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JOHNS HOPKINS  
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## Section C

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### Theories of Early Child Development

# Biological-Based Theories

- Emphasize inherited biological factors and processes
- Major theories
  - Ethological theories
  - Attachment theory
  - Neurodevelopmental approaches
- Contributions
  - Biological influences on development
  - Importance of early years for later development

# Ethological Theories

- Evolutionary perspective of development (Darwin)
- Work of zoologist, Lorenz, on duck imprinting most identified with perspective

# Attachment Theory

- Developed by Bowlby, based on ethological principles
- Stresses importance of early relationship between child and caregiver for development
- All children thought to form attachments to caregiver regardless of quality of care received
- Contemporary research focuses on quality of early attachments formed and how they affect subsequent relationships over the life course

# Neurodevelopmental Approaches

- Highlight relation of brain development to behavior and cognition
- Emphasize importance of early years when the brain is maximally sensitive to environment
- Early experiences play a crucial role in how the brain wires itself, and they influences later behavior
- Research is largely based on animal models

# Psychoanalytic Theories

- Emphasize unconscious internal drives and interactions with others
- Early major theories
  - Freud's Psychosexual Theory
  - Erikson's Psychosocial Theory
- Contributions
  - Highlight individual's unique life history
  - Early research on emotional and social development

# Environment-Based Theories

- Emphasize role of external world/environment as major determinant of individual's behavior
  - Changes in behavior are associated with changes in environment
  - The individual's role in shaping behavior is seen as relatively passive
- Major theories
  - Classic Conditioning Theory
  - Operant Conditioning Theory
  - Social Learning Theory
- Contributions
  - Major applied impact in clinical settings



# Social Learning Theory

- Developed by Bandura on principles of conditioning and reinforcement, but expanded the view of how children acquire new responses
- Based on the theory that individuals are greatly influenced by observing and imitating/modeling others
  - Receive vicarious reinforcement
  - Learn new behaviors

# Cognition-Based Theories

- Emphasize role of cognition and information processing and children's strive for greater understanding of world around them
- Major theories
  - Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development
  - Information Processing Theory
- Contributions
  - Major applied impact in educational settings