
Elephants and turtles (sea-going, not teenage mutant) take longer to reach maturity than most other large animals, so the existence of such animals is not well documented. Even so, few of us have the courage, long term confidence, and dedication to document, in large numbers of children, the relatively shorter period required to reach human maturity. Those that do succeed in such a task find their results providing reference data against which other individuals and other groups are matched. This book provides just such descriptive data on more than 300 children from secondary schools in Scotland and 113 boys' public schools in Berkshire, who were examined and measured three times a year between the ages of 10 and 18. The children were not randomly selected. The data are not complete in that prepubertal or pubertal growth is missing for children who matured early or left school early. But these limitations are offset by the variety of anthropometric detail presented, the longitudinal nature of the study, and, most impressively of all, the fact that the measurements were all taken by one observer—the author.

The book is constructed as a thesis. The chapters present various aspects of the study and discuss the findings and then present the relevant tables and figures. Over 150 pages at the end of the book are devoted to computer printouts of the centile distributions of measurements for the different groups of children. The rest of the book is made up of more pages of figures and tables than text. Thus this is not a book from which to learn the basic facts of adolescent growth for the Membership but an essential reference for the pediatrician libraries, those with aural aspirations, and as an armchair book for the seasonned growth expert who can compare Buckler'sfindings with his or her own interpretations of adolescent growth.

The wealth of figures and tables may make the book sound heavy going but in fact it is easy to read. Interpretations of the anthropometric figures are presented clearly and concisely and the figures are drawn in such a way that other growth curves can readily be matched against them.

The wide spectrum of anthropometric change presented in this book leaves an overwhelming impression of the variety in adolescent growth which inevitably becomes fudged in cross sectional studies. This impression is enhanced by the discussion comparing the Buckler children with other studies. What rules does nature follow to determine growth when individual variation is so great? This reader longed for the extra dimension of parental reference figures for children wishing to achieve an ideal size must, I suspect, do one thing they could never do: choose their parents wisely.

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Problems with speech and language development are the commonest problems encountered in the preschool population and for many will have long term implications. During the last 20 years there has been remarkable progress in applying the sciences of cognitive neuropsychology and linguistics to clinical practice. Our methods of looking at language development have during this time concentrated on the development of hierarchical linguistic subdivisions of language, for example semantics and phonology. It is likely that in the future there will be a greater concentration on how these different areas are linked and integrated, and the assumed psychological reality of those theoretical categories will be challenged, for example Bates et al.1 Pamela Grunwell has edited this multiauthor book for a range of professionals interested in language and speech problems with the aim of setting current clinical practice within a theoretical framework.