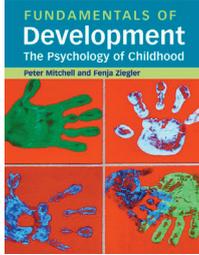


Fundamentals of Development

The Psychology of Childhood



Authors: Peter Mitchell, Fenja Ziegler

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اساسيات التطور علم نفس الطفولة

المؤلفون: بيتر ميتشل و فينجا زيغلر

As an introductory developmental psychology text, *Fundamentals of Development* achieves a passing grade. The authors adopt a topic-based approach which, though promoting the material's accessibility to students, seems incomplete, disjointed and lacking in organisation. The text maintains a solidly cognitive approach, but it fails to assert the interactions among the biological, social and cultural influences present in each aspect of development.

In terms of accessibility, the language used in this text is simple and presented conversationally. Though this may appeal to introductory students, it often reduces the power of the theories being discussed, and allows the authors to pass judgements which may be considered inappropriate at this level of foundation. The simple and repetitive language may be an advantage to students who do not have English as their native language, but must be balanced with the fact that this often reduces the explanatory power of the presented theories.

Each chapter begins with chapter aims, and concludes with suggested further reading followed by a brief summary, which varies in depth and helpfulness

depending on the chapter. Key words are also provided, defined in the margins and in the glossary. Conspicuously absent at the ends of the chapters are outlined reviews of the central themes, theories and terms. These are both conducive to a student's initial learning of the concepts, and to his examination preparation. This text would also benefit from charts comparing theories and highlighting different theories' strengths and weaknesses; a study aid frequently found to be useful for students.

The organization of the book also leaves quite a lot to be desired. Each chapter in this text is self-contained, but there is very little continuity between chapters or effort at linking ideas. It would appear that the chapters are meant to be used individually and perhaps not necessarily in the order in which they are presented in the book; this may be confusing to students. For example, the introductory chapter briefly presents, then quickly dismisses Freud's theory of development as "perverse," and does not directly refer to it again until towards the end of the text, between chapters on parenting and moral development. There the authors return to Freud's stages of development and personality theory in

greater detail, devoting an entire chapter to these topics and again refuting them. This fractured presentation makes it difficult for the authors to maintain a coherent narrative of the progression of developmental psychological research. The book ends with a chapter on aggression and provides no real conclusion chapter to wrap up the text or to incite the student to further study. There is no chapter addressing the implications of developmental research or new directions in contemporary work. The authors' piecemeal presentation of the material in this book makes it seem more appropriate for supplementary use than as a core text in the classroom.

Although this book dabbles in several central areas of developmental psychology, covering the major theories - albeit some quite briefly - it often lacks the grounding and comparative substance necessary to tie the ideas together. The text provides a number of illustrated examples to demonstrate each of the groundbreaking experiments which advanced understanding of the discipline, but provides no introduction to the research methods of developmental psychology. There are a few elements of modern psychology that this book does not deeply consider. One of these is prenatal development: there is almost no consideration of the biological developments that accompany the cognitive developments addressed. Another weakness of the text is the lack of recognition of recent findings

surrounding the effects of cultural and racial factors beyond a mention of racial differences in IQ and aggression due to environment. In addition, there is very little discussion about the range of developmental disorders beyond autism. A number of theoretical perspectives are also not mentioned: psychosocial theories, socio-historical theories and dynamic systems theories to name several.

In conclusion, although this text does an excellent job of illustrating and explaining many of the major studies that brought advances in our understanding of psychological development, it lacks the cohesiveness and broad-spectrum approach that would make it a good introductory text for independent use. It is much better as a companion piece to a fuller text, so that its chapters can be used to flesh out concepts with examples and easy, conversational language.

REVIEWER

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