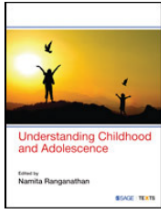


# Understanding Childhood and Adolescence

Edited by  
**Namita Ranganathan**

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**Edited by:**

[Namita Ranganathan](#) - Professor, Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi

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## CHAPTER

# 4

# Perspectives on Children and Childhood

Ravneet Kaur

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- Describe childhood as socially and historically constructed.
- Explain the notion of multiplicity of childhoods.
- Develop an imagery of childhood in contemporary times through the lens of social class.
- Contextualize childhood in the social construct of gender.

## 4.1. INTRODUCTION

We are often curious to find answers to certain perplexing questions pertaining to children and childhood such as 'who' and 'what' is a child? Which images appear in our minds when we think about a child? Are children really as adults perceive them to be? Are children entities in their own right? As individuals, how do children live and experience the world? What is childhood all about? Does the form of childhood remain static and universal or does it change over time and place? Indeed, the intrigues of children and childhood are many, each raising a set of questions to be probed and understood.

Over several centuries in the past, childhood as a stage of life was considered to be universal and invariant. The dominant ways of understanding childhood within courses and books on education, psychology and child development rested extensively on the concepts of development and progression. It is only very recently that the cultural constructions of childhood have begun to be

