Developmental Lectures

Week 1: Introduction, approaches and methods

The field of human development

- We take a scientific approach
- We take an applied approach
- It's an interdisciplinary field

Philosophies of childhood

- Ancient Rome through Middle Ages - childhood ends at 6 years
- After the renaissance and enlightenment - childhood was recognised as a unique period
- After the 17th and 18th centuries - John Locke: a tabula rasa, Jean Jacques Rousseau: innately good and child should be left to their own devices to explore the world, actively create their own experiences

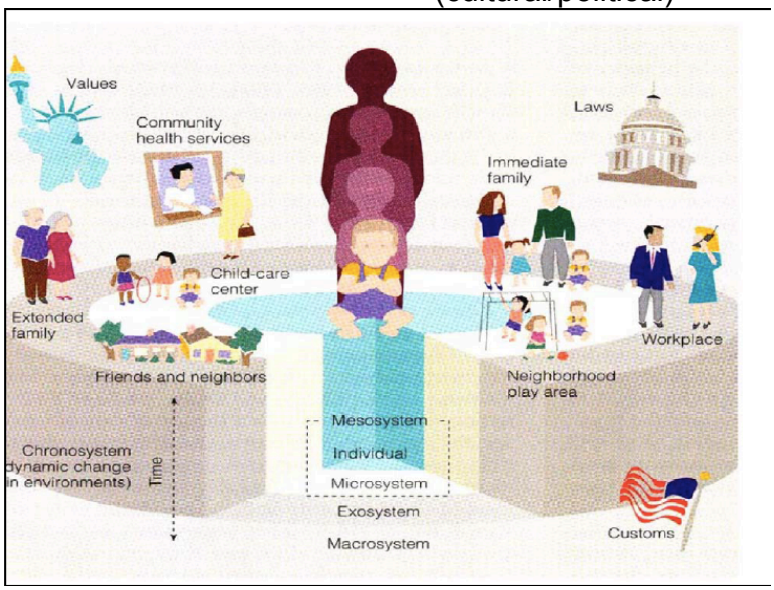
Major questions in development

- How development occurs?
    - **Major theoretical issues in child development**
        - Nature versus nurture
            - Nature
                - Genetic hereditary factors
                - Some degree of stability - Individuals who are high or low in a characteristics will remain so
                - Galton noted eminence ran in families
                - Correlation between parents and childrens IQ's = .45
            - Nature
                - Environmental factors
                - Plasticity: change is possible and likely is new experiences support it
        - Continuity (gradual process ie crawling, standing, walking) versus discontinuity (literal versus abstract thinking)
        - Sensitive period - optimal window in which an experience is very important - ie genie who was not exposed to language, kittens raised with horizontal lines
    - **Is development time sensitive?**
        - sensitive period: Period of development during which certain behaviours are easily learned
        - critical period: A period of development during which certain experience is needed for future normal development. Without such experience, later development may be impaired
- What develops?
    - Major domains of development

        - Physical – bodily structures and motor development
        - Cognitive – sensation, perception, memory, thinking (reasoning), language
        - Psychosocial development: emotional, social knowledge, morality, personality
    - Periods of development

Prenatal	Conception – birth
Infancy & Toddlerhood	Birth – 2 years
Early Childhood	2 – 6 years
Middle Childhood	6 – 11 years
Adolescence	11 – 20 years
Early Adulthood	20 – 40 years
Middle Adulthood	40 – 60 years
Late Adulthood	60 years – death

- Why development occurs?
    - Theories of development
        - Describe, Explain, Predict behaviour
        - **Bronfenbrenner's ecological model**
            - Microsystem: innermost level of the environment and includes bi-directional influences in the person's immediate environment (family)
            - Mesosystem: connections among microsystems that foster development (external family)
            - Exosystem: contexts not directly linked to children that affect their microsystem and mesosystem experiences (education, school)
            - Macrosystem: outermost layer that includes a culture's laws, values and customs (cultural/political)



- Lifespan perspective
  - Lifelong
  - Multidimensional
    - Physical
    - Cognitive
    - Social emotional
  - Multidirectional
  - Plastic
  - Embedded in context
    - Age graded: different periods in age
    - History graded: experience now would be different to post war period
    - Nonnormative: ie illness, trauma, major life event that is not predicted by periods

Research Methods

- Systematic observation
  - Naturalistic
  - Structures
- Self-reports
  - Clinical interview
  - Structured interviews, questionnaires, tests
  - Surveys
- Case studies
- Interviews
- Ethnography

General research designs

- Correlational
  - Reveals relationship between variables
  - Does not reveal cause and effect
- Experimental
  - Allows cause and effect statements
  - Lab experiments may not apply in the real world

Developmental research designs

- Longitudinal: same group, different times
- Cross sectional: different groups/cohorts compared at same time
- Longitudinal-sequential: multiple groups studied together at different times

Rights of research participants

- Protection from harm
- Freedom to participate
- Informed consent
- Privacy
- Knowledge of results