Developmental Theories of Adolescence and Young Adulthood

I. Nature vs. Nurture Debate

A. **Nature**: our behavior is primarily determined by our genetic makeup.

B. **Nurture**: our behavior is primarily determined by our environment.

C. Developmental theories have differed on which side is most important.

D. Currently: Question is how these two dimensions influence each other in the developmental process.

II. Applying Your Own Developmental Theory

Jessica is a 15-year-old girl who engaged in consensual sex with her boyfriend. Neither wishes to have a child but they did not use contraception. Now Jessica finds herself pregnant.

Q: What caused this developmental event?

III. Importance of Examining Multiple Levels to Understand Behavior.

A. Genetic

B. Biological

C. Cognitive

D. Affective

E. Behavioral

F. Family

G. Peer

H. Neighborhood

J. Culture
IV. Theoretical Application: Adolescent Sex-Related Problems

A. Biological:
   • Early pubertal onset leads to early sex initiation

B. Psychological:
   • Ambivalent attitudes toward childbearing, contraception, and abortions leads to adolescent childbearing
   • Poor psychological adjustment
   • Low educational aspirations

C. Peers:
   • Peer rejection.
   • No. of sexually active girlfriends (for girls)

D. Family
   • No. of sexually active older siblings.
   • Low parental monitoring

E. Community
   • Low income, socially disorganized.
   • Lack of family planning services
### Important Implication:

Any program aimed at teen sexuality may need to address multiple levels to be effective.

Applies to explaining almost all developmental events.

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### Research Methods for Studying Adolescence

How Do We Test Theories & Build Knowledge?

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### Strategies Providing Foundation for Beliefs & Understanding

I. **Method of Tenacity**
   
   Only way civilization works.

II. **Method of Authority**
   
   Makes intuitive sense. “Feels right.”
   
   Can lead to endless debate - little progress.

III. **A priori Method**
   
   Leads to agreement/progress.
   
   Can’t be applied to all questions.
Methods of Collecting Data

I. Self-Report Questionnaires & Interviews

II. Observation
   A. Participant observation
   B. Naturalistic
   C. Laboratory

Types of Research

I. Experiments
   A. Direct comparison of experimental group and control group.
   B. Test experimental manipulation.
      1. Independent variable (IV)
      2. Dependent variable (DV)
   C. Random assignment desirable (if possible).

II. Correlational Studies
   No manipulation. Still have IV (predictor) & DV.

III. Evaluation
   Used to assess program effectiveness.
Developmental Research Design

I. Case History Design

II. Cross-Sectional Design

III. Longitudinal Design

Critically Evaluating Information About Development

   May be oversimplified, distorted, or overgeneralized.

II. Avoid Assuming Individual Needs on the Basis of Group Research
   e.g., COAs, ethnic gloss

III. Be Aware That a Single Study Usually Is Not the Defining Word

IV. Remember That Causal Conclusions Cannot Be Drawn from Correlational Studies.
V. Always Consider the Source of Information and Evaluate Its Credibility

A. Is it peer-reviewed?

E.g., *Newsweek* vs. *Developmental Psychology*

B. What is the quality of the evidence provided?

E.g., opinion vs. “fact”; Is there a citation?