Overview of Child Development
Child Development

- **Definition:**
  - Change in the child that occurs over time. Changes follow an orderly pattern that moves toward greater complexity and enhances survival.

- **Periods of development:**
  - Prenatal period: from conception to birth
  - Infancy and toddlerhood: birth to 2 years
  - Early childhood: 2-6 years old
  - Middle childhood: 6-12 years old
  - Adolescence: 12-19 years old
Domains of Development

Development is described in three domains, but growth in one domain influences the other domains.

- **Physical Domain:**
  - body size, body proportions, appearance, brain development, motor development, perception capacities, physical health.

- **Cognitive Domain:**
  - thought processes and intellectual abilities including attention, memory, problem solving, imagination, creativity, academic and everyday knowledge, metacognition, and language.

- **Social/Emotional Domain:**
  - self-knowledge (self-esteem, metacognition, sexual identity, ethnic identity), moral reasoning, understanding and expression of emotions, self-regulation, temperament, understanding others, interpersonal skills, and friendships.
Theories

- What is a theory?
  - Orderly set of ideas which describe, explain, and predict behavior.

- Why are theories important?
  - To give meaning to what we observe.
  - As a basis for action -- finding ways to improve the lives and education of children.
Origins of Child Development Theories
6th - 15th centuries
Medieval period

- Preformationism: children seen as little adults.
- Childhood is not a unique phase.
- Children were cared for until they could begin caring for themselves, around 7 years old.
- Children treated as adults (e.g. their clothing, worked at adult jobs, could be married, were made into kings, were imprisoned or hanged as adults.)
Art of the Middle Ages
16th Century
Reformation period

- Puritan religion influenced how children were viewed.
- Children were born evil, and must be civilized.
- A goal emerged to raise children effectively.
- Special books were designed for children.
Art of the 16th Century
17th Century
Age of Enlightenment

- John Locke believed in *tabula rasa*

- Children develop in response to nurturing.

- Forerunner of behaviorism

[Image of John Locke]

www.cooperativeindividualism.org/locke-john.jpg
Art of the 17th Century
18th Century
Age of Reason

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau
  - children were noble savages, born with an innate sense of morality; the timing of growth should not be interfered with.

- Rousseau used the idea of stages of development.

- Forerunner of maturationist beliefs
Art of the 18th Century
Charles Darwin
- theories of natural selection and survival of the fittest

Darwin made parallels between human prenatal growth and other animals.

Forerunner of ethology
Art of the 19th Century
20th Century

Theories about children's development expanded around the world.

- Childhood was seen as worthy of special attention.
- Laws were passed to protect children,
Psychoanalytical Theories

Beliefs focus on the formation of personality. According to this approach, children move through various stages, confronting conflicts between biological drives and social expectations.
Sigmund Freud

Psychosexual Theory

- Was based on his therapy with troubled adults.
- He emphasized that a child's personality is formed by the ways which his parents managed his sexual and aggressive drives.
Erik Erikson

Psychosocial Theory

- Expanded on Freud's theories.
- Believed that development is life-long.
- Emphasized that at each stage, the child acquires attitudes and skills resulting from the successful negotiation of the psychological conflict.

- Identified 8 stages:
  - Basic trust vs mistrust (birth - 1 year)
  - Autonomy vs shame and doubt (ages 1-3)
  - Initiative vs guilt (ages 3-6)
  - Industry vs inferiority (ages 6-11)
  - Identity vs identity confusion (adolescence)
  - Intimacy vs isolation (young adulthood)
  - Generativity vs stagnation (middle adulthood)
  - Integrity vs despair (the elderly)
Behavioral and Social Learning Theories

Beliefs that describe the importance of the environment and nurturing in the growth of a child.
Behaviorism

- Developed as a response to psychoanalytical theories.

- Behaviorism became the dominant view from the 1920's to 1960's.
John Watson

- Early 20th century, "Father of American Behaviorist theory."
- Based his work on Pavlov's experiments on the digestive system of dogs.
- Researched classical conditioning
- Children are passive beings who can be molded by controlling the stimulus-response associations.

www.psych.utah.edu/.../Cards/Watson.html
B. F. Skinner

- Proposed that children "operate" on their environment, operational conditioning.

- Believed that learning could be broken down into smaller tasks, and that offering immediate rewards for accomplishments would stimulate further learning.
Social Learning Theory

- Stressed how children learn by observation and imitation.
- Believed that children gradually become more selective in what they imitate.

Albert Bandura
Biological Theories

Belief that heredity and innate biological processes govern growth.
Maturationism

- Believed there is a predetermined biological timetable.

- Proponents of the normative approach to child study: using age averages to define what is normal.

G. Stanley Hall

Arnold Gesell
Ethology

- Examines how behavior is determined by a species' need for survival.
- Has its roots in Charles Darwin's research.
- Describes a "critical period" or "sensitive period," for learning
Konrad Lorenz

- Ethologist, known for his research on imprinting.
Attachment Theory

- John Bowlby applied ethological principles to his theory of attachment.
- Attachment between an infant and her caregiver can insure the infant’s survival.
Cognitive Theories

Beliefs that describe how children learn
Jean Piaget

Cognitive development theory

- Children "construct" their understanding of the world through their active involvement and interactions.
- Studied his 3 children to focus not on what they knew but how they knew it.
- Described children's understanding as their "schemas" and how they use:
  - assimilation
  - accommodation.
Piaget’s Cognitive Development Stages

- **Sensori-motor**
  - Ages birth - 2: the infant uses his senses and motor abilities to understand the world

- **Preoperation**
  - Ages 2-7: the child uses mental representations of objects and is able to use symbolic thought and language

- **Concrete operations**
  - Ages 7-11; the child uses logical operations or principles when solving problems

- **Formal operations**
  - Ages 12 up; the use of logical operations in a systematic fashion and with the ability to use abstractions
Lev Vygotsky

Socio-Cultural Theory

- Agreed that children are active learners, but their knowledge is socially constructed.
- Cultural values and customs dictate what is important to learn.
- Children learn from more expert members of the society.
- Vygotsky described the "zone of proximal development", where learning occurs.
Information Processing Theory

- Uses the model of the computer to describe how the brain works.
- Focuses on how information is perceived, how information is stored in memory, how memories are retrieved and then used to solve problems.
The belief that development can't be explained by a single concept, but rather by a complex system.
Urie Bronfenbrenner

Ecological Systems Theory or bioecological theory

- The varied systems of the environment and the interrelationships among the systems shape a child's development.
- Both the environment and biology influence the child's development.
- The environment affects the child and the child influences the environment.
Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological Model

- The microsystem - activities and interactions in the child’s immediate surroundings: parents, school, friends, etc.
- The mesosystem - relationships among the entities involved in the child’s microsystem: parents' interactions with teachers, a school's interactions with the daycare provider
- The exosystem - social institutions which affect children indirectly: the parents’ work settings and policies, extended family networks, mass media, community resources
- The macrosystem - broader cultural values, laws and governmental resources
- The chronosystem - changes which occur during a child's life, both personally, like the birth of a sibling and culturally, like the Iraqi war.
Outline of 20th Century Theories

- Psychoanalytical Theories
  - Psychosexual: Sigmund Freud
  - Psychosocial: Erik Erikson

- Behavioral & Social Learning Theories
  - Social Learning - Albert Bandera

- Biological Theories
  - Maturationism: G. Stanley Hall & Arnold Gesell
  - Ethology: Konrad Lorenz
  - Attachment: John Bowlby
Outline of 20th Century Theories

- Cognitive Theories
  - Cognitive Development: Jean Piaget
  - Socio-cultural: Lev Vygotsky
  - Information Processing

- Systems Theories
  - Ecological Systems: Urie Bronfenbrenner