

Theory Overview

DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY: the discipline that seeks to identify and explain the changes that individuals undergo from the moment of conception until they die.

- Physical growth (including sensation and perception)
- Motor skills
- Mental or reasoning ability (cognition and learning)
- Emotional expression
- Patterns of social behaviour
- Personality

1. Prenatal (conception to birth)
2. Infancy (first 2 years)
3. Childhood (2-12 years)
4. Adolescence (12-20 years)
5. Young adulthood (20-40 years)
6. Middle age (40-65 years)
7. Old age (65+ years)

GERONTOLOGY: the study of the old and the processes of aging

'Tabula Rasa' View: the idea proposed by John Locke that children's minds at birth are like a 'blank slate', to be written on by life's experiences

Predetermined view: the view that development is determined at birth. The philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a predeterminist who believes that children are born inherently good and that development unfolds according to nature's plan.

Developmental Controversies

Nature/ Nurture Controversy: the controversy over the extent to which development is influenced by nature (inheritance) and by nurture (environmental experiences)

Continuity-Discontinuity Controversy: the controversy over whether development is a continuous, gradual process that proceeds by incremental quantitative change or a process involving distinctive steps in which qualitative differences in behaviour can be observed.

Universal or Culturally Influenced?

Despite the huge range of cultural differences that affect the environments in which development takes place, many theorists have argued that some underlying processes are universal to all children (culture-free)

Approaches to Developmental Psychology

Normative-Descriptive Approach: approach to developmental psychology that describes the normal or average status of people on specified characteristics at different age levels. It is the 'what happens when?' approach that was pioneered by Arnold Gesell (maturation and predeterministic)

MATURATION: the term used by Gesell for the mechanism by which genes direct the developmental process (intrinsically determined age-related changes)

Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: a widely used instrument for assessing intelligence and predicting academic achievement. It was based on the first intelligence test developed by French psychologist Aldred Binet

Freud's Psychoanalytical Theory

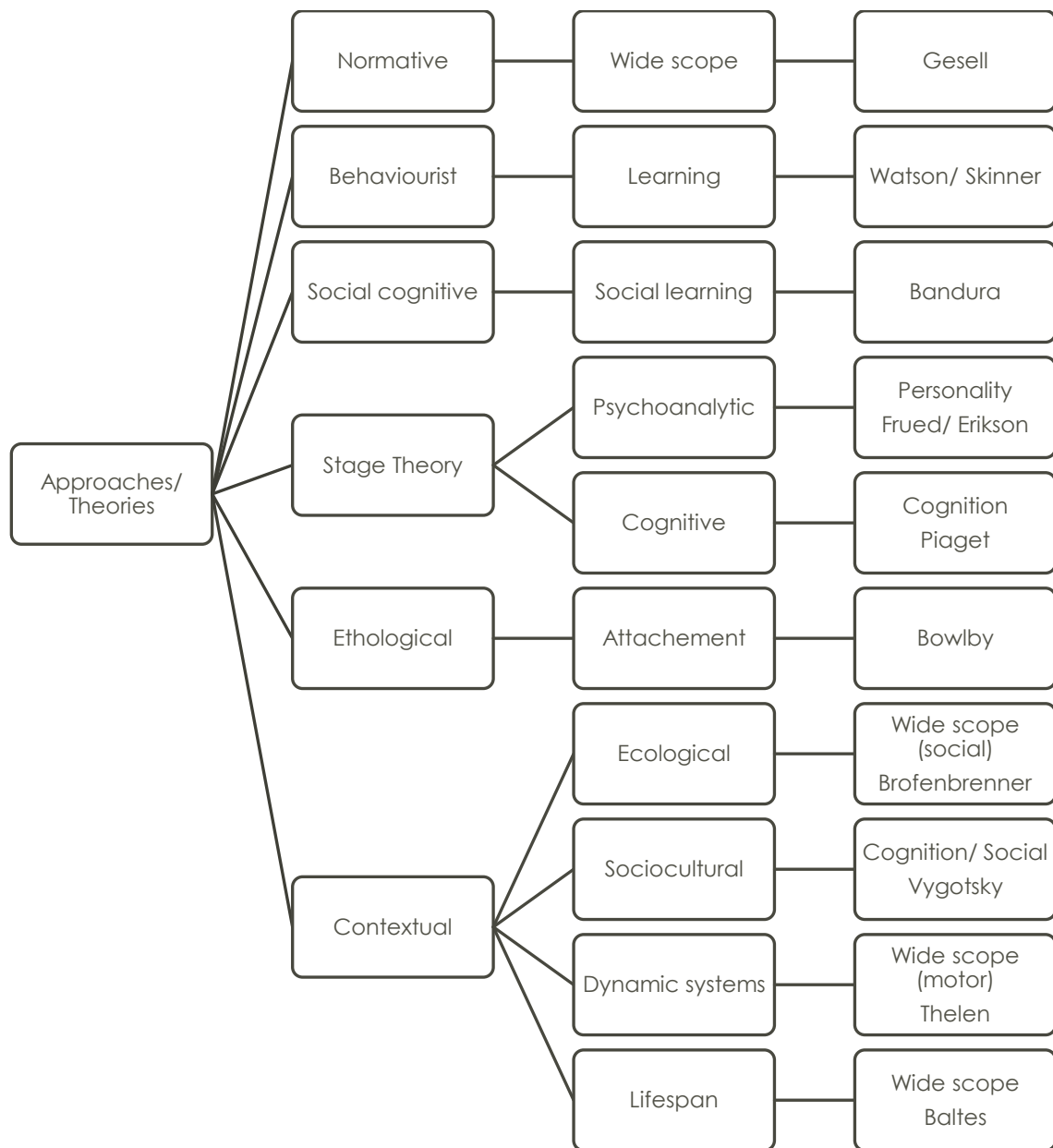
FREUD'S PSYCHOANALYTICAL THEORY: a psychosexual theory of personality development in which three structures (**the id, the ego and the superego**) determine personality development. These, Freud said, became integrated during development.

ID (in Freudian psychology): an innate structure, the sole structure at birth that contains all of the persona psychic energy (libido). The id functions unconsciously to obtain pleasure by directing the libido to the appropriate part of the body to obtain gratification.

EGO (in Freudian psychology): the arbitrator between instinctual demands and the realities of the outside world and societal standards and adapting them.

SUPEREGO (in Freudian psychology): regarded by Freud as the moral agency of personality (the conscience)

** Freud's approach cannot be tested empirically because its main constructs (instinct, repressions) do not lend themselves to scientific investigation involving random assignment to conditions or viable manipulation*



Developmental Research Designs

