MILESTONES OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Stages: Adolescence through Emerging Adulthood
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The science of human development seeks to understand how and why people change over time and is empirical in nature.

Life-Span Perspective: An approach to the study of human development that takes into account all phases of life, not just childhood, or adulthood. It also views human development as multidirectional, multicontextual, multicultural, multidisciplinary, and plastic.
Multidirectional: Over time human characteristics change in many ways—increasing, decreasing, or holding steady.
Multicontextual: Development occurs in many contexts including physical and social environments.
Multicultural: People of a nation, region in a nation, ethnic group, neighborhood, and even classroom can have their own culture and this culture affects their actions and thoughts.
**Multidisciplinary:** Human development over the life-span is such a large subject that ideas and information from many disciplines is required to understand it.
Plasticity: Human traits can be molded, yet people maintain a certain durability of identity.
Research Methods and Designs

**Methods**

- **Scientific Observation**: unobtrusively watching and recording participants’ behavior in a systematic and objective manner—in a natural setting, a laboratory, or in searches of archival data.

- **Survey**: information is collected from a large number of people by interviews, written questionnaires, or other means.

**Designs**

- **Cross-Sectional Research**: compares groups of people who differ in age but are similar in other important characteristics.

- **Longitudinal Research**: follows the same individuals over time and their development is repeatedly assessed.
## Major Theories of Development

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Premise</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviorism and Social Learning Theory:</strong></td>
<td>Development involves an increase in learned behaviors. Development results from conditioning and modeling. Behaviors reinforced and modeled may vary from child to child.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cognitive development takes place in stages.</td>
<td>Stages are assumed to be universal. Piaget’s 4 stages are sequential in order and include ages birth through adolescence.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Piaget’s Cognitive Development Theory:</strong></td>
<td>Characterized by problem finding not just problem solving. More practical and flexible thinking. Person is more open to ideas and less concerned with absolute rights and wrongs, and accept the contradictions of the complexity of the situation. Dialectical thinking is the most advanced form of thinking.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Post Formal Thought/Dialectical Thinking</strong></td>
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### Major Theories of Development, cont.

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Erikson’s Psychosocial Theory.</strong></td>
<td>A series of sequential developmental stages form birth through late adulthood. The focus is the development of a healthy personality who is able to form intimate relationships and be a productive member of society.</td>
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<td>A life-span theorist that combines psychological and cultural aspects of development.</td>
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<td><strong>Ecological Systems Theory:</strong></td>
<td>The structure of the environment includes the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Layers of the environment influence child-rearing and adult life experiences.</td>
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<td>The individual’s characteristics join with environmental forces at multiple levels to mold development in unique ways.</td>
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Development During Adolescence

Major Milestones of Development
Physical Development in Adolescence

- Puberty—Physical Transition to Adulthood
  - Hormonal changes—Sexual maturity controlled by the sex hormones: Estrogens and Androgens.
  - Growth spurt—rapid gain in height and weight begins around age 10 for girls and 12 for boys.
  - Factors influencing the timing of puberty include: heredity, nutrition, exercise, and overall health.
Cognitive Development in Adolescence

- **Post Formal Operations Stage**
  - Capacity for abstract, systematic, and scientific thinking.
  
  Capable of deductive reasoning.
  
  When presented with a problem, adolescents are more likely to engage in trial and error problem-solving in order to reach a successful outcome.

  Egocentrism involves a heightened sense of self-consciousness and a belief that others are interested in them (imaginary audience) and everyone else’s behavior is a personal judgment on them. Example: A teacher’s words or a friend’s frown may mean that “I am not likeable.”
Cognitive Development in Adolescence

- Ability to think abstractly about possibilities causes adolescents to have idealistic views that are at odds with everyday reality.

- Less effective at decision-making than adults, take greater risks, and accentuate short-term goals over long-term goals.
Erikson’s Stage: Identity versus Role Confusion

Major personality achievement of adolescence.

Identity achievement involves answering the following questions: Who am I? What do I believe? What are my goals? (Separate from my parents.)

Process of exploration followed by commitment.
Peers become increasingly important during adolescence and less time is spent with family members. Peer relations can be both positive and negative. (Delinquent behavior, drug abuse, compared to sports and group activities at school or church).

Major characteristics of adolescent friendships include: intimacy (psychological closeness), mutual understanding, and loyalty.
Sex differences in friendships:
- Emotional closeness is more common between girls than between boys.
- Girls frequently get together without a planned activity to “just talk.”
- Boys more often get together for sport activities or competitive games.
- Girls tend to focus more on communal concerns, while boys focus more on achievement and status.
Social and Emotional Development in Adolescence

- Internet Usage and Friendships
  - Adolescents use the Internet and Social Networking Sites to communicate with friends and meet new people. Use of these sites is common and seems to support friendship closeness without direct physical interaction.
  - For some adolescents, online relationships pose some risks of harmful social experiences, including harassment, exploitation, and bullying.
Emerging Adulthood

Physical, Cognitive, Social Development
Emerging Adulthood (18-25)

- Although by about age 18, the physical body is “grown up,” many do not consider themselves adults until age 25 or older.

- Our traditional signs of adulthood (completed education, marriage, parenthood, chosen career path) occur later than they once did.

- The creation of the developmental stage of “emerging adulthood”
Emerging Adulthood: Physical Development

- Period of optimal physical health
Emerging Adulthood: Physical Development

- Attitudes towards sex and marriage
  - Emotional entanglement
  - Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
Increased incidents of depression, anxiety disorders such as panic attacks.
Emerging Adulthood: Physical Development cont.

- Increased risk-taking behaviors
  - Edgework (Living on the edge) – Engage in occupations or sports that involve higher degree of risk or danger.
    - Occupations
    - Sports
    - Drugs and alcohol use
Emerging Adulthood: Cognitive Development

- Postformal thought
- Dialectical thought
- Moral Development
  - Spiritual development
  - Influence of culture
- Higher education and cognitive growth
Emerging Adulthood: Social

- Quest for identity
  - Ethnic/political-identifying with certain ethnic and political groups.
  - Vocational- indentifying a particular career path.
Emerging Adulthood: Social cont.

- Intimacy
  - Friendship
  - Romance – postponing marriage and increased rates of cohabitation.
Ongoing family relationships

- Relationships with parents: after college graduation, young adults may return home to live with their parents. (Revolving door syndrome).

- Cultural impact: relationships with parents and other family members are greatly influenced by culture and beliefs. (Western cultures expect young adults to live independently of parents).
Free Educational Instructional Resources

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- [Resources for Child Guidance](#)
Questions, Comments, Suggestions
Resources and References


Resources and References


Resources and References

MIT Center for Work, Family and Personal Life
Young Adult Development Project
http://hrweb.mit.edu/worklife/youngadult/

Search Institute
Global innovator in discovering what children and adolescents need to succeed in their families, schools, and communities.
http://www.search-institute.org/content/gates-foundation-successful-young-adult-development
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