

Developmental Psychology

Developmental psychology, also known as human development, is the scientific study of systematic psychological changes that occur in human beings over the course of the life span. Originally concerned with infants and children, the field has expanded to include adolescence and adult development, aging, and the entire life span. This field examines change across a broad range of topics including motor skills and other psycho-physiological processes; cognitive development involving areas such as problem solving, moral understanding, and conceptual understanding; language acquisition; social, personality, and emotional development; and self-concept and identity formation.

Developmental psychologists investigate key questions, such as whether children are qualitatively different from adults or simply lack the experience that adults draw upon. Two important issues concern the nature of development. One concerns whether development occurs through the gradual accumulation of knowledge or through shifts from one stage of thinking to another. The other concerns whether children are born with innate knowledge or figure things out through experience. A third significant focus of research involves the interaction between social context and development.