psychology at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland (1972 – 2005) was the Director of the Programme on Human Development and Its Risk Factors, approved as the Finnish Centre of Excellence from 1997 to 2005, and President of the International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development (ISSBD) from 1991 to 1996. She has conducted a longitudinal study on social development from1968 to the present, has collaborated in a longitudinal twin study since 1991, and organized a three-year school experiment for improving the educational offering of schools in the 2000s. In the applied field, she has been interested in how results of longitudinal studies can be utilized to improve the quality of childhood. She has about 490 publications. She received the Finnish State Award for her lifetime dissemination of knowledge in 2011, the Finnish Science Award in 2001, the Aristotle Prize from the European Federation of Psychologists' Association (EFPA), and the Distinguished Scientific Contributions to the Child Development Award from the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) in the United States in 2005.
(website: users.jyu.fi/~leapulkk)