

Development — the pattern of continuity and change in human capabilities that occurs throughout life

- Growth
- Decline

Developmental psychologists study lifelong development across three domain:

- Physical development — growth and changes in the body and brain, senses, motor skills, and health and wellness
- Cognitive development — learning, attention, memory, language, thinking, reasoning, and creativity
- Psychosocial development — emotions, personality, and social relationships

Continuous vs. discontinuous development

Continuous development — views development as a cumulative process, gradually improving existing skills

Discontinuous development — views development as occurring in unique stages (specific times or ages)

Is there one course of development or many?

Evidence for one course — studies show that children from all around the world reach language milestones in a similar sequence

Evidence for many courses — cultural differences in child care practices, different practices can accelerate or inhibit achievement of developmental milestones

Nature vs. nurture

Nature

- Biological inheritance
- Genetics

Nurture

- Environmental experiences
- Blank slate (“tabula rosa”)

Research methods in developmental psychology

Age related differences

- Cross-sectional differences (but, cohort effects)
- Longitudinal studies

Prenatal development

Teratogens — agents that cause birth defects

- Nicotine
- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Viruses

Effects of teratogens depend on...

- Timing of exposure

- Genetic characteristics
- Postnatal environment

Cognitive development
Jean Piaget (1896-1980)

Sensorimotor stage (birth - 2 years)

- Coordinate sensations with movements
- Progress from reflexive action to symbolic thought
- Object permanence

Pre-operational stage (2 - 7 years)

- Symbolic thinking: words & images
- Intuitive reasoning
- Egocentrism

Concrete operational stage (7 - 11 years)

- Classification skills
- Reason logically in concrete contexts
- Operational thinking (e.g. conservation)

Cognitive Development

Children actively construct their cognitive world using:

- Schemas — concepts or frameworks that organize information
- Assimilation — apply old (existing) schemas to new experiences
- Accommodation — adjust / alter schemas to new information

Piaget's theory

- Continuous vs. Discontinuous development
- Timing of the developmental stages
- Potential 5th stage
- Culture and education also influences development

Infant attachment

Harlow Study

- Infant rhesus monkeys
- Is it nourishment or contact that matters?
- Chose between two surrogate “mothers” : wire mother with food versus cloth mother, or infants preferred cloth mother across situations
- Contact comfort is critical to attachment

Infant attachment — is the close emotional bond between an infant and its caregiver

- Anxious / Ambivalent attachment style: Concern that others will not reciprocate one's desire for intimacy. Results in higher-than-average levels of anxiety.

- Avoidant attachment style: Suppression of attachment needs, because attempts to be intimate have been rebuffed. People with this style find it difficult to develop intimate relationships.
- Secure attachment style: Attachments rooted in trust and marked by intimacy. A lack of concern with being abandoned.

Psychological development

Erik Erikson (1902-1994)

- Theory emphasizes lifelong development
- Eight psychosocial stages of development
- Each stages represents a developmental task: Crisis that must be resolved, personal competence or weakness.

First four stages: Childhood

- Trust vs. mistrust (0-2) — basic needs met by sensitive caregivers
- Autonomy vs. shame and doubt (2-4) — discover and assert will of their own
- Initiative vs. guilt (4-5) — challenged to assume responsibility
- Industry vs. inferiority (5-12) — mastering knowledge & intellectual skills

Erikson's theory

- Primary focus on case-study research
- Omitted important developmental tasks

Understanding adolescence

Transition from childhood to adulthood — start age 10-12, ends age 18-21.

Puberty

- Rapid skeletal and sexual maturation
- Puberty begins at beginning of adolescence

Brain development

- Emotions
- Reasoning and decision making

Cognitive development— Piaget's Formal operational stages

Adolescent Egocentrism

- The belief that others are as preoccupied with the adolescent as they are
- Sense of uniqueness
- Sense of invincibility (lead to risk behavior)

Psychological development

Erikson: Psychosocial Development, identity vs. identity confusion

James Morcia's four identity status

- Identity diffusion: No exploration or commitment
- Identity foreclosure: commitment without exploration
- Identity moratorium: exploration without commitment
- Identity achievement: commitment after exploration

Adult development and aging
Emerging Adulthood (18-25ish)
Extended adolescence

Five Key feature

- Identity exploration
- Instability
- Self-focus
- Feeling “in between”
- Age of possibilities

Physical changes in adulthood

Early adulthood

- Peak of physical development

Middle adulthood

- Most lose height, many gain weight
- Menopause for woman (late 40s or early 50s)

Late adulthood

- Accumulated wear and tear
- Less ability to repair and regenerate

Theories of aging

Cellular-clock theory: Maximum number of cell divisions possible predicts human life span of about 120 years.

Cognitive development

Early adulthood

- Idealism gives way to realistic pragmatism
- Reflection on worldview

Middle adulthood

- Memory peaks
- Numerical ability decline

Late adulthood

- Speed of processing generally declines
- Memory retrieval skills decline
- Wisdom increases in some individuals
- Strategy training and physical activity can improve cognitive function

Psychological development

Erikson's theory: Last three stages

- Intimacy versus Isolation
- Generativity versus Stagnation
- Integrity versus Despair

Marriage

Erikson's Stage 6: Intimacy vs. Isolation

Individuals form intimate relationships with others

In 1980, average age for 1st marriage was:

- 24 for men
- 21 for women

In 21 century, average age for 1st marriage was:

- 30 for men
- 29 for women

Erikson's stage 7: Generativity vs. stagnation

- legacy: assist the younger generation
- wellness through contribution to the next generation
- contribution through rearing children

Erikson's stage 8: Integrity vs. despair

What have I done with my life?

- wellness through reminiscence
- seeking meaning through a life review
- confronting own pending death
- importance of meaning: past and present
- more selective about social network