Lecture Notes

# Chapter 1: Understanding Human Development: Approaches and Theories

**Learning Objectives**

* 1. Outline five principles of the lifespan developmental perspective.
  2. Explain three theoretical controversies about human development.
  3. Summarize five theoretical perspectives on human development.
  4. Describe the methods and research designs used to study human development.
  5. Discuss the ethical responsibilities of researchers to protect their participants.

**Chapter Summary**

**1.1. Outline five principles of the lifespan developmental perspective.**

Development is a lifelong process. It is multidimensional, multidirectional, plastic, and influenced by the multiple contexts in which we are embedded.

**1.2. Explain three theoretical controversies about human development.**

Theories of human development can be compared with respect to their stance on the following questions. First, in what ways is developmental change continuous, characterized by slow and gradual change, or discontinuous, characterized by sudden and abrupt change? Second, to what extent are people active in influencing their development, interacting with and influencing the world around them? Finally, is development caused by nature or nurture, genetic endowments and heredity, or the physical and social environment? Most developmental scientists agree that some aspects of development appear continuous and others discontinuous, that individuals are active in influencing their development, and that development reflects the interactions of nature and nurture.

**1.3. Summarize five theoretical perspectives on human development.**

Freud’s psychosexual theory explains personality development as progressing through a series of psychosexual stages during childhood. Erikson’s psychosocial theory suggests that individuals move through eight stages of psychosocial development across the lifespan, with each stage presenting a unique psychosocial task, or crisis. Behaviorist theory emphasizes environmental influences on behavior, specifically, classical conditioning and operant conditioning. In classical conditioning, neutral stimuli become associated with stimuli that elicit reflex responses. Operant conditioning emphasizes the role of environmental stimuli in shaping behavior through reinforcement and punishment. Bandura’s social learning theory suggests that individuals and the environment interact and influence each other through reciprocal determinism. Piaget’s cognitive-developmental theory explains that children actively interact with the world around them and that their cognition develops through four stages. Information processing theorists study the steps involved in cognition: perceiving and attending, representing, encoding, retrieving, and problem solving. Sociocultural systems theories look to the importance of context in shaping development. Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory emphasizes interactions with members of our culture in influencing development. Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model explains development as a function of the ongoing reciprocal interaction among biological and psychological changes in the person and his or her changing context: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Evolutionary developmental psychology integrates Darwinian principles of evolution and scientific knowledge about the interactive influence of genetic and environmental mechanisms.

**1.4. Describe the methods and research designs used to study human development.**

A case study is an in-depth examination of an individual. Interviews and questionnaires are called self-report measures because they ask the persons under study questions about their own experiences, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and behavior. Observational measures are methods that scientists use to collect and organize information based on watching and monitoring people’s behavior. Physiological measures gather the body’s physiological responses as data. Scientists use correlational research to describe relations among measured characteristics, behaviors, and events. To test hypotheses about causal relationships among variables, scientists employ experimental research. Developmental designs include cross-sectional research, which compares groups of people at different ages simultaneously, and longitudinal research, which studies one group of participants at many points in time. Sequential designs combine the best features of cross-sectional and longitudinal designs, by assessing assess multiple cohorts over time.

**1.5. Discuss the ethical responsibilities of researchers to protect their participants.**

Researchers must maximize the benefits to research participants and minimize the harms, safeguarding participants’ welfare. They must be accurate and honest in their work and respect participants’ autonomy, including seeking informed consent and child assent. In addition, the benefits and risks of participation in research must be spread equitably across individuals and groups.

**Lecture Notes**

1. What is Lifespan Human Development?
2. Lifespan human development is the study of the ways in which people grow, change, and stay the same throughout their lives, from birth to death
3. Ages in Human Development
   1. Prenatal
   2. Infancy and toddlerhood
   3. Early childhood
   4. Middle childhood
   5. Adolescence
   6. Early adulthood
   7. Middle adulthood
   8. Late adulthood
   9. Death
4. Lifespan human development can be described by the following principles:
   1. Development Is Multidimensional: Development entails changes in many areas of development
      1. Physical development refers to body maturation and growth, including body size, proportion, appearance, health, and perceptual abilities
      2. Cognitive development is the maturation of thought processes and the tools that we use to obtain knowledge, become aware of the world around us, and solve problems
      3. Psychosocial development includes changes in personality, emotions, views of oneself, social skills, and interpersonal relationships with friends and family
   2. Development Is Multidirectional: Development consists of both gains and losses, growth and decline, throughout the lifespan
   3. Development Is Plastic: Development is malleable or changeable
   4. Development Is Influenced by Multiple Contexts: Context refers to where and when a person develops and includes aspects of the physical and social environment, such as family, neighborhood, country, culture, and historical time period
      1. Culture is particularly important
      2. Cross-cultural research compares individuals and groups from different cultures to identify similarities and differences in developmental processes
      3. Cultural research, a growing trend in the field of developmental science, examines how culture itself influences development
      4. Cohorts are people who are born at the same time period. They are similar in ways that people born at other times are different
   5. Development Is Multidisciplinary: The contributions of many disciplines are needed to understand how people grow, think, and interact with their world
5. Basic Issues in Lifespan Human Development
6. Continuities and Discontinuities in Development
   1. Continuous development is characterized by slow and gradual change
   2. Discontinuous development is characterized by abrupt change
   3. Today, developmental scientists agree that development includes both continuity and discontinuity
7. Individuals Are Active in Development
   1. Individuals interact with and influence the world around them, create the experiences that lead to developmental change, and thereby influence how they change over the lifespan
   2. The prevailing view among developmental scientists is that people are active contributors to their own development
8. Nature and Nurture Influence Development
   1. One of the oldest and perhaps most heated debate within the field of human development is the nature-nurture issue
   2. Explanations that rely on nature point to inborn genetic endowments or heredity, maturational processes, and evolution as causes of developmental change
   3. An alternative explanation for developmental change is nurture, the view that individuals are molded by the physical and social environment in which they are raised, including the home, school, workplace, neighborhood, and society
   4. Although developmental scientists once attempted to determine whether nature or nurture influenced development, most now agree that both nature and nurture are important contributors to development across the lifespan
9. Theoretical Perspectives on Human Development
10. A theory is a way of organizing a set of observations or facts into a comprehensive explanation of how something works
    1. Effective theories generate specific hypotheses, or proposed explanations for a given phenomenon, that can be tested by research
    2. A good theory is one that is falsifiable, or capable of generating hypotheses that can be tested and, potentially, refuted
11. Psychoanalytic Theories: Describe development and behavior as a result of the interplay of inner drives, memories, and conflicts of which we are unaware and cannot control
    1. Freud’s Psychosocial Theory
       1. Sigmund Freud, a Viennese physician, is credited as the father of the psychoanalytic perspective
       2. Freud believed we progress through a series of psychosexual stages, periods in which unconscious drives are focused on different parts of the body, making stimulation to those parts a source of pleasure
       3. Because of its heavy emphasis on infant sexuality, Freud’s psychosexual stage framework is not widely accepted
    2. Erikson’s Psychosocial Theory
       1. Erik Erikson was influenced by Freud, but he placed less emphasis on instinctual drives as motivators of development and instead focused on the role of the social world, society, and culture in shaping development
       2. Erikson posed a lifespan theory of development in which individuals progress through eight stages of psychosocial development, with each stage presenting a unique developmental task (crisis or conflict)
       3. Erikson’s psychosocial theory is well regarded as one of the first lifespan views of development
12. Behaviorist and Social Learning Theories
    1. Theorists who study behaviorism examine only behavior that can be observed and believe that all behavior is influenced by the physical and social environment
       1. Classical conditioning is a form of learning in which the person or animal comes to associate environmental stimuli with physiological responses
       2. B. F. Skinner’s theory of operant conditioning maintains that behavior becomes more or less probable depending on its consequences
          1. Reinforcement: A rewarding or pleasant outcome
          2. Punishment: An aversive or unpleasant outcome
    2. According to Bandura’s social learning theory, people actively process information—they think and they feel emotion—and their thoughts and feelings influence their behavior
       1. One of Bandura’s most enduring ideas about development is that people learn through observing and imitating models, which he referred to as observational learning
       2. Another of Bandura’s contributions that has influenced the field of lifespan human development is the concept of reciprocal determinism, according to which individuals and the environment interact and influence each other
13. Cognitive Theories
    1. Jean Piaget founded the cognitive-developmental perspective on child development, which views children and adults as active explorers of their world, learning by interacting with the world around them, and organizing what they learn into cognitive schemas, or concepts, ideas, and ways of interacting on the world
    2. Piaget proposed that children’s drive to explore and understand the world propels them through four stages of cognitive development
    3. Piaget’s cognitive-developmental theory transformed the field of developmental psychology and remains one of the most widely cited developmental theories
14. Information Processing Theory
    1. Information processing theory posits that the mind works in ways similar to a computer because information enters, is manipulated, stored, recalled, and used to solve problems
    2. Information processing theory is not one theory; rather, there are many theories that emphasize different aspects of thinking
    3. Maturation of the brain and nervous system, as well as experience and interaction, contribute to gains in information processing
15. Sociocultural Systems Theory
    1. Lev Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory examines how culture is transmitted from one generation to the next through social interaction
    2. Children interact with adults and more experienced peers as they talk, play, and work alongside them
    3. Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory was the first theory to emphasize the role of the cultural context in influencing people’s development throughout life
16. Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Systems Theory
    1. Urie Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory poses that development is a result of the ongoing interactions among biological, cognitive, and psychological changes within the person and his or her changing context
    2. The individual interacts with the contexts in which he or she is embedded, influencing and being influenced by them
       1. Microsystem: Immediate physical and social environment surrounding the person
       2. Mesosystem: The relations and interactions among microsystems
       3. Exosystem: Consists of settings in which the individual is not a participant but that nevertheless influence him or her
       4. Macrosystem: The larger sociocultural context
       5. Chronosystem: Refers to timing of events
17. Ethology and Evolutionary Developmental Psychology
    1. Ethological theory, a precursor to evolutionary developmental theory, is the scientific study of the evolutionary basis of behavior and its survival value
    2. Evolutionary developmental theory applies principles of evolution and scientific knowledge about the interactive influence of genetic and environmental mechanisms to understand the changes people undergo throughout their lifetime
18. Research in Human Development
19. Applied developmental science is the study of individuals within the contexts in which they live
20. The Scientific Method: Outlines the basic steps used in formulating questions, finding answers, and communicating research discoveries
    1. Identify the research question or problem to be studied and formulate the hypothesis, or proposed explanation, to be tested
    2. Gather information to address the research question
    3. Use statistical analysis to summarize the information gathered and determine whether the hypothesis is refuted, or shown to be false
    4. Interpret the summarized information, consider the findings in light of prior research studies, and share findings with the scientific community and world at large
21. Methods of Data Collection
    1. Scientists use the term data to refer to the information that they collect when they conduct research
    2. Observational measures
       1. Scientists who use naturalistic observation observe and record behavior in natural, real-world settings
          1. Naturalistic observation is challenging because one must first decide on an operational definition of the behavior of interest
          2. Sometimes, the presence of an observer causes the person to behave in unnatural ways or ways that are not typical for him or her, a phenomenon called participant reactivity
          3. Structured observations entail observing and recording behaviors displayed in a controlled environment, a situation constructed by the experimenter
    3. Self-report measures
       1. The open-ended interview is very flexible because the trained interviewer uses a conversational style that encourages the participant, or the person under study, to expand his or her responses
       2. Structured interviews pose the same set of questions to each participant in the same way, and therefore are less flexible than open-ended interviews
       3. Questionnaires, also called surveys, are sets of questions, typically multiple choice, that scientists compile and use to collect data from large samples of people
    4. Physiological measures
       1. Physiological measures are increasingly used in developmental research because cognition, emotion, and behavior have physiological indicators
       2. An advantage is that these measures do not rely on verbal reports and generally cannot be faked
       3. A challenge is that the recorded measures may be difficult to interpret
22. Research Designs
    1. Case Study: In-depth examination of a single person, or small group of individuals
    2. Correlational Research: Permits researchers to examine relations among measured characteristics, behaviors, and events
    3. Experimental Research: Experiments are conducted to determine causal relationships among variables or factors
       1. The dependent variable is the behavior under study
       2. The independent variable is the factor proposed to change the behavior. It is manipulated or varied systematically by the researcher during the experiment
       3. Random assignment, where each participant has an equal chance of being assigned to the experimental or control group, is essential for ensuring that the groups are equal in all preexisting characteristics
23. Developmental Research Designs
    1. Cross-sectional research design
    2. Longitudinal research design
    3. Sequential research design
24. Research Ethics
25. Basic ethical principles
    1. Beneficence and non-maleficence
    2. Responsibility
    3. Integrity
    4. Justice
    5. Respect for autonomy
26. Rights of Research Participants