PSYC 307 Developmental Psychology

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Required reading:
Discovering the Life Span
Robert S. Feldman (2009)
Prentice Hall

Why Study Developmental Psychology?
Reason #1: Raising Children

- Knowledge of child development can help parents and teachers meet the challenges of rearing and educating children
  - For example, researchers have identified effective approaches that parents and other caregivers can successfully use in helping children manage anger and other negative emotions.

Reason #2: Choosing Social Policies

- Knowledge of child development permits informed decisions about social-policy questions that affect children
  - For example, psychological research on children’s responses to leading interview questions can help courts obtain more accurate testimonies from preschool children.
Reason #3: Understanding Human Nature

- Child-development research provides important insights into some of the most intriguing questions regarding human nature (such as the existence of innate concepts and the relationship between early and later experiences).

- Recent investigations of development among children adopted from inadequate orphanages in Romania support the principle that the timing of experiences often influences their effects.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 1.1</th>
<th>APPROACHES TO LIFESPAN DEVELOPMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Defining Characteristics</td>
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</table>
| Physical development | Emphasizes how brain, nervous system, muscles, sensory capabilities, needs for food, drink, and sleep affect behavior | - What determines the sex of a child? (1-2)  
- What are the long-term results of premature birth? (1-3)  
- What are the benefits of breast milk? (2-4)  
- What are the consequences of early or late sexual maturation? (5-7)  
- What leads to obesity in adulthood? (6-8)  
- How do adults cope with stress? (7-1)  
- What are the outward and internal signs of aging? (8-1)  
- How do we define death? (9-1) |
| Cognitive development | Emphasizes intellectual abilities, including learning, memory, problem solving, and intelligence | - What are the earliest memories that can be recalled from infancy? (3-5)  
- What are the intellectual consequences of watching television? (3-2)  
- Do spatial reasoning skills relate to music practice? (3-2)  
- Are there more benefits to bilingualism? (4-2)  
- How does an adolescent's egocentrism affect his or her view of the world? (8-2)  
- Are there ethnic and racial differences in intelligence? (4-2)  
- How does creativity relate to intelligence? (6-2)  
- Does intelligence decline in later adulthood? (8-2) |
| Personality and social development | Emphasizes enduring characteristics that differentiate one person from another, and how interactions with others and social relationships grow and change over the lifetime | - Do newborns respond differently to their mothers than to others? (1-3)  
- What is the best procedure for disciplining children? (3-3)  
- When does a sense of gender identity develop? (5-3)  
- How can we promote cross-race friendships? (4-3)  
- What are the causes of adolescent suicide? (5-3)  
- How do we choose a romantic partner? (6-3)  
- Do the effects of parental divorce last into old age? (8-3)  
- Do people withdraw from others in late adulthood? (6-3)  
- What are the excitements involved in confronting death? (9-1) |

*Numbers in parentheses indicate in which Module the question is addressed.*
Historical Foundations: Early Philosophers

- Provided enduring insights about critical issues in childrearing, even though their methods were unscientific
  - Both Plato and Aristotle believed that the long-term welfare of society depended on raising children properly, but they differed in their approaches

Historical Foundations: Plato vs. Aristotle

- **Plato** emphasized self-control and discipline
- **Aristotle** was concerned with fitting child rearing to the needs of the individual child

... 
- **Plato** believed that children are born with innate knowledge
- **Aristotle** believed that knowledge comes from experience
Historical Foundations: Later Philosophers

- The English philosopher John Locke, like Aristotle, saw the child as a *tabula rasa* and advocated first instilling discipline, then gradually increasing the child’s freedom.

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the French philosopher, argued that parents and society should give the child maximum freedom from the beginning.

Historical Foundations: Research-Based Approach

- Emerged in the nineteenth century, in part as a result of two converging forces.

  1. *Social reform movements* established a research conducted for the benefit of children; provided some of the earliest descriptions of the adverse effects that harsh environments can have on child development.
Historical Foundations: Research-Based Approach

- Emerged in the nineteenth century, in part as a result of two converging forces

2. Charles Darwin’s (1809-1882) theory of evolution inspired research in child development in order to gain insights into the nature of the human species

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Key Ideas About Human Behavior and Development</th>
<th>Major Proponents</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychodynamic</td>
<td>Behavior throughout life is motivated by inner, unconscious forces, stemming from childhood, over which we have little control.</td>
<td>Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson</td>
<td>This view might suggest that a young adult who is overweight has a fixation in the oral stage of development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>Development can be understood through studying observable behavior and environmental stimuli.</td>
<td>John B. Watson, B. F. Skinner, Albert Bandura</td>
<td>In this perspective, a young adult who is overweight might be seen as not being rewarded for good nutritional and exercise habits.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Emphasis on how changes or growth in the ways people know, understand, and think about the world affect behavior.</td>
<td>Jean Piaget</td>
<td>This view might suggest that a young adult who is overweight hasn’t learned effective ways to stay at a healthy weight and always values good nutrition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanistic</td>
<td>Behavior is chosen through free will and motivated by our natural capacity to strive to reach our full potential.</td>
<td>Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow</td>
<td>In this view, a young adult who is overweight may eventually choose to seek an optimal weight as part of an overall pattern of individual growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual</td>
<td>Development should be viewed in terms of the interrelationship of a person’s physical, cognitive, personality, and social worlds.</td>
<td>Erich Fromm, Lev Vygotsky</td>
<td>In this perspective, being overweight is caused by a number of interrelated factors that influence the individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolutionary</td>
<td>Behavior is the result of genetic inheritance from our ancestors; traits and behavior that are adaptive for promoting the survival of our species have been inherited through natural selection.</td>
<td>Influenced by early work of Charles Darwin, Konrad Lorenz</td>
<td>This view might suggest that a young adult might have a genetic tendency toward obesity because extra fat helped his or her ancestors to survive in times of famine.</td>
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Historical Foundations: Formal Field of Inquiry

- Child development emerged as a *formal field of inquiry* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- In particular, Sigmund Freud and John Watson formulated influential theories of development during this period.

Historical Foundations: *Psychodynamic Approach*

- Freud concluded that biological drives, especially sexual ones, exerted a crucial influence on development.
Historical Foundations:

**Behavioral Approach**

- **Holds that the key to understanding development are observable behavior and environmental stimuli. If we know the stimuli, we can predict the behavior.**
Flavors of behaviorism

- **Classical behaviorism**: Watson’s behaviorism
  - Objective study of behavior
  - No mental life, no internal states; thought is covert speech

- **Radical**: Skinner's behaviorism
  - Considered radical since it expands behavioral principles to processes within the organism, in contrast to methodological behaviorism
  - Not mechanistic or reductionist; rather, hypothetical (mentalistic) internal states are not considered causes of behavior, phenomena must be observable at least to the individual experiencing them

Historical Landmarks in Behaviorism

- John Watson (1878-1958): Behaviorism
Historical Landmarks in Behaviorism

- John Watson (1878-1958):
  Behaviorism

  Watson argued that children’s behavior arises largely from the rewards and punishments that follow particular behaviors
  - Although the research methods on which these theories were based were limited, the theories were better grounded in research and inspired more sophisticated thinking than their predecessors

  (Watson, 1925)

Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I’ll gaurantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select—doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief, and yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities...
(Watson, 1925)
Historical Landmarks in Behaviorism

- **B.F. Skinner (1904-1990):**
  
  Radical Behaviorism

  Departs from methodological behaviorism most notably in accepting treatment of feelings, states of mind and introspection as existent and scientifically analyzable.

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*Was challenged during a casual discussion at Harvard to provide an account of a randomly provided piece of verbal behavior, Skinner set about attempting to extend his (then new) functional, inductive, approach to the complexity of human verbal behavior. Developed over two decades, his work appeared as the culmination of the William James lectures in the famous book, Verbal Behavior.*
Historical Landmarks in Behaviorism

• Albert Bandura (1925-): Social Learning Theory
  – *Reciprocal determinism* (vs. Watson’s environmental determinism)
  – *Observational learning* (or: “no-trial” learning)

Bandura’s Bobo-Doll Study

[Diagram showing the average number of acts initiated in the performance test]

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Bandura’s Bobo-Doll Study

Historical Landmarks:
Cognitive Approach

- Piaget (1896-1980)
  - Father of “Cognitive Development”
  - Genetic epistemology: “…attempts to explain knowledge, and in particular scientific knowledge, on the basis of its history, its sociogenesis, and especially the psychological origins of the notions and operations upon which it is based”
- Led to: Information Processing Theories
  - Thinking is both limited and flexible (focus is on the structural characteristics that determine limits and the processes that provide ability to flexibly adapt)
Cognitive Neuroscience

Example: The Autistic Brain

Historical Landmarks: Contextual Approach

- Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-):
  Ecological Systems Theory (bioecological approach)
  - Microsystem (child)
  - Mesosystem (immediate surroundings)
  - Exosystem (extended surroundings)
  - Macrosystem (broader culture)
Historical Landmarks: *Contextual Approach*

- Vygotsky (1896-1934)
  - Sociocultural theory
  - Zone of Proximal Development
General Themes in Developmental Psychology

- Continuity/Discontinuity
- Critical and Sensitive Periods
- Lifespan/Period-Specific Focus
- Nature/Nurture