

# Introduction to Child Development

## Principles and Frameworks

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## Principles of Development

- Development has multiple determinants.
- Timing matters.
- Activity shapes development.
- Development involves both continuity and discontinuity.
- Individuals construct their own development.
- Development occurs in a cultural context.

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## Development has Multiple Determinants

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## Separation Anxiety



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## Separation Anxiety

- Emerges around 7 to 8 months of age
- Influenced by BOTH
  - quality of caregiver-infant interaction
  - cognitive development

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## Self-esteem in middle childhood

- Children typically show drop in self-esteem in the early years of elementary school

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## Cognitive underpinnings of drop in self-esteem:

- recognize differences among people
- quantitative reasoning
- perceive people as having “stable traits”

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## Social underpinnings of drop in self-esteem:

- More opportunities for social comparison
- Public acknowledgement of good and poor performance

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## Timing matters

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## Onset of Walking

- Early walkers (age 8 months) vs later walkers (after 12 months of age) (Birigen, et al.)

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## Effects of pubertal timing

- Early vs late maturation
- Caspi, et al



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## Activity Shapes Development

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## Prenatal Period

- movement promotes development of neural pathways

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## Infancy

- Locomotion & spatial understanding (Campos, Bertenthal, & Kermoian, 1992)



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# Continuity and Discontinuity

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## Between Species: Are humans qualitatively different?

- self-recognition
- language



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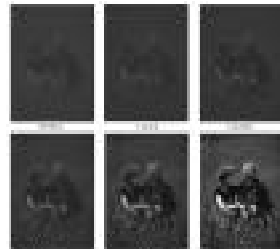
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## Within Species: Qualitative vs Quantitative Change

- Quantitative
  - Visual Acuity
- Qualitative
  - Crawling to Walking



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## Continuity and Discontinuity

- Is change sudden or gradual?
  - Sudden (e.g., “word explosion at 18-24 months)
  - Gradual (e.g., improvement in walking)

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Maybe it depends on your “lens?”

Is driving a sudden change or a gradual change?

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Answer relates to methodology

- Cross-sectional design
- Longitudinal design
- Microgenetic design

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## Continuity and Discontinuity

Factors that produce continuity and discontinuity are largely the same across the lifespan

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## Some factors that promote continuity:

- genetics
- physical appearance
- environments

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## Factors that induce “discontinuity”

- social roles
- life events

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## Individuals Construct Own Development

- Sociable infants evoke different reactions than infants who are less sociable
- We choose environments and activities that suit us



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## Possible Test Questions

- Describe one achievement of infancy (e.g., reaching, walking, object permanence, etc.) and explain how different research methods could make the achievement appear either sudden or gradual.

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## Frameworks

- Biological-maturational
- Environmental-Learning
- Constructivist
- Cultural-Context

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## Biological-maturation Framework

- Source of change is endogenous
  - Genetic Inheritance
  - Genetically determined sequence of changes
    - Change in development caused by biological changes
  - Role of environment is secondary
    - Example: Language Development

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## Environmental-Learning Framework

- Changes are a function of environmental inputs
  - Adults play a major role in shaping behavior
  - Learning - modification of behavior by experience
  - Development is gradual and continuous
- “Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I’ll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select - doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief, and yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors.” Watson, 1930, p. 104.

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## Constructivist Framework

- Nature and nurture are equally important
  - Child actively shapes own development
- Environment has differential influence at different points in time
  - E.g., influence of peers is different for infants vs adolescents
- Environment can speed up or slow down course of development

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## Cultural- Context Framework

- Nature and nurture shape development
- Child actively shapes his development
- Third Force: Socio-historical-culture shapes development
  - More than parents, family, & peers
  - Traditions, beliefs, practices and artifacts artifacts of the culture shape development

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## Example: Infant Sleeping arrangements

- Western (American, primarily) culture
  - Infant sleeps in own bed (bassinet, crib)
  - Often sleeps in own room
- WHY?
  - Beliefs about children
  - Values - Independence
  - Traditions - Formal work & work hours

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## Reasons Given for Sleeping Apart

- “We might roll over him, hurt him...and he could get smothered.”
- “I think that he would be more dependent...”
- “It was time to give him his own space, his own territory.”
- “She just might as well get used to it.”
- “My baby was sleeping through the night, he didn’t need me any more.”

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## Reasons for Co-Sleeping

“I could look over and see, yes, he is still alive. He’s still there, he’s still breathing.”

“I think he was able to look over and feel comfortable. It was a good experience for him, and for me, for the closeness.”

“I get more sleep because I don’t have to get up to feed her in the middle of the night.”

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## American Beliefs about Children

- Childhood is THE most important period.
- Children are vulnerable and in need of protection.
- Mother-child relationship most critical.
- Family is the most important vehicle for socialization.

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- Even infants have the right to exist.
- Children do not exist for the economic benefit of their parents.
- Child is a “self-contained vessel”.
- Earlier is better?
- Parents need expert advice.

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## What about other cultures?

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