



Developing Destinies: A Mayan Midwife and Town (Child Development in Cultural Context)

Barbara Rogoff

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Born with the destiny of becoming a Mayan sacred midwife, Chona Pérez has carried on centuries-old traditional Indigenous American birth and healing practices over her 85 years. At the same time, Chona developed new approaches to the care of pregnancy, newborns, and mothers based on her own experience and ideas. In this way, Chona has contributed to both the cultural continuities and cultural changes of her town over the decades.

In *Developing Destinies*, Barbara Rogoff illuminates how individuals worldwide build on cultural heritage from prior generations and at the same time create new ways of living. Throughout Chona's lifetime, her Guatemalan town has continued to use longstanding Mayan cultural practices, such as including children in a range of community activities and encouraging them to learn by observing and contributing. But the town has also transformed dramatically since the days of Chona's own childhood. For instance, although Chona's upbringing included no formal schooling, some of her grandchildren have gone on to attend university and earn scholarly degrees. The lives of Chona and her town provide extraordinary examples of how cultural practices are preserved even as they are adapted and modified.

Developing Destinies is an engaging narrative of one remarkable person's life and the life of her community that blends psychology, anthropology, and history to reveal the integral role that culture plays in human development. With extensive photographs and accounts of Mayan family life, medical practices, birth, child development, and learning, Rogoff adeptly shows that we can better understand the role of culture in our lives by examining how people participate in cultural practices. This landmark book brings theory alive with fascinating ethnographic findings that advance our understanding of childhood, culture, and change.

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