

PSYC 241 Study Notes (week 1-3)

Introduction to developmental psychology

Some misconceptions

- Personal experience ≠ understanding of theories/developmental psychology
- It's about growth and development through the lifespan, not just infants
- Traditional approach = infants+adolescents and decline in old age
- Studying late adulthood more important due to greater lifespan

The Lifespan Perspective

- Development = the pattern of movement or change that begins at conception and continues through the human life span
- Traditional approach = emphasises extensive change from birth to adolescence, little to no change in adulthood and decline in old age
- Life span approach = emphasises developmental change throughout both childhood and adulthood
- Lifespan developmental psychology studies change over longer periods than most disciplines

Biological, cognitive and socioemotional processes

- Biological = changes in an individual's physical nature
- Cognitive = changes in thought, intelligence, & language
- Socioemotional = changes in relationships with other people, changes in emotions and changes in personality

Why age is important to psychologists

- Psychologists want objectivity
- Chronological age is an important guide
- Age has meaning in all cultures, and different ones
- 4 'ages' of development
 - First age = childhood & adolescence
 - Second age = prime adulthood (20's > 50's)
 - Third age = 60 > 79
 - Fourth age = 80 & older

Age & society

- Cultural attitudes exist toward people of different ages
- People are differentiated by age within a society
- Types of age:
 - Chronological age = number of years since birth
 - Biological age = relates to biological health & vital capacities

- Psychological age = related to adaptive capacities/experience/learning
- Social age = relates to connectedness with others and social roles

Influences on development

- Cohort effects = people born in the same time period (same broad location)
 - Likely to experience the same major events
- Normative history-graded influences = biological/environmental influences associated with a particular time period
- Normative age-graded effects = Biological and sociocultural events that affect individuals in a particular age group about the same time (e.g. teething, menopause, starting school)
 - Less dependent on one's location
- Non-normative life events = specific, unique events that occur in a person's life
 - Do not occur to most people

Key issues relevant to studying and understanding development

- *Continuous* (quantitative gradual change) vs *discontinuous* change (Qualitatively distinct behaviours at different stages of development)
- Nature (maturation) vs nurture (environmental factors)
- Critical vs sensitive periods
 - Concerned with presence and timing of certain kinds of environmental input for normal development
 - Presence is necessary vs individuals are particularly susceptible (but are malleable); absence does not always have irreversible consequences
- Focus on particular periods versus the broader lifespan

General research designs for developmental psychology

- Methods for collecting data:
 - Observation (laboratory or naturalistic) = must be systematic/ controlled
 - Survey and interviews
 - Standardised test
 - Case study
 - Physiological measures (e.g. Fmri)
- Research designs:
 - Descriptive = aims to observe and record data
 - Correlational = describes strength of relationship between 2 or more variables using a correlation coefficient
 - Experimental = one or more variables are manipulated (IV) while all other variables are held constant or allowed to vary randomly (DV)

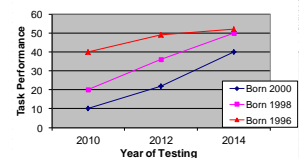
Cross-sectional research

- *Cross-sectional research* = simultaneously compares individuals of different ages
- Strengths:

- Used to see common patterns and developmental *differences*
- Less costly and more time-efficient
- Overcomes selective attrition, practice effects
- Changes in theories and methods are less likely to make findings outdated
- Weaknesses:
 - Cannot identify individual differences and developmental change
 - Cohort effects = age-related differences may simply reflect unique experiences of different cohorts

Longitudinal research

- *Longitudinal research* = studies the same individuals over a period of time (usually years)
- Strengths:
 - Common in developmental psychology because it can be used to see *changes* in development/common patterns/individual differences (unlike cross-sectional)
 - Takes into account factors influencing individual development (e.g. life events)
- Weaknesses:
 - More costly and not time-efficient
 - Theories and methods may become outdated (if other many years)
 - *Selective attrition* = dropouts > biased samples
 - *Practice effects* = changes in scores reflect familiarity with procedure/materials/experimenter
 - *Cohort effects* = results reflect different cultural and historical influences



Sequential research

- *Sequential research* = combination of cross-sectional and longitudinal design
- Different groups of people are studied at different times
- Comparing each cohort's later scores with their own earlier ones provides longitudinal data
- Comparing scores of all cohorts at each "wave" of data collection provides cross-sectional data
- Separates cohort effects from maturation effects

Choosing good research design

- Depends on whether the research is concerned with establishing an association between factors OR establishing causal relationships
- Some developmental research questions cannot be experimented because of ethics

Ethical research in life-span development

- *Informed consent* = all participants must know what their research participation will involve and what risks might develop
- *Confidentiality* = researchers are responsible for keeping the data completely confidential and, if possible, anonymous

- *Debriefing* = after the study, participants should be informed of the study's purpose and methods that were used
- *Deception* = researchers must ensure that deception will not harm participants and that participants are fully debriefed
- *Minimising bias* = researchers must avoid gender, cultural and ethnic bias

Approaches to Developmental Psychology: Some Examples

Theories of lifespan development

- Theories are *dynamic* (evolve in response to new empirical data) and *practical* (give real life strategies and interventions)
- Theories can be *specific* (explain a developmental change in a specific domain) or *far-reaching/domain-general* (try to explain developmental change over many domains)
- Eclectic theory orientation:
 - *Eclectic theory orientation* = selects from each theory, whatever is considered its best features
 - No single theory can explain all of development
 - Every theory has contributed to our understanding

Psychoanalytic approach – Freud

- Emphasises the unconscious mind
- Development is a series of age-related conflicts (specific stages) between the person's primitive desires and limitations imposed by society
- Conflicts involve the 3 personality structures: Id, Ego, and Superego
- Psychosexual stages:
 1. Oral = gain trust/attachment
 2. Anal = gain self-esteem/authority
 3. Phallic = learn about gender roles
 4. Latency = learn about relationships, calmish stage
 5. Genital = sexual attachment
- Pioneered notion of lifespan development as a predictable process of qualitative gains and psychological growth involving *dialectical balance* (reasoning to resolve competing demands and internal conflicts)

Erikson's stages	Developmental period
Integrity versus despair	Late adulthood (60s onward)
Generativity versus stagnation	Middle adulthood (40s, 50s)
Intimacy versus isolation	Early adulthood (20s, 30s)
Identity versus identity confusion	Adolescence (10 to 20 years)
Industry versus inferiority	Middle and late childhood (primary school years, 6 years to puberty)
Initiative versus guilt	Early childhood (preschool years, 3 to 5 years)
Autonomy versus shame and doubt	Infancy (1 to 3 years)
Trust versus mistrust	Infancy (first year)

Psychoanalytic approach – Erikson

- Didn't agree with Freud's emphasis on unconscious sexuality
- Psychosocial stages not psychosexual stages
- Emphasised sociocultural environment and our desire to interact with others
- Said that developmental change occurs throughout the lifespan (gave adulthood stages)
- Stage conflicts = increased vulnerability + enhanced potential for growth

- Stages involve internal and external factors
- The 8 stages' potential for growth:
 1. Trust vs mistrust = positive outlook towards people/ the world
 2. Autonomy vs shame & doubt = realising one's independence and personal control
 3. Initiative vs guilt = sense of purpose
 4. Industry vs inferiority = sense of competence with skills/abilities
 5. Identity vs identity confusion = identity and path in life
 6. Intimacy vs isolation = healthy, positive relationships
 7. Generativity vs stagnation = feelings of usefulness, helping the younger generation
 8. Integrity vs despair = positive life review

Classical learning/behavioural approach – John B. Watson

- All human development can be shaped via *classical* and *operant conditioning*
- Behaviour = entirely determined by environment (nurture)
- Changes in behaviour = neutral stimulus paired with primary reinforcer/one that reflexively creates a response (e.g. Little Albert)
- Higher-order condition > more complex behaviour

Classical learning/behavioural approach – Skinner

- *Operant conditioning* = voluntary behaviours controlled by consequences
- Changing behaviour:
 - Positive reinforcement = add stimulus to reinforce a behaviour
 - Positive punishment = add stimulus to decrease a behaviour
 - Negative reinforcement = take away stimulus to reinforce a behaviour
 - Negative punishment = take away stimulus to decrease a behaviour

Social-learning/social-cognitive approach – Bandura

- Emphasises the power of *observational* learning
- Social behaviours acquired through:
 - *Imitation* = imitating the behaviour
 - *Modelling* = replicate the behaviour of a model/ideal
 - *Vicarious reinforcement* = watch other's behaviour and the consequences they experience, repeat behaviour others are rewarded for
- Bandura's 4-step modelling process:
 1. Attention = paying attention
 2. Retention = able to remember
 3. Reproduction = able to perform the action/motions
 4. Motivation = environment delivers consequence of action which will impact the probability of performing the behaviour again
- Bandura's social cognitive model = behaviour + person's cognition + environment = reciprocal relationship

