

Themes of Development

Developmental Issues on which theorists often disagree.

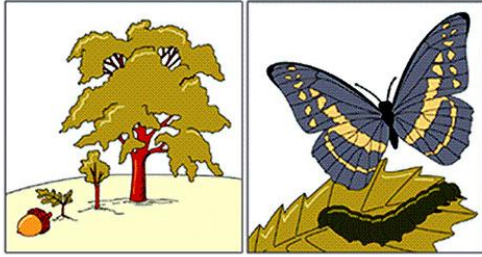
Developmental Themes

- Development proceeds:
 - a. Through stages so that the individual changes rather abruptly into a different kind of person than she/he was in an earlier stage.
 - b. In a variety of ways – some stage-like and some gradual or continuous.
 - c. Continuously – in small increments without abrupt changes or distinct stages.

Continuity versus Discontinuity

- Continuity: linear development - each development builds on previous developments. Continuous change.
- Discontinuity: series of discrete steps or stages. Abrupt, qualitative changes in development.

Continuity and Discontinuity in Development



Developmental Themes

- People are basically
 - a. Active beings who are the prime determiners of their own abilities and traits.
 - b. Passive beings whose characteristics are molded either by social influences (parents, other significant people, and outside events) or by biological changes beyond their control.

Passive versus Active Child

- Organism is either passively shaped by external forces in the environment or plays an active role in their own development.

Developmental Themes

- Biological influences (heredity and maturational forces) and environmental influences (culture, parenting styles, learning experiences) are thought to contribute to development. Overall,
 - a. Biological factors contribute far more than environmental factors
 - b. Biological factors contribute somewhat more than environmental factors
 - c. Biological and environmental factors are equally important.
 - d. Environmental factors contribute somewhat more than biological factors.
 - e. Environmental factors contribute far more than biological factors.

Nature versus Nurture

- What is the relative importance of biological and environmental factors in development?

Nature versus Nurture: Two Models

- Pillsbury Dough Boy Model: Same genetic starting point can lead to very different developmental outcomes (dependent on other factors).
- Range of Reaction: Biology sets upper and lower limits for a characteristic. Environment determines where we fall between the two.

Ethological Theory

- Ethology: study of how the evolution of a species influences the behavior and development of that species.
 - Natural selection (Darwin)
 - Species-specific innate behaviors
 - Critical periods/imprinting

Imprinting



Species-specific innate behaviors

- Stereotyped in form
- Present without relevant experience that could have allowed it to be learned
- Universal for the species
- Relatively unchanged as a result of learning

Critical Period

- Relatively short period of time in which learning can occur.
- Must have certain experiences in order for normal development to occur.
- Permanent and irreversible effect.
- Sensitive Period: time that is optimal for certain capacities to emerge - especially responsive to environmental stimulation.

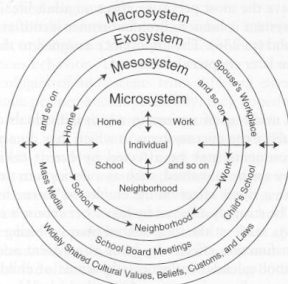
Systems Theory

- All developmental influences are equally important.
- Development is determined through interaction of all influences.
- Focus on process rather than product.

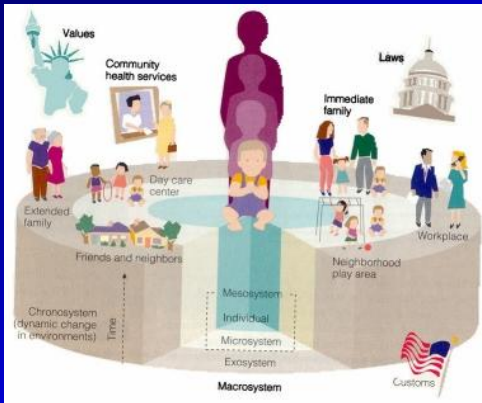
4 Levels of System Functioning

- Microsystem: Immediate surroundings (e.g., family)
- Mesosystem: The interrelationships between microsystems
- Exosystem: Not directly experienced, but influential
- Macrosystem: Larger social class and culture
- Chronosystem: Changes across time

Figure 2.1 ♦ Topological Model of the Environment: A Schematic Diagram of the Levels of the Environment in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory



NOTE: Arrows across rings indicate reciprocal interactions at all levels.



Bronfenbrenner: Developmental Issues

- We are born with NEITHER negative or positive tendencies
- We are Actively Involved in Self-Development & the Environment
- Person & Environment are BOTH in a state of flux
- Nature & Nurture are BOTH influential
- Can have qualitative and quantitative change
- Most Development is NOT universal
- Many Dynamic Contexts: Social, Historical, and Cultural
