Cognitive, Moral, and Social Development in Childhood, Part I

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Section A

Overview
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- Cognitive development theories
- Social emotional development theories
- Moral development theories
- How parenting styles impact development
- Stages of abnormal behavioral development
- Interventions that work at …
  - Promoting positive cognitive, social, and emotional development
  - Preventing a negative behavioral trajectory
Stage Theories

- **Cognitive development:** a continuum from exploring the senses to concrete reasoning to abstract reasoning

- **Social/emotional development:** from egocentric to other-directed

- **Moral development:** from egocentric to conventional to principled reasoning
Cognitive Development Emerges From ...

- **Phylogeny:** the genetically based process of human evolution

- **Culture:** the socially inherited body of past human behavioral patterns that help the child find his way in the current social environment

- **Ontogeny:** the child’s experiences in the environment interacts with genetics and cultural backdrop as a dynamic force in learning
Historical View on Cognitive Development

- **Until the mid 20th century:** infants born with rudimentary skills and learn through feedback

- **Current view:** infants are born with brain power to perceive and learn by engaging their environment

- All children pass through stages of cognitive development, each stage building on the previous

- *The current view is that children are active learners at all stages of life*
Jean Piaget’s Stages of Cognition

- Each stage represents a qualitatively different way of thinking
- Each stage is a structured whole
- Development progresses in an invariant sequence
- Characterized as hierarchic integrations
- Universal and cross-culturally true
How Development Evolves

- Children actively construct knowledge

- You can’t teach “giftedness,” but you can “retard” development through lack of stimulation
Piaget’s equilibration model: the child takes one view, becomes confused by discrepant information, and then resolves confusion by forming a more advanced and comprehensive position.

The steps: adaptation and organization
- Adaptation: an individual moves from one stage to the next through direct interaction with the environment
  - Accommodation
  - Assimilation
  - Equilibration
- Organization
Piaget’s Stages of Cognitive Development

- Sensorimotor: birth to 2 years of age
- Preoperational: from 2 to 7 years
- Concrete operations: from 7 to 12 years
- Formal operations: adolescence to adulthood
Sensorimotor Stage: Birth to 2 Years

- Knowledge acquired and structured through sensory perception and motor activity. Focus is on action, not symbols (e.g., words).

- Coordination and integration of reflex actions into more complex motor schemes

- **Goal-directed** or intentional behavior emerges

- Early ability to create **mental representation** (real cookie is different than toy cookie)
Pre-operational Stage: Ages 2 to 7

- **Language emerges** and the child learns to *mentally represent objects and people* with symbols, such as words. Words are used to communicate. Rules begin to represent how to reach a goal.

- Child is limited by inability to perform operations—organized, formal, logical mental processes

- Conservation tasks—by end of stage, objects and rules are conserved in differing forms, times, and places
Concrete Operational Stage: Ages 7 to 12

- Apply logical operations only to concrete information and not abstract ideas

- **Decentering**: ability to take multiple aspects of a situation into account (i.e., less egocentrism)

- **Reversibility**: ability to go through series of steps in problem solving, then reverse the direction to the starting point

- Understand classification hierarchies
Concrete Operations Stage (cont.)

- **Seriation**: ability to order items along quantitative dimensions (such as length or weight)

- **Knowledge is logical, but black and white**, right or wrong

- **Self-concept emerges**: awareness of self as distinct from others; view of self becomes increasingly differentiated

- Shift from concrete descriptors to more abstract
Piaget YouTube Video

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B65EJ6gMmA4
What Operations Did We See?

- Conservation
- Seriation
- Any others?
Concrete to Formal Operations

- The *transition* from concrete to formal operations causes internal conflict
- Thinking less absolute, more grays, and multiple ideas
- Confusion leads to frustration and anger
- Focus on thinking about thinking (reflective thought)
Formal Operational Stage

- Knowledge structured symbolically and logically
- Ability to view multiple sides of a problem (perspective taking)
- Hypothetical/deductive reasoning
- Problem solving can involve multiple steps, and teens can consider the positive and negative effects of their choices
- Can “think outside the box,” showing ingenuity
- Make decisions based on metacognition or think about thinking from multiple perspectives
Problem Solving at Each Stage

- **Problem**: Child wants to eat the fresh, warm homemade cookies. Mom says that the cookies are for company so do not eat them.

- **Preoperational**: Rule applies only when rule maker is present. “My hand knew how hungry my tummy is. My hand reached out and took the cookie. It’s my hand’s fault.”

- **Concrete**: Black/white/egocentric. “As long as I put a granola bar in its place, I can take the homemade cookie.”
Transition to Formal Operations

- Transition to formal operations: “Mom’s not here; I took the cookie because my friend is here and he is ‘company’, too. She didn’t say which company she means.”

- Formal operations: “Mom made this rule because she is keeping the cookies for a special occasion. I can find a different snack.”