Theories of Social Development

Look for the following themes as you read this chapter:

- Nature and nurture
- The active child
- Continuity/discontinuity
- Mechanisms of change
- The sociocultural context
- Individual differences

A face-to-face interaction between Kismet and its designer, like that between a mother and her infant, involves talking, cooing back and forth, and responding to each other's facial expressions.
The Role of Theories of Social Development

- Theories of social development attempt to account for important aspects of development:
  - Emotion, personality, attachment,

- Social development theories
  - Explain how children's development is influenced by the people and individuals around them
  - Examine the ways that human beings affect each other

Overview

- Psychoanalytic Theories
- Learning Theories
- Theories of Social Cognition
- Ecological Theories of Development
Psychoanalytic Theories

View of Children’s Nature
Central Developmental Issues
Freud’s Theory of Psychosexual Development
Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development
Current Perspectives

Influential Theorists

- Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory has had greater impact on Western culture and on thinking about social and personality development than any other psychological theory.
Influential Theorists

- **Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory** has had greater impact on Western culture and on thinking about social and personality development than any other psychological theory.

- **Erik Erikson's life-span developmental theory**, which was a successor to Freud's theory, has also been influential.

Psychoanalytic Theories: Central Developmental Issues

- **Continuity/Discontinuity**: Erikson and Freud propose stage theories that stress discontinuity in development.

- **Individual Differences**: Psychoanalytic theories stress the continuity of individual differences across development.
Psychoanalytic Theories: Central Developmental Issues

- **Continuity/Discontinuity**: Erikson and Freud propose stage theories that stress discontinuity in development.
- **Individual Differences**: Psychoanalytic theories stress the continuity of individual differences across development.
- **Nature/Nurture**: Both theories emphasize the biological underpinnings of developmental stages interacting with the child's experience.

Psychoanalytic Theories

Freud (1856-1939)
- Theory of Psychosexual Development
  - Role of early experience
  - Value of subjective experience
  - Unconscious
  - Emotional relationships
- Behavior: the need to satisfy basic biological drives
Psychoanalytic Theories: Basic Features of Freud's Psychosexual Theory

Freud posits a series of universal developmental stages in which psychic energy becomes focused in different erogenous zones.

- *Psychic energy*: Biologically based, instinctual drives that energize behavior, thoughts, and feelings
- *Erogenous zones*: Areas of the body that become erotically sensitive in successive stages of development

Freud’s Personality Structure

**Id**
- The biological drives with which the infant is born
- The earliest and most primitive personality structure
- Unconscious and operates with the goal of seeking pleasure

**Ego**
- Emerges in the first year
- The rational, logical, problem-solving component of personality

**Superego**
- Develops during the ages of 3 to 6
- Based on the child’s internalization (or adoption as his or her own) of the parents’ attributes, beliefs, and standards
Stages of Psychosexual Development

Stage 1: Oral Stage
- Birth–1 year
- Satisfaction through oral pleasure

Stage 2: Anal Stage
- 1–3 years
- Pleasure from defecation

Stage 3: Phallic Stage
- 3–6 years
- Sexual pleasure focuses on the genitalia
Superego Development

- **Path to superego development**
  - **Boys**: Through the resolution of the in which a boy experiences a form of sexual desire for his mother and wants an exclusive relationship with her.
  - **Girls**: Through a similar but less intense conflict involving erotic feelings toward the father.

Stages of Psychosexual Development

**Stage 3: Phallic Stage**
- 3–6 years
- Sexual pleasure focuses on the genitalia

**Stage 4: Latency Period**
- 6–12 years
- Sexual energy is diverted to socially acceptable activities

**Stage 5: Genital Stage**
- 12 years and beyond
- Sexual maturity
- Sexual intercourse is the goal
### Stages of Psychosexual Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral (first year)</td>
<td>The primary source of satisfaction and pleasure is oral activity. During this stage, the mother is established as the strongest love-object.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anal (1-3 years)</td>
<td>The primary source of pleasure comes from defecation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phallic (3-6 years)</td>
<td>Characterized by the localization of pleasure in the genitalia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latency (6-12 years)</td>
<td>Characterized by the channeling of sexual energy into socially acceptable activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genital (12+ years)</td>
<td>Sexual maturation is complete and sexual intercourse becomes a major goal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If fundamental needs are not met during any stage, children may become fixated on these needs, continually attempting to satisfy them.

### Freud's Psychosexual Development

- **Healthy development**
  - Culminates in ability to invest in and derive pleasure from love and work

- **Compromises to healthy development**
  - Fixation may occur if fundamental needs are not met during any stage
  - Attempts to satisfy need and resolve associated conflicts may occur throughout life
Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development

- Erikson (1902–1994) had enormous influence on developmental psychology.
- Proposed eight age-related development stages that span infancy to old age.

Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development

- Each stage is characterized by a specific crisis that the individual must resolve.
  - If the dominant issue of a stage is not successfully resolved before the next stage begins, the person will continue to struggle with it.

Many parents witness scenes like the one depicted here. Should this toddler be made to feel guilty for his natural exploratory behavior?
## Stages of Psychosocial Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust vs. Mistrust</td>
<td>Developing trust in other people is the crucial issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(First year)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy vs. Shame and doubt</td>
<td>The challenge is to achieve a strong sense of autonomy while adjusting to increased social demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1-3 years)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative vs. Guilt</td>
<td>Resolved when the child develops high standards and the initiative to meet them without being crushed by worry about not being able to measure up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3-6 years)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry vs. Inferiority</td>
<td>The child must master cognitive and social skills, learn to work industriously, and play well with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6-12 years)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity vs. Role Confusion</td>
<td>Adolescents must resolve the question of who they really are or live in confusion about what roles they should play as adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Adolescence)</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

## Contributions

- The most significant of Freud’s contributions to developmental psychology were:
  - His emphasis on the importance of early experience and emotional relationships
  - His recognition of the role of subjective experience and unconscious mental activity
- Erikson’s emphasis on the search for identity in adolescence has had lasting impact
Critique

- The single weakness of both theories is that their claims are too vague to be testable and many of the specific elements are highly questionable.
- Nonetheless, their historical significance is immense, and in recent years some of their ideas have emerged in modified form.
  - For example, research on autobiographical memory supports Freud’s idea of the existence of infantile amnesia, but not his explanation for it; it also provides evidence for Erikson’s stages.

Learning Theories

View of Children’s Nature
Central Developmental Issues
Watson’s Behaviorism
Skinner’s Operant Conditioning
Social Learning Theory
Current Perspectives
Learning Theories

- Emphasize the role of external factors in shaping personality and social behavior.
- The primary developmental question is that of continuity/discontinuity.
- Learning theories also focus on the role of specific mechanisms of change.

Watson’s Behaviorism

- Watson believed that children’s development is determined by their social environment, especially their parents.
- Ignored mental states and emphasized conditioning.
- Proved with his famous “Little Albert” experiment that fear could be conditioned.
Learning Theories: Skinner’s Operant Conditioning

- Focuses on importance of attention as a powerful reinforcer
- Highlights difficulty of extinguishing behavior that has been intermittently reinforced
- Led to a form of therapy known as behavior modification

Skinner’s Operant Conditioning

- Skinner believed that behavior was under environmental control.
- We tend to repeat behaviors that lead to favorable outcomes (reinforcement) and suppress those that result in unfavorable outcomes (punishment).
Skinner’s Contributions to Child-Rearing

- Skinner showed that attention is a powerful reinforcer.
- The behavior-management strategy of “time-out” focuses on the withdrawal of attention.
  - It is hard to extinguish a behavior that is intermittently reinforced
    - If parents
- Skinner’s work led to behavior-modification therapy, which is useful for changing undesirable behaviors.

Critique

- Watson’s exclusive emphasis on conditioning is now regarded as simplistic
- However, his approach to extinguishing fear has been widely used to rid people of phobias
  - This approach, known as systematic desensitization: debilitating responses (such as unreasonable fear) are gradually deconditioned
Social/Cognitive Learning Theory

- Emphasis on the observation and imitation of others
- Also, focus on cognitive processes of attention, encoding, storing, and retrieval of information to reproduce the behavior observed.

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Social/Cognitive Learning Theory

- Albert Bandura

Reciprocal Determinism

- Child
- Environment
Bandura’s Bobo Doll Experiment

- **Vicarious Reinforcement**

The average number of aggressive behaviors children imitated after seeing a model rewarded, punished, or receiving no consequences for her behavior. In the no-incentive test, the children were simply left alone in the room with the Bobo doll but were given no instructions. In the positive-incentive test, they were offered a reward to do what they had seen the model do. The results clearly show that the children had learned from what they observed and that they had learned more than they initially showed.

(Adapted from Bandura, 1965)
Reciprocal Determinism

Child’s Behavior
- Child enjoys playing violent video
- Interacting with peers, child plays violent games more and more often
- Child’s increasing skill leads to greater enjoyment of violent games and to spending more time with the group and less time with other friends
- Child becomes desensitized to aggression in other contexts and becomes less empathic
- Child becomes more aggressive with peers, leading to rejection by nongroup members and further commitment to the violent-games group

Social Environment
- Child encourages peers to begin playing violent games together
- Child and other peer group members encourage one another to play increasingly violent games
- Child and other group members become desensitized to violence in games
- Child and other group members encourage each other to behave more aggressively in general

Learning Theories: Current Perspectives

- Contributions of learning theories: Based on principles derived from empirical research. Have generated extensive research and valuable practical applications.

- Weaknesses of the learning approach: Has limited attention to biological factors and (with the exception of Bandura’s theory) to the impact of cognition.
Theories of Social Cognition

- Are concerned with children’s ability to think and reason about their own and other people’s thoughts, feelings, motives, and behaviors.
- Emphasize the process of self-socialization, rather than the role of others.
- Important theories:
  - Sellman’s stage theory of role taking
  - Dodge’s information-processing theory

Selman’s Theory of Role Taking

- Focuses on the development of role taking, the ability to adopt the perspective of another person and to think about something from another’s point of view.
- Before the age of 6, perspective-taking ability is limited (this is also a Piagetian belief).
- Children go through four stages of thinking about other people.
Selman’s Stage Theory of Role Taking

- A developmental approach to understanding the process of taking another person’s point of view

**Before age 6**
- Children are virtually unaware of any perspective other than their own

**Stage 1: Ages 6–8**
- The child realizes that another person may have a different perspective, but believes the difference is due to that person not having the same information they have.

**Stage 2: Ages 8–10**
- The child realizes that another person may have a different perspective and is able to think about the other person’s perspective.

**Stage 3: Ages 10–12**
- The child systematically compares the perspective of self, other, and a 3rd party.

**Stage 4: Age 12 and older**
- The adolescent attempts to understand another’s perspective by comparing it to a “generalized other” or to their social group.
Dodge’s Information-Processing Theory of Social Problem Solving

- Emphasizes cognitive processes
- Dodge analyzed children’s use of aggression as a problem-solving strategy.
- Dodge and colleagues proposed that children go through six steps in solving social problems.

Children make use of:
- past social experiences
- social expectancies
- preexisting knowledge
- concepts, and attitudes

...to carrying out the six-step analytic process.
Steps in Dodge’s Information-Processing Theory of Social Problem Solving

- Encode a problematic event
- Interpret the social cues involved in it
- Formulate a goal to resolve the incident
- Generate strategies to achieve the goal
- Evaluate the likely success of potential strategies
- Enact a behavior

Dodge’s Research About Aggression

- Found that some children have a “hostile attributional bias,” a general expectation that others are hostile to them.
- Leads them to search for hostile intent in peers and to attribute to peers a desire to harm them.
- Hostile attributional biases become self-fulfilling prophecies...leading to attacks and counterattacks.
Dweck’s Social Cognitive Perspective

- Emphasizes the role of self-attributions in academic achievement
- Children with a mastery orientation attribute success and failure to the amount of effort expended and persist in the face of failure
- Children with a helpless orientation attribute success and failure to enduring aspects of the self (such as ability) and tend to give up in the face of failure
  - Such “helpless” children tend to base their sense of self-worth on the degree of approval they receive from other people
  - To be assured of praise, they avoid situations in which they are likely to not be successful

Perspectives on Social Cognitive Theories

- They are important for their emphasis on cognitive processes.
- They have a strong emphasis on children as active seekers of information about social realm.
- They provide insight on effect of social experience on interpretation of experiences.
- They have little to say about biological factors.
Ecological Theories of Development

- Foremost issue is the interaction of nature and nurture.
- Emphasize the importance of sociocultural context.
- Emphasize the continuity of development.
- Children’s active role in their own development is a central focus.
Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Model

- Bronfenbrenner conceptualizes the environment as a set of nested structures, each inside another.
- Each structure emphasizes a different level of influence.
- The environmental forces at each level vary in effect on each child.
- There is complex interconnectedness among the levels, which are called systems.
What Is Different?

What different experiences were available to these girls born in different historical times?

How did their educational and employment opportunities differ?

Individual Differences: Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

- Characteristics of children with ADHD
  - Tend to be of normal intelligence
  - Have difficulty sticking to plans, following rules and regulations, and persevering on tasks that require sustained attention
  - Have underlying difficulty in inhibiting impulses to act, especially when distractions are present

- Incidence
  - 6.4 million children aged 4 to 17 diagnosed
  - Eleven percent of U.S. school-aged children, with higher diagnosis for boys than girls
Individual Differences: Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

ADHD can be examined within the different levels of the bioecological model.
- Biology plays a role in causing ADHD.
- Environment influences, including parental behavior and how these children are treated by others, are also important.
- There is no evidence, however, that food additives, sugar, and fast-paced television are causes.

The short attention span of children with attention-deficit disorder often leads them to distract not only themselves but also other children in their classroom.

ADHD

Treatment
- Small doses of stimulants like Ritalin help 70–90 percent of the children for whom it is prescribed.
- Longer-lasting gains require behavioral treatments, such as teaching children strategies for screening out disruptions.
- The availability of medications depends on factors far outside the influence of the family.
Ethological and Evolutionary Theories

- **Ethology**: The study of behavior within an ecological context.
- Innate behavior patterns were shaped by evolution just as physical characteristics were.
  - “...”
- Human newborns do not “imprint,”
  - but they are drawn to visual and emotional connection with others.

Ethological Perspective

- **Gender differences are affected by evolved predispositions.**
  - Females: Innate preference for objects that afford opportunities for nurturance
  - Males: Innate preference for objects that invite movement
- **Research support for the argument**
  - Nonhuman primates exhibit similar patterns of gender preferences as human children.
### Ecological Theories of Development: Evolutionary Psychology

#### Evolutionary psychology
- Applies Darwinian concepts of natural selection and adaptation to human behavior
- Posits that organisms, including humans, are motivated to behave in ways that preserve their genes in the gene pool of the species

#### Evolutionary psychologists
- Argue that large size of human brain necessitates a prolonged period of immaturity
  - Neural plasticity in learning from experience
  - Play as evolved platform for learning
  - Significant nurturance from parents required

### Brain Sizes of Various Primates and Humans

- Humans are “a slow-developing, big-brained species” compared to other primates.
- The larger the brain size of various primates, the longer their developmental period.
Body shape (WHR)--fertility cue
Evidence from Miss America Contestants:

“in spite of change in height and weight over these years, the body shape of the contestants has retained the hour glass shape rather than becoming tubular”

1940 34 - 24.5 - 35 (WHR = .70)

1987 35 - 23.5 - 34.5 (WHR = .68)
Ecological Theories of Development: Current Perspectives

**Ecological Theories**
- Important because they place individual development in a much broader context than do other theories of social development

**Evolutionary Psychology**
- Criticized because many of its tenets cannot be tested and because it overlooks the human capacity to transform our environments and ourselves

**The Bioecological Model**
- Has made important contributions to thinking about development, but can be criticized for its general omission of specific biological factors