
The main theories of perceptual development

It has also been found that Piaget's ideas towards developmental psychology have been helped to understand children and how they view the world as well as more beneficial ways to help children learn.

There are many theorists who believe that sometimes an individual's environment can also affect the way that we develop. Our environment is very important and Piaget did not take this into account. Our environment will stimulate and challenge us therefore helping us to develop. Vygotsky understood that our biological needs make up a big part of our development but that without using the tools we create to master our environment, we cannot satisfy and fulfill our deepest needs; hence, limiting our development in the future.

Vygotsky's (1962) theory of development looked at child's development more socially rather than cognitively; however, there were cognitive areas included in his theory. He believed that in order to understand human nature as a whole, the social-historical context of us as individuals should also be understood. He realized that we, as humans, change throughout history and this particular change is what helps us to learn. Alongside this learning from another more skilled person i.e. an adult, helped children to learn new cognitive skills, more advanced than just learning alone. He also claimed that every child has a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) being the area of your brain where a student becomes 'cognitively prepared, but requires help and social interaction to fully develop'.

The main problem with his theory of childhood development was the fact it was very much one-sided. He was very vague when going into account on intrinsic development produced from the child itself but when any research into extrinsic development was covered, there was a large basis for it; almost making it seem a little biased. Haight and Miller (1993) found that mothers trying to get their 1-year-olds to play imaginatively were only able to get 41% of their play episodes reciprocated at age 2. This shows that there is more to the development of a child than simply a more skilled individual being present. On the other hand, many of Vygotsky's (1896-1934) ideas have caused many changes in the education systems over the years. The main reason being the understanding of students and their own learning process as well as encouraging a teacher-student learning experience. Brown and Palinscar (1989) have studied this and always found positive results.

A lot of developmentalists, including Vygotsky, were in mutual disagreement over the extent of a child's development being solely entrusted on them. This includes the child's own interests as well as their efforts in childhood. However, one theorist who did believe that a child's effort is a

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major factor in learning was Albert Bandura (1925).

Bandura's (1969) social learning theory was developed as Bandura believed that we, during childhood, learn to moderate our behavior through social norms in such a way that helps us to learn. He believed that we learn best through observation of others, more so of the same-sex rather than the opposing. His work is based on the ideals of operant conditioning but he believed that partial reinforcement was present and nothing more. The social learning theory has 4 parts to it and is based on the concept of looking, watching and copying others.

1. Attention; paying full attention to what is being observed. Distractions can cause a negative effect.
2. Retention; remembering what was shown and being able to act on it.
3. Reproduction; reproducing what was shown which can lead to skills advancing.
4. Motivation; wanting to learn the behavior with reinforcement and punishment playing an important role

Bandura conducted his own studies to support this theory.

One of the most well-known was the Bandura, Ross and Ross (1963) Bobo Dolls study which found that 4 and 5-year-olds who watched an adult play and behave more aggressively were then more aggressive themselves. However, it has been known that this imitating behavior he studied only occurred in around 10% of participants which is definitely in the minority. It was also found that some of his studies showed how modeling can help to reduce fears. One example, 4-year-olds who had a fear of dogs watched another calmly playing with a dog and it was noted that they became less fearful (Bandura, Grusec & Menlove, 1967).

Not only is behavior influenced by personal or live individuals but there is also a significance to those considered famous or in the media. These individuals are known to have a powerful impact on those observing them. One example of this would be the case of the murder of James Bulger where it's established that the two who murdered James were known to watch Child's Play 3 quite regularly as some similarities were noticed. The father of the children denies this so we can't say how accurate it is.

A lot of theorists developed their own personal theories around the idea of maturation and how we, as individuals, will mature and develop over time due to biological or environmental factors, and even both.

One theorist who was in the middle of the nature/nurture debate was Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) but his ideas were very much sexual based and so many looked over this as it wasn't seen as convincing.

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Freud developed the psychosexual stages (1905) as he believed that children mature through their childhood based on their memories as well as any sexual feelings that may be encountered. A lot of his theory was based around his work with adults who suffered with serious mental disorders and their early experiences were what he based his work off of. He understood that psychological change was very much an innate process but that also social forces played a powerful role in progressing through the stages. To be able to progress through his stages, you would have to be considered as psychologically healthy or fixation would occur.

1. Oral; until around one year where the baby will seek pleasure from the mouth. If fixated, many oral activities occur later in life e.g. smoking
2. Anal; until around 3 years old where point of pleasure is the anus. If fixated, can become over obsessive and tidy as well as being the complete opposite too.
3. Phallic; until around 6 years old where point of pleasure is the genitals masturbation. If fixated, can become very self-obsessed, envious, vain etc.
4. Latent; until puberty and there is a lack of sexual motivation during this time with no fixation occurring.
5. Genital; throughout the rest of an individual's life where the genitals become point of pleasure yet again but this time in terms of sexual intercourse but no fixation occurs.

Many theorists disagree with Freud's theory and way of thinking especially as it is very dated in comparison to other theories. It is also seen as very subjective due to it simply just being all Freud's opinions and there isn't really any fact to it. Because the psychosexual stages are said to lie in the unconscious mind it's also been considered a non-scientific theory as it can be difficult to test. However, the Little Hans (1909) study did support his theory as Hans was said to be stuck in the Anal stage due to his consistent dreams about wiping babies bottoms and enjoying his own being wiped; adhering to the idea of being fixated. This particular study was also a case study, as well as any other studies supporting this also were, showing validity of this theory.

The only problem with this is that it can only be generalized to one person or situation; a very personal ideal. Many theorists also state that his theory is not falsifiable and Grinbaum (1986) even went as far as to say that psychoanalysis is 'simply bad science'.

These are only a few out of many theories that have been developed over time to help explain how and why we, humans, perceptually develop. The biggest factor that can be agreed on is the concept of the nature/nurture debate. This debate is definitely something that is consistently brought up when looking into development of a human in the early stages. But is it all really down to our biological development or do interactions help? The theories that take on both sides of the debate are a lot stronger and have more evidence backing them up as well as just being a lot more convincing and realistic, par maybe Freud's theory. It was also discussed that

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the more recent theories have a lot more studies backing them up in a theoretical way rather and not a hypothetical way. These perspectives, when combined, can help to explain perceptual development in a more meaningful way; looking more in-depth rather than just on the surface of development.

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