There are many theories, but they all take a stance on 3 basic issues:

1. **Is Development Continuous or Discontinuous?**
   - **Continuous** development is a process that consists of gradually adding on more of the same types of skills that were there to begin with.
   
   **Discontinuous** development is a process in which new ways of understanding and responding to the world emerge at particular periods.
   
   Theories that accept the discontinuous perspective regard development as taking place in stages—qualitative changes in thinking, feeling, and behaving that characterize particular time periods of development.

2. **Does One Course of Dev. Characterize All People or Are There Many Possible Courses?**
   - Stage theorists assume that people everywhere follow the same sequence of development
   - At the same time, the human dev. Field recognizes that children and adults live in distinct **contexts** that uniquely affect individuals
3. Nature or Nurture as More Important?

- The **nature–nurture controversy** asks whether genetic or environmental factors are more important underlying causes of development.
- **Nature** means the hereditary information we receive from our parents at the moment of conception that signals the body to grow and affects all our characteristics and skills.
- **Nurture** means the complex forces of the physical and social world that influence our biological makeup and psychological experiences.
- All theories grant some role to both nature and nurture but vary in the emphasis placed on each.
- Some theorists emphasize stability—children who are high or low in a characteristic will remain so at later ages. These theorists typically stress the importance of heredity, or nature.
- Theorists who emphasize environment point to early experiences as establishing a lifelong pattern of behavior.
- Modern theories tend to recognize the merits of both sides.
- Researchers have moved away from asking which is more important, heredity or environment. Instead, they want to know how nature and nurture work together to influence change.

A Balanced Point of View

- Modern theories tend to recognize the merits of both sides, recognizing the merits of differing theories.
- Researchers have moved away from asking which is more important, heredity or environment. Instead, they want to know how nature and nurture work together to influence change.

Lifespan Perspective

**Development as:**

1. Lifelong
   - No age period has more impact.
   - Table 1.1 (p.8)—within each period, change occurs in 3 areas: physical, cognitive, and social. These domains overlap.

2. Multidimensional and multidirectional
   - Multidimensional—affected by a blend of biopsychosocial forces.
   - Multidirectional—not limited to improving performance over time. At all periods, it’s a combined expression of growth and decline.
   - By focusing on certain areas (language), we’re ignoring development in others. It’s multidirectional within each domain also.

3. Plastic
   - Aging is not an eventual “shipwreck,” but rather a “butterfly” of metamorphosis.
   - Development gradually becomes less plastic as capacity and opportunity for change are reduced.
   - Plasticity varies greatly across individuals.

4. Embedded in context
   - Age-Graded influences (normative)
     - I.e. Most kids walk around 12 months.
     - These milestones are influenced by biology, but also social customs.
     - I.e. driver’s license at 16, start college at 18.
   - History-Graded Influences (normative)
     - Development is affected by forces specific to a historical era.
     - I.e. epidemics, wars, periods of economic prosperity or depression, technological advances (tv, computer, internet), and changing cultural values (women, ethnic minorities).
     - “Cohort”—people born around the same time tend to be similar in ways that separate them from people born at other times.
     - I.e. Great Depression, baby boomers, generation X, etc.
   - Nonnormative influences
     - Events that are irregular because they happen to just a few people and aren’t specific to a predictable timetable.
     - I.e. piano lessons in childhood with an inspiring teacher, battle with cancer.
## Periods of Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prenatal</td>
<td>Conception – birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infancy &amp; Toddlerhood</td>
<td>Birth – 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
<td>2 – 6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Childhood</td>
<td>6 – 11 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescence</td>
<td>11 – 20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Adulthood</td>
<td>20 – 40 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Adulthood</td>
<td>40 – 60 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Adulthood</td>
<td>60 years – death</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## Theories

### The Psychoanalytic Perspective
- Assumes children move through a series of stages (oral, anal, phallic, latency, genital) in which they confront conflicts between biological drives and social expectations.
- How they resolve these conflicts determines psychological adjustment.
- **Freud’s Theory**
  - *The id*, the largest portion of the mind, is the source of biological needs and requires immediate gratification.
  - *The ego* develops in early infancy and is the conscious, rational part of personality.
  - *The superego* represents the values of society and one’s conscience.
  - According to Freud, the relations between the id, ego, and superego determine an individual's basic personality.

### The Psychoanalytic Perspective
- **Erikson’s Theory**
  - Expanded Freud’s views and created his psychosocial theory that emphasized the ego as a positive force in development.
  - He recognized that normal development must be understood in relation to the cultural context in which it occurs.
  - Trust vs. mistrust
  - Autonomy vs. shame and doubt
  - Initiative vs. guilt
  - Industry vs. diffusion
  - Identity vs. confusion
  - Intimacy vs. isolation
  - Generativity vs. stagnation
  - Ego integrity vs. despair
Behaviorism & Social Learning

| Classical Conditioning (Pavlov) | Stimulus – Response
| Adults can mold children’s behavior by controlling stimulus–response associations. |
| Operant Conditioning (Skinner) | Reinforcers and Punishments
| Environmental reinforcers and punishments as the determinants of behavior. |
| Social Learning (Bandura) | Modeling
| (imitation or observational learning) as a basis for development. |

Critical Period

- **Individual is**
  - Biologically prepared to acquire adaptive behaviors during limited time span
  - Needs support of an appropriately stimulating environment

Sensitive Period

- An optimal time for certain capacities to emerge
- Individual is especially responsive to environment
- Later development is hard to induce
- Boundaries less defined than a critical period
Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory
- Cross-cultural and multicultural studies help untangle the genetic and environmental factors which impact the timing, order of appearance, and diversity of children’s behaviors.
- Focuses on how culture is transmitted from one generation to the next.
- He viewed cognitive development as a socially mediated process in which children benefit from parental and peer support to accomplish new things. The specific tasks mastered depend on the culture’s values and traditions.

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory
- Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory views the child as developing within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the environment.
- The environment consists of a series of nested structures:
  - The microsystem is the innermost level of the environment and refers to activities and interaction patterns in the child’s immediate environment.
  - The mesosystem is composed of connections among microsystems that foster children’s development.
  - The exosystem contains contexts that do not include children but affect their experiences in immediate settings.
  - The macrosystem is the outermost layer, which includes a culture’s laws, values, customs, and resources.
- The environment is not a static force that uniformly affects individuals—it is ever-changing.
- The temporal dimension of this model is the chronosystem (time).
  - Changes in life events can be imposed externally or come from within the person—i.e. divorce, starting school, entering or reentering the workforce, etc.

Research Methods
- Basic approach to gathering info
  1. Systematic Observation
     - Naturalistic
     - Structured
  2. Self-Reports
     - Clinical Interview
     - Structured interviews, questionnaires, tests
  3. Clinical or Case Studies
  4. Ethnography
Research Methods and Research Design

- Research begins with a prediction, or hypothesis, about behavior.
- Researchers must then decide on an overall plan (research design) for conducting the specific activities (research methods) for which they need participants.
- An understanding of research strategies is important for separating dependable information from misleading results and is essential, practical knowledge for those who work directly with children.

Systematic Observation

- Find out how people actually behave.
  - Naturalistic
    - Going to the natural environment to observe a particular behavior.
    - Real and not contrived.
    - Not all individuals have the same opportunity to display a particular behavior in everyday life (can’t control the conditions)
  - Structured
    - Using a lab setting to set up a situation that cues a particular behavior to be observed.
    - Every participant has an equal opportunity to display the response.
    - Might not provide observations that are typical of everyday behavior for that individual

Self-Reports

- Instruments that ask questions about people’s perceptions, thoughts, abilities, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and past experiences.
- Clinical interviews are relatively unstructured methods that explore a participant’s thoughts through the use of a flexible, conversational style of interaction.
  - Generates a large volume of information and allow exact expression of a participant’s feelings and experiences.
  - Include participants’ inaccuracy in reporting thoughts in an attempt to please the interviewer and the method’s reliance on verbal ability and expressiveness.
  - In a structured interview, every participant is asked the same questions in the same way.
    + Efficient, has briefer answers, and can be used with groups of individuals.
    + Allows for comparison of responses and efficient data collection and scoring
    - Does not yield the same depth of information as the clinical interview, and also can be affected by the problem of inaccurate reporting.

Clinical or Case Studies

- Goal is to gather a complete picture of an individual through interviews, observation and test scores.
  + The clinical method yields case narratives rich in detail that offer valuable insights.
  - Drawbacks include information that is often collected unsystematically and subjectively. In addition, investigators cannot assume that their conclusions apply to anyone other than the child studied.
Ethnography

- A descriptive, qualitative technique that is directed toward understanding a culture or distinct social group.
  - Achieves its goals through participant observation and assumes that by entering into close contact with a social group researchers can understand the beliefs and behaviors of its members more accurately.
  - At times ethnographers’ presence alters the situation being studied.
  - Investigators’ cultural values and theoretical commitments sometimes lead them to observe selectively or misinterpret what they see.
  - Findings cannot be generalized to groups other than those studied.

Research Designs

Research Design--Correlation

- The researcher gathers information on already existing groups of individuals without changing their experiences in any way.
  - One important limitation is the inability to determine cause-and-effect relationships from the results of correlational studies.
  - The correlation coefficient is a number ranging from +1.00 to -1.00 that indicates how two variables are related.
    - **Magnitude**
    - The size of the number between 0 and 1
    - A value close to +1.00 or -1.00 denotes a stronger relationship.
    - A zero correlation indicates no association.
  - **Direction**
  - The number’s sign indicates the direction of the relationship:
  - Positive (+): as one variable increases, so does the other
  - Negative (-): as one variable increase, the other decreases
  - There is a relationship, but we haven’t yet ruled out the interference of any other variables (i.e. we don’t know what caused it).

Research Design--Experiment

- Experimental Design
  - Allows us to infer cause-and-effect behavioral relationships.
  - Randomly assigning participants (flipping a coin, drawing numbers from a hat, etc.) to treatment conditions (control group or the experimental group) allows manipulation of the independent variable to see its effect on the dependent variable.
  - Increases the chances that characteristics will be equally distributed across conditions
  - I.e. Looking at the impact of adult’s angry interactions on child’s adjustment with an unresolved conflict group and a resolved conflict group
  - **Independent variable**
  - Experimenter changes or manipulates expected to cause changes in another variable
  - I.e. the adult’s angry interactions—resolved or unresolved conflict
  - **Dependent variable**
  - Experimenter measures, but doesn’t manipulate expected to be influenced by the independent variable
  - I.e. the conflict approach affects the child’s distress level
  - To control for unknown characteristics of participants that could reduce the accuracy of their findings, investigators must use random assignment and/or matching.
  - Allows us to rule out other variables that could be influencing the results
### Modified Experiments

**Field Experiment**
- Capitalize on opportunities for random assignment in natural settings

**Natural or Quasi-Experiment**
- Compare differences in treatment that already exist
- Match groups as much as possible

### Developmental Research Designs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longitudinal</td>
<td>Same group studied at different times or ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Sectional</td>
<td>Differing age groups studied at the same time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longitudinal-Sequential</td>
<td>Multiple groups of different ages studied together at different times over time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Longitudinal
- A group of participants is studied repeatedly at different ages.
  - This approach identifies common developmental patterns as well as individual differences.
  - This design permits examination of relationships between early and later events and behaviors.
  - Over time participants may move away or drop out of the research, leading to **biased samples**.
  - Participants may behave unnaturally from repeated exposure to a test situation (**practice effects**).
  - Cultural–historical changes can cause **cohort effects**—particular influences on one group that may make the research results inapplicable to other groups.

### Cross-sectional
- Different-aged groups are studied at the same point in time. Group differences are assumed to be the result of developmental changes.
  - More efficient than longitudinal design.
  - Not dealing with participant dropout and **practice effects**
  - Individual changes in development cannot be detected
  - Results may suffer from cohort effects in that differences among the groups may be due to cultural or historical influences and not age-related changes.
Rights of Research Participants

- Protection From Harm
  - Physical or psychological

- Informed Consent
  - Allows for appropriate determination of the willingness to participate in the study as well as discontinue participation at any time.

- Privacy
  - Not revealing identity of any of the participants.

- Knowledge of Results
  - Explained in language appropriate to their understanding.

- Beneficial Treatments