

*Early Childhood Development: A Multicultural Perspective, 7e* (Trawick-Smith)  
**Chapter 3 Theories of Child Development**

3.1 Multiple Choice: Recall Questions

1) Which one of the following is the best definition of a theory?

- A) a propositional statement of cause and effect
- B) a metaphysical postulate based on speculation, rather than empirical observation
- C) a system of beliefs about something
- D) a "thick description" of events

Answer: C

2) Which of the following is the best definition of a child development theory?

- A) It is a set of beliefs that children develop while in school.
- B) It is an integrated collection of beliefs about why children behave, think, and feel as they do.
- C) It is a framework explanation encompassing one primary aspect of development.
- D) It is a summary of the influence of environmental factors on growth and development.

Answer: B

3) Which one of the following best illustrates a maturationist theory of child development?

- A) Development involves the interaction of the maturing nervous system with the environment.
- B) The child grows and matures, much as a flower, guided by genetics.
- C) The child's maturation is purposefully shaped by adults and other environmental elements.
- D) Maturation results from a tension between biological drives and the pushes and pulls of the immediate social world.

Answer: B

4) Which theorist is a maturationist?

- A) Lev Vygotsky
- B) Jean Piaget
- C) B. F. Skinner
- D) Arnold Gesell

Answer: D

5) "Buy a year" is a strategy that was designed by:

- A) behaviorists to shape the development of less mature children over an extended period.
- B) maturationists to allow children to postpone school entry or other taxing situations until full maturation has occurred.
- C) psychoanalytic theorists to vigorously intervene in the interpersonal development of children showing conduct problems.
- D) ecological systems theorists to address society-wide problems that affect children and families and to engage in political advocacy.

Answer: B

- 6) Behaviorists believe that a child is born as:
- A) an organism that assimilates and accommodates to the environment.
  - B) a blank slate to be filled in by adults and the environment.
  - C) a blooming flower that requires basic needs to mature.
  - D) an instinctual being with urges that create psychosocial tension.

Answer: B

7) Which of the following theorists did NOT emphasize a behaviorist approach to learning and development?

- A) B. F. Skinner
- B) John B. Watson
- C) Jean Piaget
- D) Albert Bandura

Answer: C

8) Which of the following strategies for working with children is influenced by behaviorist thinking?

- A) postponing school entry until children have matured enough
- B) asking children to address anxieties and express instinctual desires
- C) modeling and rewarding appropriate behaviors
- D) encouraging self-esteem by never punishing a child

Answer: C

9) A parent using operant conditioning is most likely to:

- A) present children with interesting problems and encourage them to construct knowledge independently.
- B) assist children in coping with anxieties through play and literature.
- C) provide a stimulus that leads to an unconditioned response and then pair this stimulus with another stimulus.
- D) shape children's desirable behavior with reinforcers.

Answer: D

10) Social learning theory is most likely to emphasize:

- A) modeling desirable behavior.
- B) the self-construction of social reality.
- C) an internal struggle between different emotional states.
- D) the scaffolding of social learning.

Answer: A

11) Freud believed that the emergence of a conscience to guide judgments of right and wrong was due to development of the:

- A) id.
- B) ego.
- C) superego.
- D) personality.

Answer: C

12) Which one of the following conflicts did Erikson identify as an emotional struggle that occurs AFTER early childhood?

- A) trust vs. mistrust
- B) industry vs. inferiority
- C) identity vs. role confusion
- D) autonomy vs. shame and doubt

Answer: C

13) According to Erikson, which emotional struggle is most often found in the early elementary years?

- A) trust vs. mistrust
- B) industry vs. inferiority
- C) identity vs. role confusion
- D) autonomy vs. shame and doubt

Answer: B

14) Piaget argued that learning primarily involves:

- A) the maturation of the central nervous system.
- B) the active, internal construction of knowledge by the learner.
- C) transfer of knowledge from adults to children.
- D) socialization within a larger ecological system.

Answer: B

15) In Piaget's theory, assimilation refers to the process of:

- A) making sense of new or puzzling phenomena by fitting them into previously existing understandings.
- B) adapting previous understandings to account for new or puzzling phenomena.
- C) establishing equilibrium when encountering new or puzzling information.
- D) teaching children competencies and understanding that are valued in the culture.

Answer: A

16) In Piaget's theory, accommodation refers to the process of:

- A) making sense of new or puzzling phenomena by fitting them into previously existing understandings.
- B) adapting previous understandings to account for new or puzzling phenomena.
- C) establishing equilibrium when encountering new or puzzling information.
- D) teaching children competencies and understanding that are valued in the culture.

Answer: B

17) Vygotsky's theory of human development most heavily emphasizes:

- A) shaping of children's behavior and beliefs to conform to societal norms.
- B) individual construction of knowledge and internal mental functions.
- C) the important role of language and social interaction in learning.
- D) affective aspects of constructing knowledge.

Answer: C

18) Studies on the accuracy of Piaget's theory suggest that:

- A) he underestimated children's abilities and variations across cultures.
- B) he overestimated children's abilities in the later stages but underestimated the early stages.
- C) his theory accurately explained culture-specific developmental trends.
- D) his theory accurately explained universal developmental processes.

Answer: A

19) The theory of child development that most fully addresses societal conditions and informs policymaking and advocacy is the:

- A) information processing theory.
- B) social cognitive learning theory.
- C) cognitive-developmental theory.
- D) ecological systems theory.

Answer: D

20) A teacher who says, "This is important for you to learn," before a demonstration is applying a principle from which of the following theories?

- A) sociocultural
- B) information processing
- C) psychoanalytic
- D) cognitive developmental

Answer: B

21) Ecological systems are defined as:

- A) environmental influences of the family and community.
- B) the settings and institutions interact to affect the developing child.
- C) the various settings and institutions that are within the immediate environment.
- D) the political, ideological, legal, and cultural influences on child development within the larger society.

Answer: B

22) Which one of the following child development theories does NOT suggest that children learn by actively constructing meaning from the world around them?

- A) sociocultural theory
- B) information processing theory
- C) maturational theory
- D) cognitive-developmental theory

Answer: C

- 23) Which one of the following statements best describes information processing theory?
- A) Information processing theory highlights the importance of studying processes such as identity development and trust building.
  - B) Information processing theory is concerned primarily with external behaviors rather than internal states.
  - C) Information processing theory emphasizes the importance of attention and memory to the process of learning.
  - D) Information processing theory applies evidence from neuroscience to the study of child development.

Answer: C

- 24) What has brain research revealed about response to reward?
- A) Children's brains look remarkably similar in the way they respond to reward.
  - B) The brain has a "reward center" that is active in the presence of positive reinforcement.
  - C) The brain responds more to punishment than reward, in contrast with Skinner's theory.
  - D) the brain shows stronger responses to physical rewards, such as toys or food, compared to social rewards.

Answer: B

- 25) The existence of the fusiform face area in infancy suggests that:
- A) infants may be "wired" with the tendency to pay attention to faces.
  - B) infants experience rapid brain maturation in the first few days of life.
  - C) Freud's "superego" has a physical component in the brain.
  - D) Piaget's theories about early cognitive development were accurate.

Answer: A

- 26) The part of the brain most associated with inhibiting emotions and behavior is the:
- A) hippocampus.
  - B) amygdala.
  - C) ventral striatum.
  - D) frontal lobe.

Answer: C

### 3.2 Multiple Choice: Analysis/Application

- 1) A study finds that infants who are hospitalized for long periods without being able to crawl will "catch up" to their peers in motor development within a few months. This finding supports a:
- A) neuroscience theory.
  - B) behaviorist theory.
  - C) maturationist theory.
  - D) cognitive-developmental theory.

Answer: C

2) Which of the following theorists would be most likely to believe that "a person is either born to be a good teacher or not. Good teaching cannot be taught"?

- A) Jean Piaget
- B) Arnold Gesell
- C) B. F. Skinner
- D) Urie Bronfenbrenner

Answer: B

3) Ryan was a fussy infant and did not respond well to strangers. As he grew, he continued to be shy and uncomfortable around new people. As an adult, he still feels awkward in social situations that involve a lot of people. How would a maturational theorist explain Ryan's trajectory?

- A) Ryan's surroundings, including his family, school, neighborhood, and community, all significantly affected his development and contributed to his feelings of shyness from a very young age.
- B) Early in his life, Ryan failed to acquire trust with his caretakers. This early event influenced his development into adulthood.
- C) As a result of mostly genetic factors, Ryan has a shy temperament and will continue to behave in a socially inhibited manner throughout his life.
- D) Ryan has failed to pick up on important social cues throughout his life, making social interaction less rewarding.

Answer: C

4) Which of the following would be a statement a multicultural scholar might make about the maturationist theory?

- A) "It is the only viable theory; it leads to greater cultural and gender understanding than Freudian or behaviorist paradigms."
- B) "It is a dangerous theory because it leads some to believe that cultural differences are caused by genetic deficits."
- C) "It is a dangerous theory because it leads some to blame the family as the source of poor school achievement."
- D) "It explains the behavior and development of children of some cultural and socioeconomic groups, but not all."

Answer: B

5) In an effort to promote cooperation among children in his preschool, a teacher displays obvious and exaggerated cooperative behaviors in his own interactions with others. This is an application of:

- A) social learning theory.
- B) cognitive-developmental theory.
- C) psychodynamic theory.
- D) ecological systems theory.

Answer: A

6) Which of the following would be a statement a multicultural scholar might make about behaviorism?

- A) "It is a theory that leads to bias-free parenting and teaching since its application is systematic and equitably delivered."
- B) "It is a theory which perpetuates cultural bias since it defines developmental stages in relation to the behaviors of white, middle-class culture."
- C) "It is the most scientific of developmental theories, so, is less susceptible to societal prejudice in its application."
- D) "It is a theory that perpetuates Anglo-Saxon ideals and focuses on shaping children's behavior to conform to standards of dominant culture."

Answer: D

7) Megan and Alicia are ten-year-old twin sisters. Alicia has received a lot of praise from their parents for winning an essay contest at school, and Megan feels jealous. For a moment, Megan considers lying to their parents and saying that Alicia didn't write the essay herself. She knows, however, that lying is wrong, and it wouldn't be fair to her sister. According to Freud's theories, which component of the mind "won out" in this scenario?

- A) id
- B) superego
- C) identity
- D) ego

Answer: B

8) According to Erikson, children who are abused by parents as infants are most likely to:

- A) be abusive themselves.
- B) adopt anti-social behaviors in later life.
- C) suffer social isolation syndrome.
- D) develop a sense of mistrust.

Answer: D

9) To Erikson, what is the major difference between initiative and industry?

- A) Initiative is related to biologically derived personality traits, industry to learned drives and desires to succeed.
- B) Initiative refers to an individual's internal interests and desires, industry to an individual's job or role in the world.
- C) Initiative refers to making creative attempts, regardless of outcome, industry to actual accomplishment.
- D) Initiative develops after industry, although they both reflect the child's desire for independence.

Answer: C

10) A Japanese American child is quiet and withdrawn. Her first-grade teacher becomes worried and refers her and her family to a psychologist. The psychologist determines that the child has not acquired initiative and suffers from guilt. He recommends on-going family therapy. This is an example of how Erikson's theory:

- A) has universal utility.
- B) can effectively guide diagnosis of developmental problems.
- C) reflects Euro-American values.
- D) includes a full ecological perspective.

Answer: C

11) On a field trip to a pet store a 6-year-old spots an unusual-looking lizard. He studies it a moment then announces to his teacher, "It's probably a turtle. I've seen these before." This is an example of:

- A) assimilation.
- B) accommodation.
- C) equilibrium.
- D) scaffolding.

Answer: A

12) Elsie is five years old. She is good at identifying letters and colors and simple problem-solving. However, she has a difficult time reasoning about the future and thinking abstractly. Piaget would classify Elsie as being in which stage of cognitive development?

- A) formal operational
- B) sensorimotor
- C) preoperational
- D) concrete operational

Answer: C

13) Vygotsky would argue that the primary role of a teacher is to:

- A) observe and understand learning for all children.
- B) prepare the classroom environment to stimulate cognition and language.
- C) use language and cultural tools to guide children's learning.
- D) shape children's learning through systematic feedback and reinforcement.

Answer: C

14) A child has built a large block structure in his Head Start center. He now places two blocks upright and tries to make a bridge across them using a third block. He selects a block of the wrong length to make the bridge, however, and his structure topples. He tries again and again with this block, always getting the same result. A teacher moves over to him and says, "What if you tried a different block? Which block would be the right length?" The child thinks about this question, selects a longer block, and successfully completes the bridge. This is a good example of a teacher intervening:

- A) to facilitate accommodation when concepts are beyond the child's level of mastery.
- B) too quickly, thus depriving a child of an opportunity for internal construction.
- C) within the child's zone of proximal development.
- D) to accommodate the child's thinking.

Answer: C



15) A cognitive-developmental theorist would address a problem of aggression in the classroom by providing:

- A) an elaborate reward system to shape the desirable behavior of an aggressive child.
- B) a play therapy intervention in which an aggressive child could be encouraged to bring to the surface and understand hostilities and anxieties.
- C) an ecological intervention in which families and community service providers are engaged in resolution of problems.
- D) an intervention to help an aggressive child accurately read social situations and learn alternative social strategies.

Answer: D

16) An information-processing theorist would most likely consider which of the following factors in assessing why a child is consistently unable to complete class projects?

- A) whether the child is getting adequate sleep and nutrition at home
- B) the patterns in the family relating to work
- C) the distracting elements in the classroom situation
- D) whether the child is capable of accomplishing the assigned task

Answer: C

17) Brittani is solving the addition problem  $4 + 5$ . She says, "If I have one, two, three, four fingers plus one, two, three, four, five fingers, that equals...one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine! Nine fingers!" Brittani is using:

- A) nonconceptual speech.
- B) verbal thought.
- C) assimilation.
- D) self-directed speech.

Answer: D

18) A teacher assists a family in finding safe and affordable public housing. This is an intervention within the:

- A) microsystem.
- B) exosystem.
- C) macrosystem.
- D) ecosystem.

Answer: B

19) A Head Start teacher develops a parent education program to help strengthen attachment of children to parents. From an ecological systems perspective, what is the best explanation for why she has created such a program?

- A) Attachment to parents is crucial to strong family ties, enmeshment, and a positive home environment.
- B) Attachment to parents has been adopted as a global national goal of the Head Start program.
- C) Attachment to parents is a protective factor that will insulate children from psychological harm in later years.
- D) Attachment to parents can reduce child abuse and neglect and promote family harmony.

Answer: C

20) A child care provider makes home visits and invites parents to come into the child care center whenever they want. His goal is to promote communication and collaboration. This is an intervention within the:

- A) microsystem.
- B) mesosystem.
- C) macrosystem.
- D) exosystem.

Answer: B

21) A researcher reviews a video in which two children argue. She concludes that the argument could have been avoided if the children had paid more attention to one another's social cues before the situation escalated. Based on her conclusion, the researcher is MOST likely to be:

- A) a social information processing theorist.
- B) a behaviorist.
- C) a neuroscientist.
- D) an ecological systems theorist.

Answer: A

22) A neuroscientist scans children's brains while they look at pictures of people or objects. She finds that the reward center in the brain shows greater activation when children see pictures of people rather than objects. Which one of the following is an appropriate conclusion to make from this study?

- A) Skinner's theoretical approach to child development was the most accurate.
- B) Physical rewards, like stickers or candy, are ineffective reinforcers.
- C) Teachers should be aware that social rewards and attention from classmates can reinforce behavior.
- D) Parents and teachers should use reward rather than punishment to guide and teach children.

Answer: C

### 3.3 Essay Questions

1) A kindergarten teacher notices in early fall that one of her students is far behind the others in reading and math skills. After only a few days of school the child is showing signs of stress and feelings of inadequacy. Describe at least two specific strategies that a maturationist theorist would recommend to solve this classroom problem.

Answer: **Suggested Responses:** Students should describe strategies that reflect the premise that this child is simply less mature than others in the class and will catch up naturally over time. The buy a year approach - in which the child waits a year before entering kindergarten or spends an extra year at this grade level - might be mentioned. Other strategies which reduce strenuous academics or buy time for the child to mature might be described. Another appropriate strategy would be to place the child in a classroom of children who are more at the same developmental level as this child; this would be appropriate in the early weeks of the school year and would reflect sensitivity to maturational factors. A response that suggests intervention to correct academic deficiencies would NOT be appropriate, since maturationists would espouse more hands-off, wait-and-see solutions.

2) A child in a second-grade classroom is having a problem sitting in his seat and finishing his work. Describe at least two specific strategies a behaviorist theorist would recommend to solve this classroom problem.

Answer: **Suggested Responses:** Students should describe strategies which involve a system of rewards to shape the child's desirable behavior. Giving praise or stickers for hand-raising, turn-taking, and ignoring calling-out would be appropriate examples. Time out should be mentioned as a possible strategy. Praising other children's hand-raising and modeling turn-taking would also be acceptable examples. Use of negative reinforcers, such as taking recess away from the child, would not be an appropriate application of the behaviorist theory.

3) A teacher in a childcare center notices that one of her students is extremely withdrawn and isolated from her peers. The child avoids other children and rarely speaks. Describe at least two specific strategies a psychodynamic theorist would recommend to solve this classroom problem.

Answer: **Suggested Responses:** Students should describe strategies which address this child's feelings of trust, autonomy, or initiative. They might suggest, for example, methods of promoting attachment, including warmth and responsiveness. They might propose strategies for encouraging autonomy and initiative, once the child has acquired a sense of trust. Strategies for the teacher to demonstrate and model warmth in human interactions and encouraging other children to be responsive to this child would also be appropriate.

4) A first grader is exhibiting aggressive behavior. She strikes out at peers when they touch her or interfere with her work. She pushes and screams when disagreements arise. Describe at least two specific strategies a cognitive-developmental theorist would recommend to solve this classroom problem.

Answer: **Suggested Responses:** Students should describe strategies which help children to read social situations and learn alternative, prosocial behaviors. Helping the child to interpret the intentions of others or the consequences of her aggression might be suggested. Showing the child videotapes of social situations and helping her to interpret these might be proposed. Helping the child learn alternatives to aggression or screaming should be mentioned.

5) A kindergartner is knocked down as another child trips over a truck in the sandbox. He screams in anger and hits the child who bumped into him. Describe at least two specific strategies that a social information processing theorist would recommend to resolve this situation.

Answer: **Suggested Responses:** Students should describe strategies that teach the child steps to use to assess the social and situation clues - to figure out why the child bumped into him - before reacting and responding. For example, he should observe the child's face to see if he meant to knock him down, what happened just before, and how the child responds (does he seem surprised, does he also lose his balance, does he seem sorry or apologize?). Directing his attention to relevant factors in the situation and relating them to events that have happened to him are relevant as well as weighing the possible responses and their consequences.

6) A child who lives in poverty is having social and emotional difficulties. He alternates between extreme activity and lethargy. His teacher is aware that his family is facing multiple stressors. Based on an ecological systems theory, describe one strategy to help resolve this problem within each layer of the ecological system - the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem.

Answer: **Suggested Responses:** Students should discuss strategies which address each ecological layer (i.e., school-based interventions in the microsystem, better home-school communication in the mesosystem, improved family mental health services in the exosystem, and political advocacy for children and families in the macrosystem).

7) How does neuroscience research contribute to our theoretical understanding of child development? Give at least one example of a discovery about the brain that supports an existing theory of child development.

Answer: **Suggested Responses:** Students should explain that our growing knowledge of the brain can help us to understand the physiological processes that are associated with the behaviors that occur in child development and can help us to apply existing theories to teaching and parenting practices. They might cite the way that knowledge of the brain's reward center has supported Skinner's beliefs about positive behavior reinforcement or describe similarities between Freud's ego and superego and the role that the frontal lobes play in inhibiting unwanted behaviors.

8) Which theory of human development best reflects your own beliefs about children? Explain why you have chosen the theory you have, referring to supportive research and refuting common criticisms. Address issues of cultural sensitivity as part of your response.

Answer: **Suggested Responses:** Students should provide a justification of one of the major theories reviewed in the chapter - maturationist, behaviorist, psychoanalytic, cognitive-developmental, sociocultural, information processing, or ecological systems theory. Students should support their choice with research and comment on multicultural and other criticisms.