

Teaching Guide

Chapter 9: Developmental psychology

Topic map

Section number and name	Learning outcome	Number of hours (suggested)	Relevant material
9.1 Developmental psychology: an introduction	Among the many elements influencing the individual's cognitive and social development in the earlier decades of life are time spent in play, degree and nature of interaction with peers, childhood traumas encountered and resilience levels, and socio-economic variables.	6	Figures 9.1–9.6 Activity 9.1 Self-assessment questions 9.1
9.2 Developing an identity	Among the elements influencing the child developing a personal identity are the pattern of attachment experienced in the formative years, the communicated social norms, and the development of empathy and theory of mind.	7	Figures 9.7–9.10 Self-assessment questions 9.2 Essay response question at the end of the chapter
9.3 Developing as a learner	Cognitive and biologically-based theories and studies contribute to understanding the complex ways in which individual children develop as learners.	7	Figures 9.11–9.22 Activity 9.2 Self-assessment questions 9.3

9.1 Development psychology: an introduction

Overview

This topic extends the range of cognitive and socio-cultural influences in the core topics to focus on their influence in child and adolescent development. The focus of this vast field narrows down to viewing one type of positive influence (the role of play through positive interactions with peer groups) and two types of negative influences (childhood trauma, poverty), together with the young person's resilience capacities following traumatic events.

The role of play in cognitive development is revisited in *Section 9.3 Developing as a learner*, in the work of Piaget.

Please preview the materials before approving student use, as some of the content may be disturbing.

Suggested activities

Possible starter

Activity 9.1 in the coursebook should enable students to discover elements of this topic through memories of their own childhood experiences. Consider presenting this item as an individual rather than a group task, to avoid possible embarrassing self-disclosures. It may be extended by the students mathematically analysing their data for any correlation between the variables.

Main lesson content

- Peers and play are effectively linked on the Encyclopaedia on Early Childhood Development website with a short video, [How can we help preschool children get along with their peers?](#) This resource also contains information sheets, viewing the way various play activities promote cooperation among the very young. Play is also claimed to be productive for ages other than the very young, as presented in the TED talk by Stuart Brown, [Play is more than just fun](#).
- The trauma-creating realities of children's separation from primary caregivers as exemplified by deportations are presented in [Separation anxiety](#) on the Psychology Today website. It should support the work on Perry and Pollard (1997) presented in the coursebook.
- There is considerable background material on the deprivation suffered by Romanian orphans, the subject of the research of Rutter et al. (2004) covered in the coursebook. It may be exemplified by [Romanian orphans](#) and [Growing up in a Romanian orphanage](#) available on YouTube, and contrasted with those orphans adopted by British families in [From Romania with love](#).
- Studies in the effects of trauma and the role of resilience may include the video-supported Huffington Post article, [Building resilience key to overcoming childhood trauma](#), which incorporates two TEDx talks delivered in a Californian prison gym. These can be compared with the approach of paediatrician Nadine Burke Harris in the TED video, [How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime](#).

Common misunderstandings and misconceptions

Ensure that the students can distinguish between childhood trauma and childhood deprivation. These terms are not interchangeable.

Supporting your students

Though the students should find this topic easy to relate to, the placing of peers and play within the frameworks of Piaget and Vygotsky at this early stage (as in the coursebook) may confuse some students. It could be better to postpone the use of those theories to Section 9.3 where they are presented in full. The role of peers and play can then be reconsidered in the light of those models.

Challenging your students

The Research Idea in Section 9.1 should enable students to examine the effect of poverty-paralleled conditions on the capacity to use cognitive skills and socially interact. Students will need to distinguish between individuals that do not eat breakfast on non-school days out of choice, and those who miss that meal on school days because of being too hurried to arrive on time.

Homework suggestion

- Examine Figure 9.5 in the coursebook. The students can suggest and justify five ways of structuring a day school environment to promote resilience and create the necessary academic and social skills for children living in poverty to work towards a better future.

Cross-references with other topics

2.5 Ethical considerations

10.3 Analysing data

9.2 Developing an identity

Overview

The development of a clear and positive idea of who we are and where we fit into society is greatly influenced by childhood experiences. Psychological studies seek to examine the crucial elements that, suitably applied, can enable childhood to be an encouraging and constructive formative process.

Suggested activities

Possible starter

Ask the students to write down three occasions or events when they recall feeling completely out of place. They should then explain why, identifying what caused them to feel uncomfortable. Next, ask them to reframe those reasons on the lines of: 'I felt uncomfortable because of A, because I see myself as B.' Finally, ask them to combine the Bs in their answer, which should give them a series of elements forming their individual identities.

This item may arouse sensitivities: it might be better for students to complete this task on their own rather than in groups.

Main lesson content

- The Simply Psychology item on Ainsworth's (1969, 1971 and 1978) Strange Situation test of finding out the nature of the child's attachment is presented as a [video](#), with notes that will back up the material in the coursebook. There is evidence that secure attachments support the immune system to fight infectious diseases, as presented in [Science bulletins: Attachment theory – understanding the essential bond](#), available on YouTube.
- [Gender roles in society](#) are thoughtfully explored by Ria Chinchankar within the framework of gender stereotype threats, in her talk available on YouTube (delivered in TED format, but organised by her local community). It proposes the idea of the presence of psychological constraints on those seeking to move on from socially perceived gender role norms.
- Arguments have been used to link the gender stereotyping that occurs in the hidden curriculum of many school environments with the high mortality rate of male suicides compared to female. This is exemplified by Johnson Mthembu in the video [Masculinity & suicide](#), available on YouTube. You are urged to preview this video before the lesson and judge its suitability for your particular class.
- Theory of mind is clearly introduced on the Thoughtful Parent website in an article called [The hidden way that kids learn empathy \(and how parents can help\)](#). This shows the difference between how a three-year-old and four-year-old handle a simple task that requires them to see something from another person's point of view, and should therefore support the material in the coursebook. It can be followed with these videos available on YouTube: [Smarties task and Sally-Anne task](#) and Baron-Cohen's (1985) [The Sally-Ann test](#), which explores the potential application of this test to detect autism.

Common misunderstandings and misconceptions

Sympathy and empathy are often confused: it is possible to be empathic towards another person even when thoroughly disagreeing with their viewpoint.

Though Bowlby (1951, 1953, 1969) is popularly associated with the concept that 'Children need mothers', his work does not invalidate a similar quality attachment being able to take place with a primary caregiver other than the mother. Also, until Bowlby's studies it was generally understood that attachments grew out of dependence for food rather than the need for love and security.

Supporting your students

Some students may find the relatively complex research of Ainsworth and Baron-Cohen to be confusing. The use of the short videos (above) supporting both studies should help students to navigate the details, and place each study into context.

Challenging your students

The critical thinking task in Section 9.2.1 of the coursebook should enable students to apply the work of Bowlby, Ainsworth, Hazan and Shaver (1987), and some of the video materials in this guide to examine a common real-life situation, and as a psychologist, to give supported advice. There are probably many students who can relate to the scenario from first-hand experience.

Homework suggestion

- Students are very likely to find the claims made by Ria Chinchankar in the TED-type [video](#) intriguing but thought-provoking and controversial. They should review the biological, cognitive and socio-cultural theories of gender-role development, and apply them and other research to any three points in the video that they either strongly agree or strongly disagree with, for example her concept of gender-stereotype threat.

Cross-references with other topics

2.5 Ethical considerations

5.2 The individual and the group

9.3 Developing as a learner

Overview

This topic considers the cognitive and biological development processes that appear to underlie and power the learning progress of most individuals. It includes several models of varying complexities. The students' main challenges in this area of study are to master the workings of those models, and to determine where they complement or conflict with each other.

Suggested activities

Possible starter

Present the following scenario to the class: 'Bradley's promotion':

Bradley is ten years old, with the mathematical skills of a pre-IB student. He reads widely, is highly creative and expresses himself in writing extremely well. His verbal, written and mathematical reasoning skills are well above the average 16-year-old. His parents believe that the next years of schooling with his own age group will be a waste of time. They have requested his Principal to place him in the pre-IB class with the view to starting the diploma programme the following year, finishing it two years later aged 13.

Advise the school and Bradley's parents, solely in terms of Bradley's learning capacities.

This exercise should elicit a lively discussion and at the same time create a scenario where the students can apply the different models later on. Advise students to keep a record of the initial responses contributed to the discussion, for revisiting later on in this topic.

Main lesson content

- Piaget's four stages of cognitive development are simply and very clearly presented in the video, [Piaget's stages of development](#), available on YouTube. This resource is particularly recommended for those who become lost in the details. It may be followed up by the more in-depth coverage of Piaget's ideas, [Jean Piaget's 4 stages of cognitive development](#), also on YouTube.
- Vygotsky's understanding of cognitive development (including the zone of proximal development and role of scaffolding) is systematically presented in the video, [Vygotsky and scaffolding](#), on YouTube, with the role of social interaction in video-scribe form in [Vygotsky's social interaction](#). For a lively comparison with Piaget, view [Piaget vs. Vygotsky: Theories of cognitive development](#), which can be followed up in more depth in [Vygotsky's sociocultural theory](#), both also available on YouTube.
- The video, [Bruner's theory of cognitive development](#), on YouTube, incorporates enactive, iconic and symbolic representation modes, and the whole content integrated within the spiral curriculum can be seen in this video, [Jerome Bruner](#), on YouTube.
- The brain development studies of Waber et al. (2007) and Barkley-Levenson and Galván (2014) may be supplemented by the research of Sarah-Jayne Blakemore (also recommended in this guide for Chapter 3) on [The mysterious workings of the adolescent brain](#), available on the TEDEd website. The 'Dig Deeper' section contains a range of suitable materials for the theme of adolescent brains being works in progress.

Common misunderstandings and misconceptions

It is important to view Piaget's theory of cognitive development as multi-dimensional. Students can easily mix up the terminology. For example, the cognitive processes of assimilation, disequilibrium, equilibration and accommodation all take place in the earlier as well as later operational stages of cognitive development.

Supporting your students

This multi-dimensional topic can be very confusing. Self-assessment questions 9.3 supply the scaffolding for the students to extrapolate the theory from the text and reach a systematic understanding of the cognitive models. That includes the issues where they complement and challenge each other.

Challenging your students

Return to 'Bradley's promotion' starter activity.

Review (a) the initial class responses in the discussion, and (b) the five models/studies (three cognitive-based, two biologically-based).

Then advise the school and Bradley's parents, solely in terms of Bradley's learning capacities. But this time advise as a development psychologist, applying all five items in (b) to the issue.

Homework suggestion

- Activity 9.2 should give the students an opportunity to apply the three cognitive development models in depth to a real-life issue that typifies cutting-edge approaches to education in this digital age. However, unlike the 'Challenging your students' item above, this piece of work focuses on the cognitive theories of development only.

Cross-references with other topics

2.5 Ethical considerations

4.2 Cognitive processing: memory, schema theory, and thinking and decision-making processes

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