

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in Child Development

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## THE ENVIRONMENT

*Where Children Spend Time and  
Become Who They Are*

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## The Environment

### Where Children Spend Time and Become Who They Are

Elements in Child Development

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**Abstract:** The focus of this Element is on the environment and how it is implicated in children's development. A very broad array of social and physical features connected to children's home life and to the neighborhoods where children live, including multiple aspects of parenting, housing characteristics, and the increased prevalence of media in daily life, are addressed. Attention is also given to the broader social, economic, and geographic contexts in which children live, such as neighborhood surroundings and conditions in less developed countries. There is a focus on how various aspects of the home context (e.g., crowding) and key parental characteristics, such as mental illness and substance abuse problems, affect the behavior of parents. Consideration is also given to how various forms of chaos and instability present challenges for parents and children and how those circumstances are implicated in both children's development and caregiver behavior.

**Keywords:** parenting, home environment, cumulative risk, child development

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