

Developmental Psychopathology

How our understanding has evolved

History

- Children with psychological, behavioral, and learning problems have existed throughout history
- Understanding these children = work in progress
- Important to appreciate: Children's lives affected by people who lived through different eras
 - Parents, Grandparents, Teachers, Doctors....

Example

- **What do you see?**

A child with Down Syndrome



- **What is it?**

A genetically based condition resulting in impaired cognitive development & characteristic physical features

- **What causes it?**

- Caused by an additional 21st chromosome resulting in three instead of the usual two: Trisomy-21

BUT

- It hasn't always been like that
- How has our view of this child changed over time?

Changing views

- Earliest?
 - Statues of Central American tribe 1500BC-300AD
 - Half human, half god
- First described?
 - 1866 by John Langdon Down in England
 - "Mongolism" or reversion to a "more primitive race"
- Cause discovered?
 - 1959 by French and English researchers
- But history doesn't disappear
 - 1985 article in *Biological Psychiatry* refers to Mongolism
 - DEVO song *The Mongoloid* in recordings 1978-92

History

- Earliest times belief in divine causes
- Deformities = possession by evil spirits/devil
- Life harsh with high infant mortality
- Children with birth defects often simply abandoned or euthanized (killed)



History: Harsh Treatment

- High infant and child mortality→Less emotional investment
- Belief children were possessed or born bad and needed to be civilized→Beat the devil out of them
- Children as property→Parents do as they please
- 1646 Massachusetts Stubborn Child Law

MA Stubborn Child Act

If a man have a stubborn or REBELLIOUS SON, of sufficient years & understanding (viz) sixteen years of age, which will not obey the voice of his Father, or the voice of his Mother, and that when they have chastened him will not harken unto them: then shal his Father & Mother being his natural paret, lay hold on him, & bring him to the Magistrates assembled in Court & testifie unto them that their Son is stubborn & rebellious & will not obey their voice and chastisement, but lives in sundry notorious crimes, such a son shal be put to death.

History: Emergence Social Conscience

- J. Locke, Philosopher & Physician, 1690/93
 - Child not born with original sin but a "blank slate"
 - "[T]he little and almost insensible impressions on our tender infancies have very important and lasting consequences."
- J. Rousseau, Philosopher, 1762
 - *Noble savage*. Child=primitive state; untamed but pure
- J. Itard, Physician: 1798
 - *The Wild Boy of Aveyron*. Child's behavior as product of deprived environment. Takes boy in to be rehabilitated.

19th Century

- Psychiatric v. intellectual disorders
 - Mental retardation ("imbeciles") seen as distinct from those with psychiatric disorders ("lunatics")
 - Normal cognitive but disturbing behavior → "moral insanity"
 - Advances in medicine → organic disease model
 - Schools for deaf and blind

Early 20th Century

- Rise of modern medicine & disease model
- Premise: Cause of problem=*within the individual*
- Segregate, institutionalize
- Contributes to **Eugenics** Movement
 - Social engineering
 - Encourage more children for wealthy and accomplished; sterilize undesirables

Early 20th Century (cont)

- IN legalizes forced sterilization 1907; 30 states follow
- Orphans, poor, epileptics, blind, deaf, "feebleminded"
- Supreme Court upholds 1927
 - "It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind...Three generations of imbeciles are enough." Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., in *Buck v. Bell*, 1927
- Continued through 1970's: 65,000 Americans
- 1927 *Buck v. Bell* ruling has never been overturned

20th Century

- Psychoanalytic theory
 - Mental disorders linked to childhood experiences
 - No longer inevitable
 - Opening years are critical
- Behaviorism
 - Conditioning & elimination of children's fears
 - Greater influence seen in environment
- Attachment theory
 - Effects of separations on infants during war
 - Importance of relationships

20th→21st Century

- Continued discovery of psychological disorders
 - 1962 Battered Child Syndrome
 - 1963 Learning Disability
 - 1971 Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
 - 1992 Asperger Syndrome
 - 1996 Executive Function Disorder
- Continued understanding of complex causes
 - Environmental toxins & developmental problems
 - Chemical compounds produced without demonstrating child safety first

Evolving Treatment Approaches

- **Through 1940's:** Institutionalization for intellectual & mental disorders
- **1945-1965:** Institutions decrease; foster/group homes increase
- **1950's & 60's:** Behavior therapy applications
- **1970's:** Social context approaches
- **2000's:** Evidence Based Treatment
 - Increasing focus on demonstrating efficacy of therapies but quacks persist

Evolving Rights

- **Pre-1975** Children can be excluded from public schools if too hard to educate
- **1975** Education for All Handicapped Children Act: All children entitled to a free, appropriate public education
- **1991** Americans with Disabilities Act: Access including College and Work
- Miles to go but we have come very far

The long reach of history

- The MA Stubborn Child Act of 1646 remained in effect until _____.
- A. 1673
B. 1773
C. 1873
D. 1973

20th Century



- Children as property
- Especially marginalized
- History does not change overnight

Developmental Psychopathology Approach

- How might development go awry?
 - Delay—progress slower
 - Regress—progress then go backwards
 - Asynchrony—progress not same across domains
 - Precocity (generally not a problem)—advanced
 - Deviant—developing along a different path
 - Adaptional Failure or Disability —Child not able to meet demands of environment, TWO components here: (1) child's capacity and (2) what the environment demands

Disorder v. Disability

- **Disorder** = underlying condition
 - Remediation by increasing person's capacity
- **Disability** = mismatch between demands of environment and capacity of individual, "adapational failure"
 - Remediation by fixing capacity or Altering environment
 - More options

Consider

- Dyslexia = genetic neurological condition
- Sally has dyslexia
 - Does she have a disorder?
 - Does she have a disability?



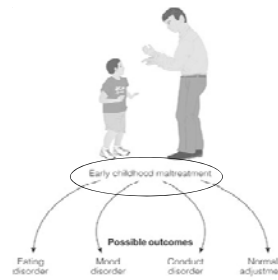
Developmental Psychopathology

- Approach to describing disorders of childhood and adolescence stressing the importance of developmental processes and tasks
- Trajectory or pathway of problem in context of development of child
- Not a simple classification; dynamic

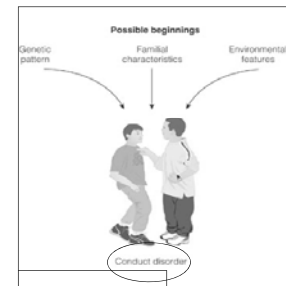
Developmental Pathways

- Sequence and timing of behaviors, and the relationship between them over time
 - Equifinality: different early experiences → similar outcome
 - Multifinality: similar early experiences → different outcomes

Multifinality



Equifinality



Multiply determined

- Many contributors to psychopathologies in each child
- Among children who show the disorder, contributors will vary
- Children express features of their disturbances in different ways
- Pathways leading to particular disorders are numerous and interactive

Risk & Resilience

Risk

- Variables that *increase the chance* negative outcome will occur
- Typically acute, stressful situations, but also chronic adversity
- Vulnerability
- Potentiating
 - Another factor → risk even greater

Risk

Known risk factors include

- Community violence & disasters
- Divorce/family break-up
- Chronic poverty
- Homelessness
- Parental psychopathology
- Perinatal stress

Probabilistic NOT deterministic

Resilience

- Avoiding negative outcomes *despite being at risk for them*
- Connected to resources & health-promotion
- Strengths of child, family, school, community
- Not a fixed attribute, but a process
- Children are not resilient, they experience resilience

How does Resilience work?

- Michael Rutter: Mechanisms
 - Reduce risk impact
 - Reduce negative cycles or “chain reactions”
 - Promote self esteem
 - Open opportunities
- Anne Matsen: “Ordinary Magic”
 - Everyday positive relationships

Risk/Resilience not absolute

- Characteristics not à priori one or other
- Level of match to context
- Capacities and demands of environment
- Tiger and Shark

