

Psychodynamic theory

As noted in the chapter about psychological perspectives, some of Freud's psychodynamic perspectives are considered to have more historical value than current value. However, his views about gender role development are widely known (and sometimes referred to in the media) and so are worth mentioning. Freud viewed gender development as a competition. Young boys, unconsciously, compete with their fathers for their mothers' attention. Girls, similarly, compete with mothers for their fathers' love. Proper gender development occurs when a child realizes that she or he cannot hope to beat their same-sex parent at this competition and identifies with that person instead, girls learning to be a woman like mom or boys being a man like dad. To verify this idea empirically is difficult, if not impossible.

Social-cognitive theory

Social and cognitive psychologists concentrate on the effects society and our own thoughts about gender have on role development. Social psychologists look at how we react to boys and girls differently. For example, boys are more often encouraged in rough physical play than are girls. Cognitive psychologists focus on the internal interpretations we make about the gender message we get from our environment. Gender-schema theory explains that we internalize messages about gender into cognitive rules about how each gender should behave. If a girl sees that her little brother is encouraged to wrestle with their father, she creates a rule governing how boys and girls should play.

Practice Questions

Directions: Each of the questions or incomplete statements below is followed by five suggested answers or completions. Select the one that is best in each case.

1. Some researchers consider developmental psychology an applied research topic because
 - (A) it is more easily applied to people's lives than research such as behaviorism.
 - (B) researchers apply findings and theories from other areas of psychology to the specific topic of human development.
 - (C) it is more commonly studied by a graduate student rather than an undergraduate because of the applications for other research.
 - (D) doing original research in this area is difficult, so most of the research is about application.
 - (E) pure research is difficult to gain support for, especially when a researcher needs to recruit children as participants.

2. You read in your philosophy class textbook that humans are born “Tabula Rasa” or “blank slates.” As a student of psychology, which of the following responses would you have?
 - (A) The statement is incorrect. Humans may be born without reflexes and instincts, but we are born with the ability to learn them.
 - (B) The statement is correct. Humans are born without instincts or other mechanisms in place to help us survive.
 - (C) The statement is correct. Humans are born with a certain number of neurons, but most develop later as we learn.
 - (D) The statement is incorrect. Humans are born with a set of reflexes that help us survive.
 - (E) The statement is impossible to prove since we cannot infer what babies know or do not know due to their lack of language.

3. Which of the following statements is most true about how a newborn’s senses function?
 - (A) A newborn’s senses function the same as an adult’s since the sensory apparatus develops in the womb.
 - (B) All of our senses function normally when we are newborns except taste due to lack of stimulation in the womb.
 - (C) All of our senses function normally when we are newborns except touch due to lack of stimulation in the womb.
 - (D) A newborn’s senses function at a very low level but develop very quickly with experience.
 - (E) Most senses function normally, but sight develops slowly with experience.

4. Most prenatal influences on humans are genetic or hormonal in origin except for
 - (A) teratogens.
 - (B) stress on the mother.
 - (C) parents’ level of education about fetal development.
 - (D) family history of mental illness.
 - (E) operant conditioning occurring before birth.

5. Parental involvement can have dramatic effects on all the following human traits except
 - (A) intelligence.
 - (B) reading ability.
 - (C) self-esteem.
 - (D) motor development.
 - (E) emotional development.

6. A principal difference between a longitudinal study and a cross-sectional study is
- (A) the number of participants involved.
 - (B) the developmental stage of the participants.
 - (C) the time span of the study.
 - (D) the statistical methods employed to evaluate the data.
 - (E) the sampling method used to choose participants.
7. Harlow's experiments with substitute mothers made of wire demonstrated the importance of what aspect of nurturing?
- (A) feeding
 - (B) responsiveness to needs
 - (C) imprinting
 - (D) touch
 - (E) stranger anxiety
8. According to research, the most advantageous parenting style for children's development is
- (A) authoritarian, because children learn boundaries quickly and appreciate consistency.
 - (B) permissive, because young children need to explore the environment more than they need guidelines for behavior.
 - (C) authoritarian, because it combines the best elements of the permissive and authoritative styles.
 - (D) securely attached, because children are confident parents will meet their needs.
 - (E) authoritative, because children have boundaries that are reasonable and justified.
9. A major difference between the psychoanalytic stage theories (Freud and Erikson) and the more cognitive or experiential stage theories (Piaget and Kohlberg) is
- (A) the psychoanalytic theories are less empirical.
 - (B) the psychoanalytic theories were based exclusively on data from children with developmental disorders.
 - (C) Freud and Erikson studied only young children, while Piaget and Kohlberg studied the full range of development.
 - (D) only the psychoanalytic theories take parental effects into account.
 - (E) the psychoanalytic theories are continuous, the others are discontinuous.

10. You have a cousin named Holden who flunked out of three expensive private schools and was arrested for wandering the streets of New York using his parents' credit card. Holden is intelligent but cannot seem to get motivated toward any career. What conflict would Erikson say Holden is struggling with?
 - (A) autonomy versus authority
 - (B) identity versus role confusion
 - (C) integrity versus despair
 - (D) industry versus inferiority
 - (E) trust versus isolation

11. In which stage of cognitive development do infants learn object permanence?
 - (A) preoperational
 - (B) formal-operations
 - (C) autonomy
 - (D) sensorimotor
 - (E) conventional

12. According to Erikson's theory, adolescents are most primarily concerned in a search for
 - (A) career.
 - (B) identity.
 - (C) affection.
 - (D) autonomy.
 - (E) archetypes.

13. The ability to generate several alternate hypotheses in order to explain a phenomenon demonstrates cognition in which of the following Piagetian stages?
 - (A) operational
 - (B) hypothetical-operations
 - (C) syllogistic
 - (D) formal-operations
 - (E) abstract reasoning

14. Which of the following attachment styles did Mary Ainsworth find most often in her research (in about 66 percent of the cases she studied)?
 - (A) avoidant
 - (B) authoritarian
 - (C) secure
 - (D) anxious/ambivalent
 - (E) authoritative

15. Which of the following is the correct term for a mental rule Piaget said we use to interpret our environment?
- (A) schema
 - (B) syllogism
 - (C) assimilation
 - (D) accommodation
 - (E) hypothesis

ANSWERS TO PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. (B) Developmental psychology can be called an applied topic because many findings from other areas are applied to the topic of maturation. Many topics such as behaviorism are easily applied to our lives. It is studied at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, many original research studies are done, and pure research is still well supported even when it involves children.
2. (D) Humans are born with reflexes that help us nurse and find our mother. We are born with all the neurons we will ever have, and we can observe babies' behavior and infer what reflexes and abilities babies have.
3. (E) Most of our senses function at birth other than sight, which develops quickly as we mature. Lack of stimulation seems to have little effect on touch and taste, and most senses function at a normal level, not a low one.
4. (A) Teratogens are chemicals that the mother is exposed to in the environment, making them environmental influences. The rest of the answers either are not environmental in origin or do not have proven effects on a fetus.
5. (D) Motor development is not dramatically affected by parental involvement or encouragement since the rate of development is controlled mostly by development of the neurons in the cerebellum. The other answers are traits that might be greatly affected by parental involvement.
6. (C) Longitudinal studies take place over a number of years, while cross-sectional studies do not. The rest of the answers are not necessarily differences between the two types of studies.
7. (D) The monkeys in Harlow's experiment ran to the soft mother when frightened, demonstrating the importance of a mother's touch in attachment. The soft mothers did not feed the infant monkeys or (obviously) respond more to their needs. Stranger anxiety was present in the experiment but is not an important aspect of nurturing.
8. (E) The authoritative parenting style has been shown as the most advantageous in studies. The rest of the answers are incorrect because they identify the incorrect parenting style. Secure attachment is not a parenting style.

9. (A) The psychoanalytic theories are based on anecdotal evidence and personal inference rather than empirical research methods.
10. (B) Holden's inability to stay in school and decide about goals indicates a search for identity, according to Erikson.
11. (D) Infants learn object permanence during the sensorimotor stage, not the preoperational or formal-operations stages. Choices D and E are not stages in Piaget's theory of cognitive development.
12. (B) Erikson's theory places adolescents into the identity versus role confusion stage. Adolescents would very possibly be concerned with the other factors listed in the choices, but Erikson's theory identifies identity as the area of primary concern.
13. (D) Creating hypotheses demonstrates formal operational thought. The other choices are not stages in Piaget's theory.
14. (C) Most of the infants Ainsworth studied demonstrated secure attachments, rather than anxious/ambivalent or avoidant attachments. The terms authoritarian and authoritative refer to parenting styles, not attachment theory.
15. (A) A schema is a mental rule we use to interpret our environment. Assimilation and accommodation are steps in the process of learning described by Piaget. We first try to assimilate new information into an existing schema, then accommodate the new information by changing the schema if we need to. A syllogism is a type of logical argument, and a hypothesis is an explanation for an environmental event.