

Making Observations of Psychological Processes in Everyday Life [Student Handout]**[06] Development****A. Introduction**

Like dogs, who recognize each other despite fantastic differences in size, shape, color, pelt and behavior, we humans all know each other—but in addition to fantastic variation in

physical appearance we find ourselves confronted with fellows who speak different languages; act differently because of the history, culture and social positions of our families; and process the world differently because of how they have individually grown and developed so far. We all know, simultaneously, that babies are human and that babies act very differently from (adult) humans. Remarkably, there is evidence that babies do much the same thing with us.

Key Concepts

- Cognitive development (Piaget)
- Theory of Mind
- Emotional development (Freud, Spitz, Harlow)
- Social development (Erikson, Bandura)
- Zone of Proximal Development (scaffolding)

It doesn't take a psychologist to know that infants and children are different from adults, and to know, in addition, that the differences have something to do with growth and development. Since psychology established itself as a science opinion has swung wildly from conceptualizing children as totally incapable to conceptualizing them as remarkably competent. Some have argued that much of what we become is passed on more or less directly through our genes while others have argued that it's largely personal experiences and observations that make us who we are. Are babies best thought of as humans who haven't 'blossomed' yet, or as radically different creatures who must transform themselves to become us?

B. Questions to Guide Your (Re)Search

[1] How does thinking in terms of development affect how we interact with other people? How does thinking about the fact that human beings develop all their lives alter how we think about each other?

[2] Humans are extraordinarily adaptable creatures, although one of the ways we do so is by taking advantage of the fact that life keeps on going, so that getting things wrong often doesn't matter. When people interact the parties often make complementary maneuvers to compensate for errors, so that one party's wrong guesses are effectively overridden by the other party's wrong interpretations. How commonly do people fail to properly communicate because of such situations? How often do failures to communicate occur because the parties find themselves operating out of very different levels of development?

[3] How do failures to take account of developmental differences between us lead to difficulties, errors, potentially embarrassing situations, etc? How often do people at different developmental levels hear or use the same word, but actually mean different things? How else does that happen?

[4] How often do people make specific adjustments of their behavior or style of communication to take account of developmental difference between them? What are the particular situations and circumstances in which people make such compensations? When and where do they fail to do so when they really should, and what sorts of things happen then?