Introduction

While taking a routine report at an elementary school, a police officer was interrupted by a girl of about 6 years old. Looking the officer up and down, she asked, “Are you a cop?” “Yes,” said the woman, and continued writing the report. “My mother said if I ever needed help I should ask the police. Is that right?” “Yes, again,” replied the officer. “Well, then,” she said as she extended her foot forward, “would you please tie my shoe?”
Introduction

1. What was this child thinking?
2. How did she process the information she already knew and apply it to her real life experience?
Major Theories

• So many changes are taking place in the early years of life.
• **Development**: orderly set of changes in the life span from conception to death.
• **Developmental theory**: “systematic statement of principles and generalizations that provides a coherent framework for understanding how and why people change as they grow older.”

Berger 2012
Major Theories

- **Learning theory**: explains how learning takes place.

- Child development and child psychology research tries to answer the following questions about children:

  1. How do children develop?
  2. What do they learn and in what order?
  3. What do children need to be ready to learn?
  4. What affects learning?
  5. Do all children develop in the same ways?
  6. What are the similarities and differences in growth and development?

- Theories in child development help us understand human growth and development
What is a theory?
What is a theory?

• An explanation of how the facts fit together
• A collection of related statements intended to make sense of observations
• Theory gives facts their meaning
• It’s what makes sense out of facts
• A way of predicting outcomes
• Produces a hypothesis: an educated guess about children's behavior and development.
Why is Theory Important in ECE?
**Why is Theory Important in ECE?**

- It proposes which facts are most important for understanding children
- We need some way to look for information and then choose and organize the facts so that we can understand what we see
- It describes the underlying structure of different beliefs about what children are like and how children should be treated
- It’s like a lens through which we view children and their growth
Three aspects that make up the whole of development:

1. Biological processes describe changes in the body
2. Cognitive processes are those changes in one’s thought, intelligence, and language
3. Socioemotional processes reflect changes in an individual’s relationships with other people, emotions, and personality.
   - These 3 domains develop at the same time
Domains Of Development

1. Physical-Motor
   gross motor
   fine motor
   perceptual motor

2. Affective
   social
   emotional
   creative
   spiritual

3. Intellectual
   cognitive
   language development
Is children's development driven by maturation or experience?
Nature or Nurture

Some theories claim children change because of innate, biologic, or genetic patterns built into the human being (Heredity)

Vs.

Others claim that they are shaped by the environment and experiences of life; such as parents, materials, TV, school, and so on (Environment)
Is growth smooth & continuous or more stage like?
Nurture

- Some theories emphasize a cumulative type of growth
  ex: acorn to an oak tree. The seedling becomes more oak like over time.
- Continuity of development is the viewpoint of theories that emphasize experience (nurture)
Other theories view growth as a sequence of stages that are marked by distinct stages, ex: caterpillar to a butterfly. In the cocoon, the chrysalis does not become more caterpillar-like. It becomes a different kind of organism.

This viewpoint emphasizes the innate conditions of development (nature).
What can theory and research do for ECE?
What can theory and research do for ECE?

- Before research and science, adults had certain beliefs about children that may have been rooted in myth rather than reality.

  ex: “You'll spoil the baby if you respond to his demands too quickly.”
Before & After Research

Before
- child development examined trends and descriptions of age changes

After
- lifespan approach
- Context of development
- Culture, resiliency, studying the brain
Theories

1. Psychodynamic Theory
   Sigmund Freud & Erik Erikson

2. Behaviorist Theory
   Pavlov, Watson, Thorndike, Skinner, Bandura

3. Cognitive Theory
   Jean Piaget

4. Sociocultural Theory
   Lev Vygotsky
Theories

5. Ecological Theory
   Bronfenbrenner

6. Multiple Intelligences Theory
   Howard Garner

7. Maturation Theory
   Arnold Gessell

8. Humanistic Theory
   Abraham Maslow