Child Developmental Theories
Learning Theory - Skinner
behavior is determined by its consequences

- Children are inherently neither good/bad
- People are passively shaped by environmental forces
- Development is gradual and not stagelike
- Early behavior may change dramatically if the environment changes
- Development can proceed in many directions, depending on life experiences.
Learning Theory - Bandura

◆ Tenets of theory
  ■ Children are inherently neither good/bad.
  ■ Nurture is more important than nature.
  ■ Development is continuous rather than stagelike.
  ■ Traits and habits are unlikely to be stable if the environment changes.
  ■ Development can proceed in many directions, depending on life experiences.

◆ Studies on aggressiveness in children.
We are born with predominantly positive tendencies such as curiosity.

Both nature and nurture are important.

We are active in our own development as we “construct” more sophisticated understanding of ourselves in our world.

Development is stagelike & universal.

Each new stage incorporates the elements of previous stages.
Piaget – Cognitive Developmental Stages

◆ Stage 1: Sensorimotor Stage (0-2)
◆ Infants are busy discovering relationships between their bodies and the environment
  ◼ Rely on sensory & motor capabilities as means of understanding environment.
  ◼ Development of object permanence.
  ◼ Development of deferred imitation.
  ◼ Development of problem solving.
Piaget – Cognitive Developmental Stages

◆ Stage 2: Preoperational (2-7 years)
  ◼ Use of symbolism (language & imagery) manifested in imaginative play.
  ◼ Reliance on how things appear to be.
  ◼ Egocentrism.
Piaget – Cognitive Developmental Stages

- Stage 3: Concrete Operational (7-11)
  - Acquisition and use of cognitive operations.
    Process of thinking logical but concrete, cogn.operation of remembering
  - Acquisition of conservation and classification skills.
  - Decreased reliance on appearances.
  - Decreased egocentrism.
    Take someone else's viewpoint into account when thinking.
Conservation of liquid

Conservation of mass

Conservation of number

Conservation of length

Original Setup

Alter as Shown

Ask Child

Usual Answer

Which has more liquid?

Has more

Do they both weigh the same, or does one weigh more than the other?

Weighs more

Are there still as many pennies as nickels, or more of one than the other?

More

Are they the same length, or is one longer?

Is longer

Is one pencil as long as the other, or is one longer?
Stage 4: Formal Operations (11 & Up)

- Reorganization of cognitive operations so as to permit thinking about thinking.
- More abstract, hypothetical thinking (reasoning and judgment); logical thinking not limited to the observable.
- Systematic deductive reasoning.
- A process of thought that yields a conclusion.
- Interest in issues; idealism.
Piaget Terms

◆ Each stage qualitatively different with regard to the type of thought or type of behavior.

◆ Cognitive development:
  ■ Taking information in about the world = assimilation.
  ■ Changing one’s idea to include the new knowledge = accommodation.
  ■ Cognitive organization = people try to organize new information into an existing organizational structure.
Piaget Terms

◆ Adaptation: how a person deals with new information. (assimilation & accommodation).

◆ Equilibrium: we are constantly striving for equilibrium – a balance between a child and outside world and among child’s own cognitive structure. The need for equilibrium causes a child to shift from assimilation to accommodation.
Humanistic Theories

◆ Human nature is essentially good and unique.
◆ Emphasis on potential for self-development.
◆ Emphasis on becoming a better person.
◆ Change occurs as a result of human’s freedom to choose, to be creative, to achieve self-realization.
Self-Actualization & Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow

- Physiological Needs
- Safety Needs
- Affiliation Needs
- Esteem Needs
- Self-Actualization
Neo-Psychoanalytic Theories

◆ Erik H. Erikson (1902-1994)
◆ Focus is on social relationships rather than individual personality and sexual feelings.
◆ Influenced by Freudian thought.
Psychosocial Theory
Erik Erikson

◆ Premise of theory:
  ■ We are born with basically good qualities.
  ■ Biological forces push the individual toward each life crisis, and social forces largely determine the outcomes of these crises.
  ■ Children are active participants in determining developmental outcomes.
  ■ Development is stagelike & universal.
  ■ There is a carry-over from early life to later life.
Basic Trust v. Mistrust (0-1 year): Infants must learn that adults can be trusted. This occurs when adults meet a child’s basic needs for survival. Infants are dependent upon their caregivers, so caregivers who are responsive and sensitive to their infant’s needs help their baby to develop a sense of trust; their baby will see the world as a safe, predictable place. Unresponsive caregivers who do not meet their baby’s needs can engender feelings of anxiety, fear, and mistrust; their baby may see the world as unpredictable. If infants are treated cruelly or their needs are not met appropriately, they will likely grow up with a sense of mistrust for people in the world.

- Infants must learn to trust others.
- Adults need to be reliable & rewarding.
- Child requires physical comfort & low anxiety.
- Believes that the world is a “trustworthy” place.
Cause of...

Trust (maladaptive)
A parent who overly protects their child when they are young.

Mistrust (malignant)
Parents who are unreliable and often rejects or harmed the child as an infant.
Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt

(1-3 years) : begin to explore their world, they learn that they can control their actions and act on their environment to get results. They begin to show clear preferences for certain elements of the environment, such as food, toys, and clothing. A toddler’s main task is to resolve the issue of autonomy vs. shame and doubt by working to establish independence. This is the “me do it” stage. For example, we might observe a budding sense of autonomy in a 2-year-old child who wants to choose her clothes and dress herself. Although her outfits might not be appropriate for the situation, her input in such basic decisions has an effect on her sense of independence. If denied the opportunity to act on her environment, she may begin to doubt her abilities, which could lead to low self-esteem and feelings of shame.

◆ Children must learn to be “autonomous” and look after their own needs, e.g. pot tying – thus avoiding self-doubt & shame.

◆ If restrained too much or punished too harshly, the child may develop a sense of shame & doubt.
Initiative v. Guilt (3-6 years): they are capable of initiating activities and asserting control over their world through social interactions and play. According to Erikson, preschool children must resolve the task of *initiative vs. guilt*. By learning to plan and achieve goals while interacting with others, preschool children can master this task. Initiative, a sense of ambition and responsibility, occurs when parents allow a child to explore within limits and then support the child’s choice. These children will develop self-confidence and feel a sense of purpose. Those who are unsuccessful at this stage—with their initiative misfiring or stifled by over-controlling parents—may develop feelings of guilt.

- Children must learn to act grownup and take initiative without going beyond their capabilities or impinging on the rights, privileges, or goals of others.
- This stage notes the development of purposeful behavior; including responsibility for own body, behavior, toys, etc.
- Increase in imaginative thinking & creative ideas.
- The child who does not develop a sense of responsibility, or is made to feel anxious, develops guilt.
Initiative vs. Guilt

As preschool children encounter a widening social world, they are challenged more & need to develop more purposeful behavior to cope with these challenges. Children are asked to assume more responsibility. Uncomfortable guilt feelings may arise, though, if the children irresponsible & are made to feel too anxious.
Industry v. Inferiority (6-12 years):

Children face the task of *industry vs. inferiority*. Children begin to compare themselves with their peers to see how they measure up. They either develop a sense of pride and accomplishment in their schoolwork, sports, social activities, and family life, or they feel inferior and inadequate because they feel that they don’t measure up. If children do not learn to get along with others or have negative experiences at home or with peers, an inferiority complex might develop into *adolescence* and adulthood.

- Children are expected to be “industrious” and master important social/academic skills.
- Failure to acquire important skills leads to feelings of inferiority.
- Children who are successful feel self-assured.
Stage 4: Industry vs. Inferiority

6-12 years

Industry vs. Inferiority

Competence

Gain real adult skills (reading, writing)
Industry: Motivation to keep learning and practicing.
They want to be productive instead of just wanting to play.
When not encouraged to work and learn skills feel inferior and unmotivated.
Conflict between what they should do and should not do.
School learning, interaction with peers
Identity versus Role Confusion (12-20) :

children face the task of *identity vs. role confusion*. According to Erikson, an adolescent’s main task is developing a sense of self. Adolescents struggle with questions such as “Who am I?” and “What do I want to do with my life?” Along the way, most adolescents try on many different selves to see which ones fit; they explore various roles and ideas, *set* goals, and attempt to discover their “adult” selves. Adolescents who are successful at this stage have a strong sense of identity and are able to remain true to their beliefs and values in the face of *problems* and other people’s perspectives. When adolescents are apathetic, do not make a conscious search for identity, or are pressured to conform to their parents’ ideas for the future, they may develop a weak sense of self and experience role confusion. They will be unsure of their identity and confused about the future. Teenagers who struggle to adopt a positive role will likely struggle to “find” themselves as adults.
Adolescents struggle with “who am I?”

Attempt to figure out basic social/occupational identities.

Confusion persists until identity is reached.

Time to explore vocational, romantic, political, religious roles b/f making commitment.
**Intimacy v. Isolation (20-40)**: People in early adulthood (20s through early 40s) are concerned with *intimacy vs. isolation*. After we have developed a sense of self in adolescence, we are ready to share our life with others. However, if other stages have not been successfully resolved, young adults may have trouble developing and maintaining successful relationships with others. Erikson said that we must have a strong sense of self before we can develop successful intimate relationships. Adults who do not develop a positive **self-concept** in adolescence may experience feelings of loneliness and emotional isolation.

- **Primary task** is to form strong relationships and to achieve a sense of love and companionship with another person.
- If no close relationships are formed, isolation results.
Generativity v. Stagnation (40-65) : When people reach their 40s, they enter the time known as middle adulthood, which extends to the mid-60s. The social task of middle adulthood is generativity vs. stagnation. Generativity involves finding your life’s work and contributing to the development of others through activities such as volunteering, mentoring, and raising children. During this stage, middle-aged adults begin contributing to the next generation, often through childbirth and caring for others; they also engage in meaningful and productive work which contributes positively to society. Those who do not master this task may experience stagnation and feel as though they are not leaving a mark on the world in a meaningful way; they may have little connection with others and little interest in productivity and self-improvement.

- Major task to become productive in work, to raise a family, look after young people.
- Failure to achieve these goals results in feelings of stagnation, meaninglessness, or self-centeredness.
Ego Integrity v. Despair (old age): From the mid-60s to the end of life, we are in the period of development known as late adulthood. Erikson’s task at this stage is called *integrity vs. despair*. He said that people in late adulthood reflect on their lives and feel either a sense of satisfaction or a sense of failure. People who feel proud of their accomplishments feel a sense of integrity, and they can look back on their lives with few regrets. However, people who are not successful at this stage may feel as if their life has been wasted. They focus on what “would have,” “should have,” and “could have” been. They face the end of their lives with feelings of bitterness, depression, and despair.

- The adequacy of one’s life experiences, when reviewed, will determine whether an individual feels that their life has been meaningful/productive or disappointing or meaningless.
- If see a life well spent, have a sense of satisfaction, then integrity. If meaningless, feel despair.
Ego integrity vs. Despair
Ethological Theory
Karl Lorenz

- Karl Lorenz (1903-1989)
- Ethological theory stresses: behavior is strongly influenced by biology & tied to evolution.
- Talked about critical or sensitive periods.
- Rapid, innate learning with a critical period of time that involves attachment to the first moving object seen (Lorenz’s geese).