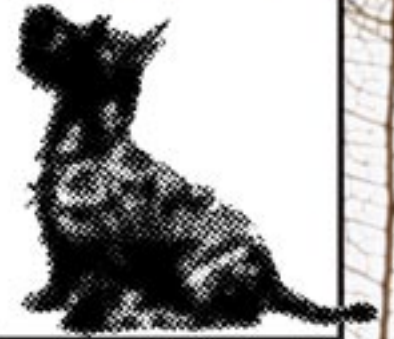


SAGE COURSE COMPANIONS

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS *for* SUCCESS



Developmental Psychology

Carol Brown



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Los Angeles • London • New Delhi • Singapore

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To Matt whom I will always love
and
for Paul and Tim, the two most special sons who have really taught me
about developmental psychology. I love you both.

	
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introduction	

Why use this course companion to developmental psychology?

This book is designed to help you succeed on your degree level psychology course. The aim is to provide you with a course companion that gives you a short cut to understanding the basics behind developmental psychology. It is about helping you gain the most from your degree level course, passing your examinations in psychology and helping you to achieve success in your assignments.

It has been designed and written to provide you, the reader, with an easy-to-navigate guide to the commonly taught curriculum in developmental psychology, and the ways of thinking and writing that your examiners will be looking for when they start to grade your work.

This companion is not to be used instead of a textbook or wider reading, but rather as a means of memorising content and familiarising yourself with the basics of the discipline when preparing for an examination or planning an assessed essay. The book will help you to structure and organise your thoughts, and will enable you to get the most from your textbooks and the other reading that you will do as part of your course. This companion is designed to point you in the direction of key thinkers and key ideas, and to give you the briefest of introductions to their work and how to put their work in context. It will point you in the direction of the most important readings and thinkers, and will encourage you to widen your reading and research so as to improve your attainment.

The guide therefore provides you with ways of applying the information you are familiar with in a practical manner and is aimed at ensuring you gain the skills necessary to convey your theoretical/academic material successfully.

As you are still relatively new to the study of psychology you may assume that simply learning the material presented in lectures secures high achievement, but actually the learning and rewriting of information will not in fact gain you top marks. Instead you need to go beyond simply understanding the material and think critically about the

research presented to you. This ability to evaluate theories/studies is the essential skill for becoming a successful psychologist.

Summary

Using this course companion will help you:

- understand the key theories/studies within developmental psychology, alongside your notes and wider reading
- highlight the skills necessary to pass this module by providing tips on answering questions and specifying running themes within topics.

How to use this book

This book should be used as a supplement to your textbook and lecture notes. You may want to glance through it quickly, reading it in parallel with your course syllabus and textbook, and note where each topic is covered in both the syllabus and this *Companion*. Ideally you should have already bought this book before your course starts, so that you can get a quick overview of each topic before you go into the lecture – but if you didn't do this, all is not lost. The *Companion* will still be equally helpful as a revision guide, and as a way of directing you towards the key thinkers and theories in developmental psychology.

Part One is about how to think like a developmental psychologist: it will help you to get into the mindset of the subject and think about it critically. As a bonus, of course, it also means learning how to think like your examiner! Examiners want to see that you can handle the basic concepts of your subject: if you need a quick overview of the background to developmental psychology, this is the section you will find most useful.

Part Two goes into the curriculum in more detail, taking each topic and providing you with the key elements. Again, this does not substitute for the deeper coverage you will have had in your lectures and texts, but it does provide a quick revision guide, or a 'primer' to use before lectures.

You can also use this book either to give yourself a head start before you begin studying developmental psychology – in other words give yourself a preview course – or as a revision aid, or of course both. Each section contains within it the following features:

- **Tips** on handling the information in exams, or reminders of key issues. These will help you to anticipate exam questions, and to remember the main points to bring in when answering them.
- **Examples** that are useful for putting theory into a 'real world' context, and can of course be used in exams to illustrate the points you make.
- **Running themes** of the areas that will always be of interest to a social psychologist. You will find that these can almost always be brought into an exam question, and you will be expected to do so.
- Input from **key thinkers** in the field, which will be useful to quote in exams, as well as providing you with the main influences and theories within cognitive psychology.
- Sample **exam questions** with outline **answers**. These should help you be better prepared for the actual questions, even though they will (of course) be different.
- The **textbook guide** is about taking your thinking a stage further and this section introduces some texts which focus on academic thinking, and will help you to take a broader conceptual view of the topic: on a practical level, this is the type of thinking that moves you from a pass to a first!

Part Three of the *Companion* is a study guide which will help you to get more from your lectures, to remember more when you are sitting exams, and to write essays.

The final section includes a glossary of the key terms used in the book and a list of references.

part one

the basics of developmental psychology



The overall aim of this part is to familiarise you with the basics of developmental psychology. It will:

- define developmental psychology as a topic
- provide an outline of developmental psychology and its related disciplines
- give you a brief history of developmental psychology
- introduce the founding figures and their core ideas
- encourage you to think like a developmental psychologist
- help you understand the general principles of assessment and expected learning outcomes when studying this area of psychology
- provide tips and examples of the running themes you will find throughout the text.

1.1	
definition	

Developmental psychology looks at the changes we go through as we get older and examines the key stages that influence all aspects of our development from the foetus, through infancy and then transitions into adolescence and adulthood. It covers a range of developmental areas including physical, social, emotional, cognitive and language development as well as relationships with wider social agents such as peers and family.

Many of these areas are interchangeable ones and may be the result of nature or nurture, that is, the result of biological factors or environmental ones.

1.2	
developmental psychology and related disciplines/theories	

Biology

Since humans are biological creatures there is an inevitable overlap between physical functioning and the developmental process. For example it looks at heredity, genes, embryology and pre-natal development. The link between the two areas is evident in the apparent interaction between biological/physical development and childhood growth, and explicit links can be seen in the sections on physical/motor development and on the influences of biology/heredity on behaviour.

Cognitive psychology

Cognitive psychology deals with topics such as perception, memory, attention, language and thinking/decision-making. Most critically it is based on the idea that we are like a computer when processing information and have input, storage and retrieval functions. Experimental cognitive psychology presumes that cognitive processes can be tested using empirical (scientific) methods because they can be inferred from behaviour obtained under controlled conditions. Introspection can however also be used whereby one examines one's own mental processes. The development of cognitive development generally, and areas such as perception and language in particular, are key sections in this current text.

Social psychology

Social psychology is about understanding individual behaviour in a social context. Baron, Byrne and Suls (1989) define it as 'the scientific field that seeks to understand the nature and causes of individual behaviour in social situations'. It therefore looks at human behaviour as influenced by other people and the context in which this occurs. Social psychologists deal with the factors that lead us to behave in a given way in the presence of others, and looks at the conditions under which certain behaviour/actions and feelings occur. It is to do with the way these feelings, thoughts, beliefs, intentions and goals are constructed and how such psychological factors, in turn, influence our interactions with others. This developmental text looks at how our development is aided/influenced by parents, peers and play, for example, and also at the development of gender.

Comparative psychology

The comparison between animal and human behaviour underlies this area of psychology, and the debate between the inheritance of species-specific behaviour patterns (phylogeny) and behaviour which is acquired during the species lifetime but is not shared with every member, is a running theme throughout this text. Perhaps most notably the concepts of imprinting and attachment behaviour highlighted in section 2.10 relate to this.



Although developmental psychology draws on the contribution of social, comparative and cognitive psychology, and biology, it is unique in its consideration of all of these disciplines when looking at development from a lifespan perspective.

1.3	
history of developmental psychology	

In any examination or essay you will be expected to know something about where developmental psychology comes from. This may simply be a matter of demonstrating a general understanding or not getting your origins muddled, but you may well be asked to write directly on the history of the discipline.

Understanding something of the history of developmental psychology will be crucial in helping you think like a developmental psychologist.

Key developments

- 1882 – Wilhelm Preyer produced *The Mind of a Child* (translated into English, 1888) which was a rigorous case study of his own daughter's development, including observational records.
- 1894 – Alfred Binet founded the first scientific journal in this area (*L'année Psychologique*).
- 1891 – Stanley Hall founded a further journal – *Pedagogical Seminary*.
- 1890s – the first research institutes were set up in developmental psychology.
- 1905 – Binet published an intelligence test (Binet–Simon scale) which provided insight and guidance on the intellectual capabilities and potential of those suffering from mental retardation.
- 1915 – J.M. Baldwin published *Genetic Logic*, which introduced the concept that knowledge grows through childhood in a series of distinct stages, from initial physical development to language and cognitive abilities. This is believed to occur as an interaction between innate abilities and environmental feedback, such that the child emerges as a result of social and physical growth.
- 1916 – the Stanford–Binet test was produced which facilitated intelligence testing in children more widely.

As we will go now go on to see, the work of Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and John Bowlby then ensured the true establishment of the developmental psychology field.

1.4

founding figures and their
core ideas

The core ideas of the founding figures had either a philosophical influence (their ideas and beliefs impacted on thinking about developmental psychology) or a methodological influence (their ways of working and research studies influenced the development and thinking about developmental psychology).

Karl Ernst von Baer (1792–1876) – challenged the existing ideas that development follows a predetermined course as characteristics are already set at birth (preformationism), or that it moves through various stages which imitate that of the adult form of the species from which it has evolved (recapitulationism). Instead he introduced the idea that development occurs in stages, allowing for individual characteristics to emerge from more general ones.

Charles Darwin (1809–1882) – Darwin’s evolutionary theory paved the way for the idea that development occurs as the child gradually adapts to its environment. He also introduced the notion that systematic and scientific methods could be used to study such development.

Jean Piaget (1896–1980) – was influenced by early theorists Binet and Baldwin (see above). He used a clinical approach to look at the systematic cognitive errors children made, in an attempt to understand something of a child’s acquisition of knowledge and intellectual development. He initially proposed that the interaction of babies with their environment paved the way for thinking and language patterns. As we shall see later in this book he went on to propose a comprehensive theory combining evolutionary perspectives with the acquisition of knowledge as a biological process. This worked on the premise that babies are all born with similar biological properties and reflexes which mature to a state of ‘readiness’ whereby new information or experiences that cannot be assimilated challenge and then change a child’s thinking.

Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) – was also influenced by the early work of Baldwin and Binet. He focused, however, on cultural input, suggesting that this was the critical factor that transforms experience from a basic elementary function to a higher-order one. Rather than looking at fixed stages of development he focused (particularly) on the interaction

between language and thought, assuming them to be separate functions before the age of two, after which time language and cultural tools facilitate problem-solving and social interaction.

John Bowlby (1907–1990) – Bowlby believed a mother and child form an innate monotrophic bond and that maternal deprivation occurs when the bond is broken in some way. He saw attachment as a two-way, genetic process that provides a child with a secure base from which to explore the world. He therefore stated that if maternal deprivation occurred then there would be irreversible long-term emotional consequences for the child. These include affectionless psychopathy in which the individual is unable to establish normal emotional development and experiences no feelings of emotion or guilt if carrying out crimes. The psychopath lacks affection and is unable to establish lasting relationships as an adult.

1.5	
thinking like a developmental psychologist	

The key to success in your developmental psychology module is to learn how to think like a developmental psychologist, including how to speak the language of academic psychology, using their terms and phrases in a relevant way and understanding how to make links between topics and common themes. This book will give you hints and tips to guide you. It will ensure that you become confident about when and how to use this language and the ways of thinking about the world that come with this language. This will be the focus of both this section and more specifically of part two.

This initial part of the book has introduced some of the basics of developmental psychology by helping you understand that it involves looking at development over the lifespan and at the influences upon such development. It also emphasised the notion that this needs to be done in a scientific way, and so to truly understand how to think like a

developmental psychologist you will need first to understand more about this.

- *Scientific method* means that you need to test a hypothesis to examine variables that influence behaviour. Thus the hypothesis states that two variables are related in some way and if you alter one of them this may cause the participant to alter the other. In psychology we are trying to show that our results are significant and due to the thing we have changed (called the independent variable) rather than due to chance.

In order to think like a developmental psychologist you therefore need to understand clearly what a hypothesis is and what the role of variables is.

A hypothesis should be a precise, testable statement of a relationship between two or more variables.

There are two types of variables that should be included in each hypothesis:

- An **independent variable** (IV). This is the thing that the researcher *deliberately manipulates* so it is the thing that she purposely changes.
- A **dependent variable** (DV). This is what one hopes alters as a result of what is *changed* (so the DV measures any changes the IV has produced).

Generally one variable (the IV) is altered to see what effect it has on another variable (the DV). This means that cause and effect are being measured.

*The IV is the thing you are changing
The DV is the thing you are measuring*

You also need to be aware that your hypothesis can be tested using both experimental and non-experimental methods.

The principal difference is that experiments involve looking at whether manipulating one variable (the IV) has an effect on what you are measuring (the DV) and can involve laboratory experiments or field experiments, for example. In the laboratory the researcher deliberately manipulates variables using standardised procedures (the same method

each time). In a field experiment the researcher also deliberately manipulates the IV but does so in the participants' own natural environment.

In contrast non-experimental methods may be more viable within the social context since, often, studying behaviour in the real world becomes unnatural if transferred to the laboratory, and therefore a range of other methods may be required, including:

- **Case studies**, which focus on one individual and their behaviour, thoughts, feelings and experiences.
- **Correlations**, which measure the strength of the relationship between two variables; for example, they test if there is a relationship between two things. They *do not*, however, test cause and effect – so they do not say that one thing causes the other but simply say there is some relationship between two things.
- **Questionnaires**, which use various types of questions to make a quick and efficient assessment of people's attitudes and which contain fixed or open-ended questions (or both).
- **Observations**, which look at the behaviour of participants in various situations and see 'a relatively unconstrained segment of a person's freely chosen behaviour as it occurs' (Coolican, 1990: 60). These can be structured or unstructured but can be carried out in the participants' natural environment.

Such work also needs to be carried out according to ethical guidelines, and special note needs to be made of those concerning deception, informed consent, withdrawal, debriefing and protection of participants from harm.



Thinking like a developmental psychologist involves weighing up the costs and benefits of research to determine if anything valuable can be found.

Once you understand what developmental psychology is and how it can be investigated you are half way to understanding the key principles which underpin this module.

So how do you think like a developmental psychologist?

- You need to understand the changes and consistencies in development during the lifespan from conception through to old age, focusing on how particular behaviours change as a result of age.
- It is not a discipline that looks at how you behave/process information in a collective way but instead takes an individual slant.

- To be a successful developmental psychologist you will need to learn how to consider the theories presented as a scientist, that is, to talk about development in the context of the research studies/theories.
- You will also need to be aware that developmental psychologists use scientific methods when studying people and their development, and that they can test their hypotheses in experimental or non-experimental ways provided that ethical guidelines are always met.

When studying any topic in developmental psychology, you need to be aware of how the above disciplines have influenced the thinking of developmental psychologists as this will help you understand their perspective/explanation of development.

You must also consider the methodology and the advantages/disadvantages/ethics of the methods used, as this will help you evaluate their work.

1.6	
learning outcomes and assessment	

Learning outcomes

At the end of your developmental psychology module you should be able to:

- understand and describe the major theories and areas of research in developmental psychology;
- think critically about the key studies /theories;
- understand and be able to evaluate the methods used to research developmental psychology;
- relate the theories and thinking of developmental psychologists to child development;