

Theories of Development

Theories of Development – Study Notes

1. Overview

Developmental theories aim to explain how and why people change over the lifespan. They differ in:

Dimension	Description
Focus	Cognitive, psychosocial, moral, ecological, etc.
Level of Analysis	Biological, individual, interpersonal, cultural
Methodology	Observation, experiment, longitudinal study, cross-cultural comparison
Assumptions	Continuity vs. stage-like change; nature vs. nurture; universality vs. cultural specificity

2. Classical Stage Theories

Theory	Proponent(s)	Core Idea	Stages & Age Ranges	Key Contributions
Psychosexual Development	Sigmund Freud	Personality shaped by pleasure zones & conflicts.	1. Oral (0-1) 2. Anal (1-3) 3. Phallic (3-6) 4. Latency (6-12) 5. Genital (12+)	Introduced concept of unconscious drives; highlighted early childhood impact.

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Psychosocial Development	Erik Erikson	Crisis at each stage; resolution yields virtues.	1. Trust vs. Mistrust (0?1) 2. Autonomy vs. Shame (1?3) 3. Initiative vs. Guilt (3?6) 4. Industry vs. Inferiority (6?12) 5. Identity vs. Role Confusion (12?18) 6. Intimacy vs. Isolation (young adult) 7. Generativity vs. Stagnation (mid?adult) 8. Integrity vs. Despair (late adult)	Integrated social context; lifespan perspective.
Cognitive Development	Jean Piaget	Children construct knowledge through active schemes.	1. Sensorimotor (0?2) 2. Preoperational (2?7) 3. Concrete?operational (7?11) 4. Formal?operational (11+)	Emphasized stages of logical reasoning; introduced concepts of assimilation & accommodation.
Moral Development	Lawrence Kohlberg	Moral reasoning progresses through hierarchical stages.	1. Pre?conventional (0?9) 2. Conventional (9?12) 3. Post?conventional (adolescence onward)	Showed moral thought as a cognitive process; inspired education reforms.

3. Information?Processing & Neo?Piagetian Approaches

Theory	Main Proponents	Central Tenets	How It Extends Classical Views
Information?Processing Theory	George Miller, John Flavell, Robert Siegler	Mind = computer: attention, encoding, storage, retrieval. Development = increase in processing speed, capacity, and strategy use.	Focuses on mechanisms (e.g., working memory) rather than discrete stages.

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Neo-Piagetian Models	Robbie Case, Andreas Demetriou, Juan Pascual-Leone	Development driven by increasing “mental power” (working memory, processing efficiency) that enables higher-order operations.	Bridges Piaget’s stage view with quantitative changes in cognitive resources.

4. Socio-Cultural & Ecological Theories

Theory	Proponent(s)	Core Concepts	Implications for Development
Sociocultural Theory	Lev Vygotsky	Learning mediated by language, tools, and “more knowledgeable others”	