

Ethological Theory

- **Ethology:** stresses that behavior is strongly influenced by biology and evolution
 - ▣ Characterized by critical or sensitive periods
 - ▣ Brought to prominence by Konrad Lorenz
 - Studied *imprinting* in geese
 - ▣ Bowlby stressed the importance of human attachment during the first year of life

©2009 The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All rights reserved.

Ethological Theory

- **Evaluating Ethological Theory:**
 - ▣ Contributions:
 - A focus on the biological and evolutionary basis of development
 - Use of careful observations in naturalistic settings
 - ▣ Criticisms:
 - Too much emphasis on biological foundations
 - Critical and sensitive period concepts may be too rigid

©2009 The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All rights reserved.

Ecological Theory

- **Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory:** development reflects the influence of five environmental systems:
 - ▣ **Microsystem:** setting in which the individual lives
 - ▣ **Mesosystem:** relations between microsystems
 - ▣ **Exosystem:** links between a social setting in which the individual does not have an active role and the individual's immediate context
 - ▣ **Macrosystem:** culture in which individuals live
 - ▣ **Chronosystem:** patterning of environmental events and transitions; sociohistorical circumstances

©2009 The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All rights reserved.

Ecological Theory

THEORY	Continuity/discontinuity, early versus later experiences	ISSUES	Biological and environmental factors
Psychoanalytic	Discontinuity between stages—continuity between early experiences and later development; early experiences very important; later changes in development emphasized in Erikson's theory	Freud's biological determination interacting with early family experiences; Erikson's more balanced biological-cultural interaction perspective	
Cognitive	Discontinuity between stages in Piaget's theory; continuity between early experiences and later development in Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories; no stages in Vygotsky's theory or information-processing theory	Piaget's emphasis on interaction and adaptation; environment provides the setting for cognitive structures to develop; information-processing view has not addressed this issue extensively but mainly emphasizes biological-environmental interaction	
Behavioral and social cognitive	Continuity (no stages); experience at all points of development important	Environment viewed as the cause of behavior in both views	
Ethological	Discontinuity but no stages; critical or sensitive periods emphasized; early experiences very important	Strong biological view	
Ecological	Little attention to continuity/discontinuity; change emphasized more than stability	Strong environmental view	

©2009 The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All rights reserved.

Ecological Theory

- **Evaluating Ecological Theory:**
 - ▣ Contributions:
 - Systematic examination of macro and micro dimensions of environmental systems
 - Attention to connections between environmental systems
 - ▣ Criticisms:
 - Giving inadequate attention to biological factors
 - Too little emphasis on cognitive factors

©2009 The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All rights reserved.

Eclectic Theoretical Orientation

- **Eclectic Theoretical Orientation:**
 - ▣ No single theory can explain all of development
 - ▣ Every theory has contributed to our understanding
 - ▣ Eclectic orientation does not follow any one theoretical approach
 - Instead, it selects from each theory whatever is considered its best features

©2009 The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All rights reserved.