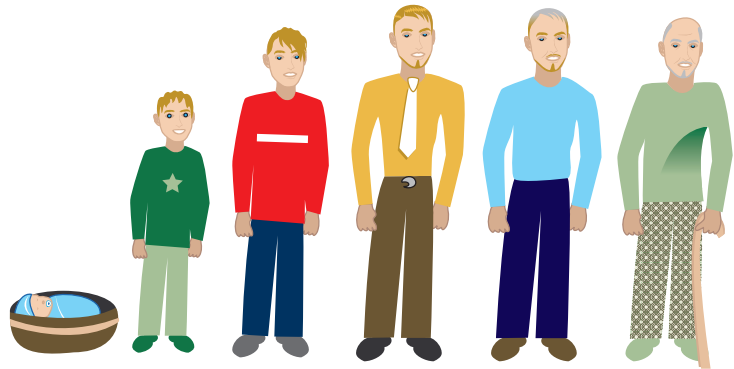


Features of Developmental Theories

EXPECTATIONS OF CHILDREN have changed as different developmental theories have emerged. For example, in medieval times, children wore smaller versions of adult clothes and had no toys. During the Industrial Revolution, children as young as seven were put to work in dangerous jobs, such as chimney sweeps and mine workers. Early schools used only memorization and repetition to teach rather than picture books and learning games. As experts have created theories on how children develop and learn, society has changed its beliefs and expectations. In this unit, you will learn more about developmental theories that have changed society.



Objective:



Identify major developmental theories.

Key Terms:



biosocial domain
cognitive domain
development
psychosocial domain

Developmental Theories

You will go through incredible changes in your lifetime. Humans develop from tiny, help-less newborns to strong, independent adults. There are many theories about the biosocial, cognitive, and psychosocial steps in the development process. However, people do not all develop in the same way or at the same rate. Many factors affect development, making it a unique process.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS

Development involves changes in every domain of human development throughout life, from birth to death. There are three domains or areas of human development: biosocial, cognitive, and psychosocial. As individuals develop in each of the domains, they are able to perform more tasks.

- ◆ The **biosocial domain** is physical growth, strength and coordination, brain development, sensory and motor development, and behavior.
- ◆ The **cognitive domain** involves the processes of thinking, attention, memory, problem solving, and communication.
- ◆ The **psychosocial domain** is the development, understanding, and regulation of emotions and morals, personality, and social relationships.

Some actions require elements of more than one domain. For example, riding a tricycle requires strength and coordination to move the pedals (biosocial domain), problem solving to determine which way to push the pedals to make the tricycle move (cognitive domain), and the ability to deal with the frustration of failure (psychosocial domain).

DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES AND THEORISTS

Many psychologists and behaviorists have created developmental theories. For instance, theories exist from each of the three domains of human development: biosocial, cognitive, and psychosocial.

Biosocial Developmental Theories

Biosocial developmental theorists include Arnold Gesell, Rudolf Dreikurs, Burrhus Skinner, and Ivan Pavlov.

- ◆ Gesell (1880 to 1961) formed the theory of developmental norms, in which he identified the typical age at which children reach various milestones.
- ◆ Dreikurs (1897 to 1972) was an American psychiatrist who formed the theory on the goals of misbehavior, which he defined as undue attention, power, revenge, or avoidance.
- ◆ Skinner (1904 to 1990) was an American behaviorist who formed the theory on operant conditioning, which focused on causes and consequences of behavior. In this theory, reinforced behavior is repeated, while behavior that is not reinforced dies out.
- ◆ Pavlov (1849 to 1936) was a Russian physiologist who formed the theory on classical conditioning. In his most famous experiment, he conditioned dogs to salivate when they heard a tone, which had been sounded every time they were presented with food. Eventually, the dogs salivated at the sound of the tone even when no food was offered.



EXPLORING OUR WORLD...

SCIENCE CONNECTION: Developmental Norms

Arnold Gesell was one of the first psychologists to describe specific developmental milestones, based on his observations of children. He established the Clinic of Child Development at Yale University, where he observed children and formed his theories. Gesell grouped developmental milestones into 10 areas: motor characteristics, personal hygiene, emotional expression, fears and dreams, self and sex, interpersonal relations, play and pastimes, school life, ethical sense, and philosophic outlook.

The theory states that there is a “norm” or typical age at which all children should reach a particular milestone. Even though much of his research was conducted between the 1920s and 1970s, those developmental norms are used today by many pediatricians and psychologists. The Gesell Developmental Assessment is a test used to determine whether a child is developing according to schedule. However, Gesell’s work was criticized by some psychologists because he did not acknowledge that there are differences in the way individual children develop.

Cognitive Developmental Theories

Cognitive developmental theorists include Jean Piaget, Albert Bandura, and Lev Vygotsky. Numerous other researchers and theorists have developed theories about information processing, which is how the brain inputs, processes, and responds to stimuli.

- ◆ Piaget (1896 to 1980) was a Swiss psychologist who developed the cognitive construction theory, which states that individuals construct knowledge by interacting with their environment.
- ◆ Bandura (1925 to present) is a Canadian-born psychologist who developed the social learning theory. The theory states that people learn from watching others and by imitating behaviors and actions.
- ◆ Vygotsky (1896 to 1934) was a psychologist who formed the theory of proximal development. He believed that students are best able to learn tasks when they are given the proper assistance or scaffolding.



FIGURE 1. Vygotsky’s theory of proximal development states that students are best able to learn tasks when they are given the proper assistance.

Psychosocial Developmental Theories

Psychosocial developmental theorists include Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Urie Bronfenbrenner.

- ◆ Freud (1856 to 1939) was a theorist who formed the theory of psychosexual development. He identified five stages: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital.
- ◆ Erikson (1902 to 1994) formed the psychosocial theory that defined eight stages of development: infancy, early childhood, play age, school age, adolescence, young adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood.
- ◆ Kohlberg (1927 to 1987) formed the theory of moral development, which included six stages: obedience and punishment, individualism and exchange, interpersonal relationships, maintaining social order, social contract and individual rights, and universal principles.
- ◆ Bronfenbrenner (1917 to 2005) developed the ecological systems theory. He identified the four aspects of the environment that influence a child's development: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.

COMMON THEMES

Five common themes can be found throughout developmental theories.

- ◆ The first theme is an interaction of nature (genetics) and nurture (environment) and how it affects human development.
- ◆ The second theme is that an individual's social and cultural context impacts his or her development.
- ◆ The third common theme is that development may be viewed as continuous or discontinuous. Continuous development is marked by gradual, steady progress, while discontinuous development is the progression in stages of sudden changes, followed by periods of relatively unchanged behavior.
- ◆ The fourth theme is that changes in one domain may affect development in another domain.
- ◆ The fifth common theme is that children have differing degrees of resilience to risk factors in development.

Summary:



Development involves the changes in every domain of human development throughout life, from birth to death. The biosocial domain is physical growth, brain development, sensory and motor development, and behavior. Biosocial developmental theorists include Gesell, Dreikurs, Skinner, and Pavlov. In contrast, the cognitive domain refers to the processes of thinking, attention, memory, problem solv-

ing, and communication. Cognitive developmental theorists include Piaget, Bandura, and Vygotsky. Finally, the psychosocial domain refers to the development, understanding, and regulation of emotions and morals, personality, and social relationships. Psychosocial developmental theorists include Freud, Erikson, Kohlberg, and Bronfenbrenner.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. Who are the theorists from the biosocial domain?
2. Who are the theorists from the cognitive domain?
3. Who are the theorists from the cognitive domain?
4. What is the difference between nature and nurture?
5. What are the recurring themes among developmental theories?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Read a few theories about the nature vs. nurture debate. Form your own opinion regarding why one aspect is more important than the other. Then hold a mock debate in your classroom, with a student who holds the opposite belief. Have at least three arguments of why you think your opinion is correct.

Web Links:



Child Development Theories

<http://psychology.about.com/od/developmentalpsychology/a/childdevtheory.htm>

Child Development through the Play Years

http://www.uen.org/utahlink/tours/tourFames.cgi?tour_id=14086

Nature vs. Nurture

http://genealogy.about.com/cs/geneticgenealogy/a/nature_nurture.htm