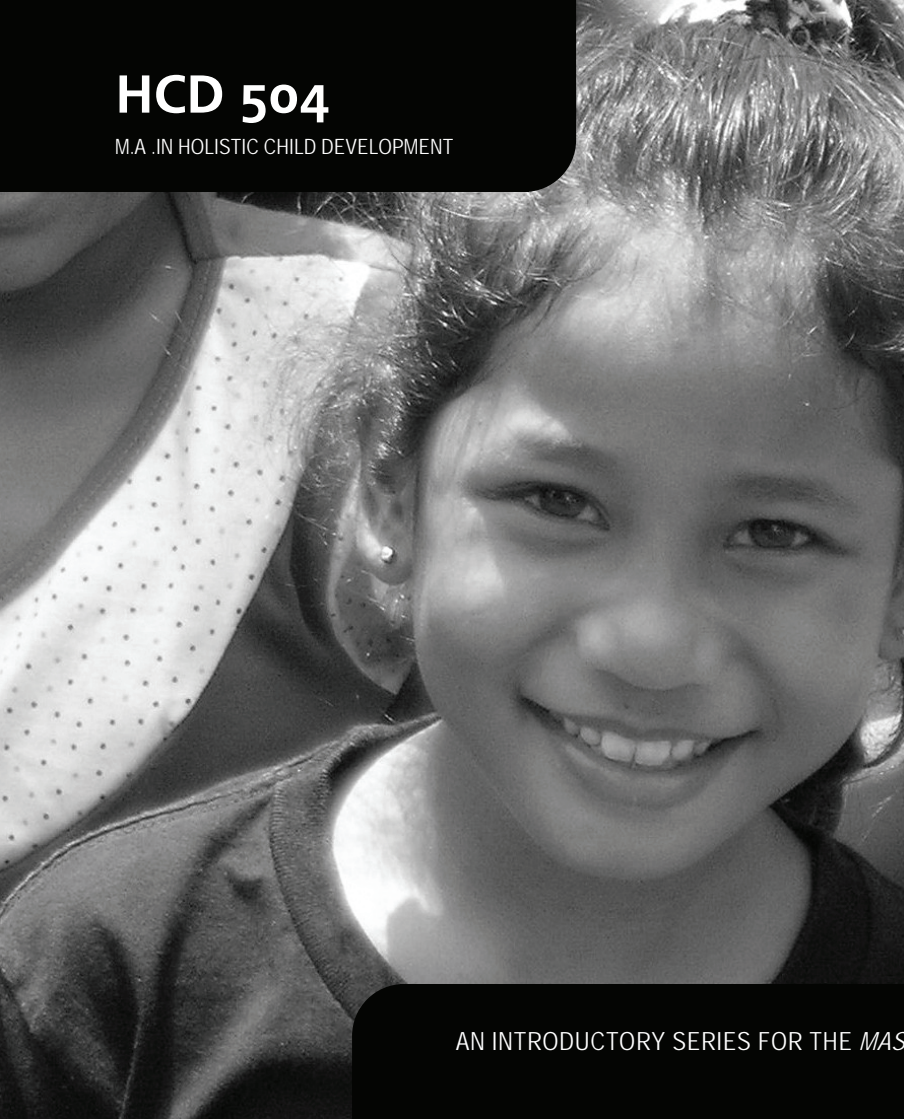


HCD 504

M.A. IN HOLISTIC CHILD DEVELOPMENT



Child Development & Functioning in Families and Communities

ROSALIND LIM-TAN

AN INTRODUCTORY SERIES FOR THE *MASTER OF ARTS IN HOLISTIC CHILD DEVELOPMENT* PROGRAM

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Glossary of Terms

HCD Curriculum is a plan for delivering the Master of Arts in HCD program at MBTS. The curriculum includes the teaching contents, standards, experiences, selection of teachers, students' competencies, and related teaching-learning issues.

HCD Syllabus is the teaching outline of an HCD course and contains statements of the teaching learning process, goals and objectives, study units, course requirements, assessment, etc.

HCD Study / Course Text contains the principal reading materials for the course. These materials can be in any form, i.e. hard-copies, electronic data, audio-visual references, etc.

HCD Study / Course Guide includes materials given to students to guide them through the learning process, e.g. outline of the lecturer's presentation, case studies, activities, question and answer sheets, etc.

HCD Introductory Series are books which introduce an HCD subject in a "nutshell". They are short commentaries on a particular HCD subject and each book contains the underlying teaching principle, a teaching outline, and bibliography.

Introduction

Children are the “most embracing evidence of the continuing work of a creative God” – Aleshire

Children are the “most embracing evidence of the continuing work of a creative God” (Aleshire, 1988, 91). Sofia Cavalletti wrote that in her forty five years of observing children, she has come to the conclusion that the children’s responses to God “transcend socio-economic factors, as well as geographical or cultural differences” (Cavalletti, 2000, viii). The children’s responses are constant and these “constants... are not sporadic or circumstantial; rather, they are indicative of deep, vital needs in the child...to the Christian message” (Ibid.). Aleshire and Cavalletti’s observations underlie the thinking for this course and that

is, children, in the image of their Creator (Gen. 1:27) are purposed to fulfil that given experience.

Thus, nurture of children is to facilitate them to further discover and experience the richness of their spiritual inheritance that God’s creativity becomes evident, that each child will grow in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and humankind. The question then to care-giving or advocacy for children is not why or when we should start the nurture process for that is obvious. But rather, how do we help children develop in ways that are evident of the workings of a creative God?

I believe the answer lies in the children themselves as they develop and function in their “natural habitat” – the homes and communities. The course *Child Development and Functioning in Families and Communities* in the HCD program seeks to address the nurture of children by understanding their development and the environment they live in. There are so many issues and perspectives that can be discussed about children’s growth but we will limit our discussion to the major child developmental theories and how we as Christians can respond with “best practices” in care-giving and advocacy.

Defining Child Functioning

“Child functioning” is a term popularly used in the late 1900s by developmental theorists in their writings. This term should not be confused with “functionalism” which is a version of behaviourism (see John Watson’s theory). The term came into being as developmental theorists paid more attention to the psychological aspects of children’s behaviour and concluded that the most viable way to understand children is to observe their behaviour (function), the way children develop and live in a given environment. Again, “child functioning” should not be confused with the definition assigned to machine functioning where responses are robotic and

programmed. Even then, many educational programs for children have been developed from the latter definition. Various definitions-in-use have actually caused confusion among some people who have chosen to shy away from using the term.

“Child functioning” is a positive term. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the word “function” as a position or action for which a person is specially fitted for in society. From this perspective, child functioning can be explained as the given position of the child, that is, as a son or daughter, student, playmate, relative, consumer, etc. Child functioning can also mean an

action – the child’s response to a given situation. Children function according to responses which make meaning to them. Whether it is a position or an action, the basis of definition is either a *child-person* correlation or a *child-event* correlation.

Scientific and empirical observations of childhood development and behaviour are formulated into what are known as “childhood developmental theories”. These developmental theories provide the scientific guidelines for observation and with every construct of a theory to explain development and nurture children there are underlying principles and behavioural perspectives that contribute to its unique function. My dissertation supervisor, Dr. Cynthia Dixon once said, “All truths are God’s truths and you should not be afraid to search deep into the theories, for

somewhere in that search you will find that God has been there before anyone else”.

In addition to knowledge of a theological foundation of childhood, HCD students who work with children or are in related ministries need to study developmental theories so that they can be more informed practitioners and advocates. A definition of child functioning from the HCD perspective consciously seeks evidences of the continuing work of a creative God either in the position or action of the children in our midst.. What does it mean for children to live, move and have their being in Jesus Christ? If the value of child development is in God as revealed in Jesus Christ, are children also called to offer themselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, transformed, and able to test and approve what God’s will is? Failing to do so, we will relegate the children and their development to mere functions - programmed and robotic.



The Theoretical Paradigms of Child Development

Developmental theories or thinking on human development has its beginnings with the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC) and thinkers ranging from St. Augustine (354-430), William Shakespeare (1564-1616) to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) have used this approach in describing and interpreting human experiences. While these thinkers intuitively expounded on life changes and the unique stages of human needs, it was only in the late 18th and early 19th centuries that human developmental theories were supported by scientific

research. Stanley Hall (1846-1924), an American psychologist is considered the founder of the child study movement.

Research into child studies has been able to identify nine theoretical paradigms for how children grow and function in their environment. Each of the nine theoretical paradigms emphasizes on a specific developmental focus in children and it is from these paradigms that the theories are developed.

1. *Biological Maturation*: During the early 1900s, the “baby biographies” method was used to study child development. Movements and responses of children from different age groups were analysed and formulated to become normative characteristics of how children grow. Biological maturation focuses on genetic and physiological elements which contribute to normative development in children. The general assumption is that there are certain developmental characteristics which are typically found in all children. Notable theorists in this category include Stanley Hall and Arnold Gesell (1880-1961).
2. *Behaviourism*: Behaviourism begun with Ivan Pavlov and his theory on classical conditioning. Later, John

- Watson (1878-1958) expanded on this theory. Watson proposed that instead of "abstract study" (psychology) on children's behaviour, child study should be based on the observable. Events which indicate stimuli and responses are not only evident but can also be modified. The various streams of behaviour modification are explained in Clark Hull's (1884-1952) *drive reduction theory* and B.F. Skinner's (1904-1990) *operant conditioning* or S-R bonds.
3. *Cognition Development*: The fore-runner of this theoretical paradigm is Jean Piaget (1896-1980). He worked on the assumption that children make sense of their environment through cognitive or logical thinking- skill patterns; and that children's thinking grow from abstract to concrete and is qualitatively different at each stage. Based on his observation of child functioning, Piaget proposed four stages in cognitive development of children. Each stage builds on the previous maturation level (hierarchical integration). Normative childhood development is to demonstrate expected age graded characteristics. Theories by Margaret Donaldson (1926- and Semenovich Vygotsky (1896-1924) have advanced Piaget's thinking in that children can do more than what Piaget proposed.
 4. *Information Processing*: A trend in cognitive psychology, information processing is the cognitive process where data is received, processed, transformed, stored and later retrieved for functioning (much like a computer system). The sensory and perceptual processes are not sequential and information received can move back and forth or overlap according to how the child uses the information. Children develop cognitively when there is *input* (received knowledge) and *output* (application) where "information is actively coded, transformed, and organized" (Santrock, 1997, 23).
 5. *Psychosocial Development*: This paradigm focuses on early childhood experiences as foundation for adult personality and behaviour (the past influences the present). Unresolved conflicts in childhood can contribute to emotional stress in later life. Each stage of human development has its unique challenges which must be positively resolved in order for the child to become a well-adjusted adult. The two prominent theorists in this category are Sigmund Freud

- (1856-1939) and neo-Freudian theorist, Eric Erikson (1902 - 1994)
6. *Evolutionary Psychology*: This paradigm has roots in Charles Darwin's theory that inherited behavioural patterns are essence for survival of future species. Evolutionary psychology is "a contemporary approach that emphasizes behaviour as a function of mechanisms, requires input for activation, and is ultimately related to successful survival and reproduction" (Santrock, 76). The study of inherited (social not genetic) behaviour patterns is termed *ethology* while *sociology* is the study of behaviour in a social group.
 7. *Social Learning*: Social learning informs us of the origins of children's behaviour and that children learn through observation and imitation of adults. The three key elements in social learning are: the child's cognitive maturation, the environment, and the object of imitation. Best known theorists in this field are Albert Bandura (1925-) and his experiment of the *Bobo Dolls* and Walter Mischel (1930-). Bandura observed that children acquire behavioural responses by watching and listening (imitation) to people. The cognitive level of the child will determine the extent of imitation.
 8. *Lifespan development*: Development is a process of growth from conception to death. "Life-span development seeks to explain the ways life events have influenced individual development ... such explanations are complex; lives themselves are complex. Human development is built on a biological foundation, shaped by genetic characteristics, structured by immediate events, and indirectly influenced by happenings that are external to the family... Interpretation of each event is dependent on prior interactions of all these factors" (Starr, 1990).
 9. *Developmental systems*: Multiple factors combined to steer child development. These factors form part of the ecological system where the child lives. The multiple strata of influences that link the child from home to immediate community to society at large is termed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-) as the ecological system. He suggests that this system consists of 5 environmental circles: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem which are interrelated by social agents.

Four Debates of Child Development

The above theoretical paradigms are not without their controversies. As theories, they are ideal hypothetical sets of propositions for child development derived from observation and research.

However, as developmental theorists worked through their hypotheses and practitioners validate the authenticity of these theories, four concerns become evident:

- Is childhood maturation determined by nature or nurture?
- Are key features of child development universal or context specific?

- Are aspects of child development continuous or discontinued?
- Are children active or passive subjects in the growth process?

Conclusions to these concerns will determine the kind of practices used in education and care of children. The concerns also prompted educators and child caregivers to strive for “developmentally appropriate practices”.

1) Nature or Nurture

The role of “nature” in child development refers to the inborn, genetic, or hereditary capacities of the child (genotype). The claim that child development is solely a work

of nature must be substantiated by evidences that childhood abilities are present in infants and it is through the course of time that these abilities unfold. “Nurture” is the process of deliberate care and shaping of the child’s personality and capabilities (phenotype). The question of nature or nurture in child development that is posed to caregivers is: What is the role of heredity and how does it compare with the role of nurture in the child’s development? Are the seeds of personality embedded in the innate potentials of the child?

Let us look at the list below and guess whether the characteristics/features are genetically inborn (nature) or socially nurtured.

Walking	Personality
Talking	Faith in God
Gestures	Temperament
Body shape	Giftedness
Hair color	Talent

All the above characteristics/features are part of being a person. Some characteristics/features such as body shape, hair color, giftedness, personality and temperament can be said to be *genotypes* (although science has made it possible to change the colour of one's hair and eye). Other characteristics like walking, talking, gestures, and faith in God are *phenotypes* – a result of heredity and nurture; where as talent is a nurtured skill.

The combination of nature and nurture in child development can be expressed in three separate categories:

- Passive genotype-environment interaction
- Evocative genotype-environment interaction
- Active genotype-environment interaction

a) Passive genotype-environment interaction

In passive genotype-environment parents genetically related to the child provide a nurturing environment that influences the child to “inherit” their habits. Think about the statements below:

- Children who love to read usually have parents who share the same interest.
- Musically inclined children usually have parents who are likewise.

The passive genotype-environment interaction hypothesis has been used in some countries as a gauge for marriage counseling and starting of families. The rationale is

that parents with positive traits are more likely to raise children who are likewise. One Asian country goes as far as to hint that highly educated parents breed highly educated children. This subject is a worthwhile topic for discussion.

b) Evocative genotype-environment interaction

In evocative-genotype environment it is the child's genotype characteristics that evoke responses from other people to create a particular social environment (Santrock, 92). Personality plays an important role in how other people view the child. For example,

- Smiling, babbling babies receive more attention than quiet babies.
- Extrovert-type children make more friends than introvert-type children.
- Children with choleric temperaments are more likely

to be voted as leaders than children who are phlegmatic.

c) Active genotype-environment interaction

In active genotype-environment the children seek out social environments that are compatible with their abilities. Children are more likely to indulge in leisure activities that suit their genotype characteristics. For example,

- Children who are interested in soccer often spent their leisures at the soccer fields or enjoy watching soccer matches.
- Teenage girls who enjoy shopping are more likely to hang out at the shopping malls.

These individuals seek out environments which cater to their interest and where they can express their personhood.

2) Continuous or Discontinuous

Development that is continuous considers the effect of cumulative experiences from infancy to childhood. The process of growth is gradual maturity, a smooth progress of growth, much like a seedling growing into an oak tree. Continuous development means that the child trod the same path except with greater capabilities. As such care-giving is to provide more of the same experiences so that the child can grow in quantitative skills.

Some characteristics of continuous growth are:

- The growth process has no schemas or stages.
- The growth process is smooth, transitioning from one characteristic to another.
- The growth process may not be chronologically ordered or sequential.

- The growth process is quantitative.

On the other hand, discontinuous development gauge the growth of children at different stages of maturity, each stage has its unique characteristics which identify it as “different”. The change from one stage to the next is a sign of maturation and is observable and normally indicates the chronological age of the child. An illustration of discontinuous development is like a caterpillar changing into a butterfly (Santrock, 19).

Some characteristics of discontinuous growth are:

- The growth process is defined by stages of development.
- Each developmental stage is qualitatively different.
- The stages or schemas of development are sequential and invariant, i.e. the process cannot be reverse.

- There is no deviation in the growth process.

How do we differentiate stage development from gradual increment? Below are some questions that can help us in the evaluation.

- Is the developmental change qualitative or quantitative?
- How many stages can you identify in the growth process?
- What dimension of development (cognitive, emotional, etc.) is it?
- Do the characteristics correlate to the age of the child?

Now test your understanding by applying the above questions to the examples listed:

- Is walking a continuous or discontinuous experience?
- Is speech a continuous or discontinuous experience?
- Is physical development a continuous or discontinuous experience?

- Is faith in God a continuous or discontinuous experience?

The issue in the continuous or discontinuous debate is not whether the child will grow. Children will grow whether one holds to the continuous or discontinuous theory. The term “child development” suggests that the experience is a process. However, children do not grow overnight to become adults and the stand taken by the caregiver will ultimately affect the way children are nurtured.

3) Universal or Context Specific

Most developmental theorists affirm that people experience developmental sequences and accomplishments that are both universal and context specific. The founders of the Child Study movement, Stanley Hall (1846-1924) and psychologists Arnold Gesell (1880-1961) proposed that heredity

and maturity (products of nature) leads to universality in development. Yet there are other theorists who argued that child development and its experiences are results of socio-cultural encounters in a unique geographical location and are context specific.

Child development that is universal means there are growth experiences which are typical of all developmental situations regardless of geographical location or culture of the child.

Context specific development refers to situations and encounters that result from a particular culture, experience, or geographical location. A child’s development is influenced by complex interactions with the environment and children’s experiences are not fundamentally the same. Each geographical location and culture has its own set of variables which

shape the development of personality.

Are differences in child development across cultures simply variations of a universal process or do development take different paths depending on the context? “Some theorists argue that despite what look like differences in development, there is only one fundamental developmental process for everyone” (Kail and Cavanaugh, 2007, 7). Some issues for thought are as listed:

- Do children all over the world grow in a predetermined order?
- Do children all over the world love to eat at the “Golden Arch”?
- Do children all over the world begin primary education at age six?
- Do children all over the world go through the same rites of passage?

Can you list some childhood characteristics that are either universal and context specific?

Most theorists are in the opinion that child development is both universal and context specific depending on the characteristic in question. Culture plays an important part to determine whether development is universal or context specific. Although the fundamentals of physiological development are the same for children everywhere, there are context specific experiences which shape each child’s identity. These experiences include the child’s racial identity, culture, language, and political and economic situations. Universality and context specific experiences in child development are issues discussed at length by socio-cultural theorists, e.g. Urie Bronfenbrenner and Semenovich Vygotsky.

4) Active versus Passive

Are children active participants in shaping their experiences, instinctively motivated to be active agents in their growth process or are they passive recipients (*tabular rasa*) of their environment? Do children have the ability to actively impose their thinking on the way they function? The traditional understanding of child functioning is that children are passive recipients who cannot initiate change for themselves. As such, the children receive knowledge in a rote manner. John Locke’s *tabular rasa* suggests that the minds of children at birth are “empty” (passive) and it is only through social experiences that the reality of ideas set in. “There are no innate ideas stamped upon the mind from birth. The ideas which sensation gives enter by the senses simple and unmixed; they stand in need of the activity of mind to bind them... for knowledge” (Bk. 2:2:1).

On the other hand, children as active participants can initiate responses, seek out opportunities, think for themselves, and incite change. Sofia Cavalletti differs from Locke in her understanding of children's agency and participation. Speaking in context of a faith relationship she said, "...the child brings to the relationship all the dignity of a true partner, of one who listens to the voice that calls him [or her] and takes delight in responding to it (Cavalletti, 2002, 9). Most contemporary caregivers and educators adhere to the perspective that children are active contributors to their environment and thus should be listened to.

An evidence of active agency of children is seen in the declaration of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which among other principles states that:

- Children have rights to be listened to, to freely express their views on all matters that affect them, and to freedom of expression, thought, association and access to information.
- Measures should be put in place to encourage and facilitate their participation in accordance with their age and maturity.
- Participation should promote the best interest of the child and enhance the personal development of each child.
- All children have equal rights to participation without discrimination.
- All children have the right to be protected from manipulation, violence, abuse and exploitation.

Relegating children as passive recipients of their environment is

one of the greatest limitations of their behaviour. Not all the theoretical paradigms mentioned earlier in this chapter agree to active children's agency. For example, the biological-maturation theory proposes that the position of children is a "given" and hence cannot be changed. The behavioural theories also view children as passive recipients, subjects that can be manipulated. However, "all contemporary theories view children as active, purposeful beings who make sense of their world and contribute substantially to their own development" (Berk, 2003, p. 12). Theories that do not view children's agency as active are "...antithetical to current conceptions of developmentally appropriate practices..." (Berk and Winsler, 1995).

Using Developmental Theories to Inform Nurture of Children

What do the four recurring concerns in child development inform us of caregiving and nurture?

First, developmental theories examine maturation across a broad range of human growth topics that include physical development, cognitive abilities, manipulative skills, social-emotional responses, language acquisition, moral understanding, and identity formation. These theories explain “the pattern of change that begins at conception and continues through lifespan ... a complex process of biological, cognitive, and

socio-emotional changes” (Santrock, 15). James MacDonald noted that,

... human beings construct models, paradigms, and myths which serve as interpretative frameworks to help limit, organize and act upon impressions... and developmental theories can help individuals understand, explore, and enhance the patterns by which they organize their meaning... so that they can create models to function with the biological and social world of human existence. (Cited in Seymour and Astley, 1982, 15.)

Second, development is a life-long process and the analysis is concerned with changes in the psychological functioning of adults as well as those occurring in childhood. Cole and Cole suggested that the change is probably due to evolving human culture and that developmental theories actually “offer insights into the development of developmental psychology itself, countering any simple interpretation of the discipline as straightforwardly progressive” (Cole and Cole, 6, 1993). Each theory provides a specific view of child development and no one theory is sufficient to explain the

entire phenomena of growth. Thus a theory "... is like a lens that brings certain phenomena into sharp focus but leaves other phenomena blurry or unrecognizable" (McDevitt and Ormrod, 2004, 18).

Third, development assumes that there is a regular pattern of upward growth and directional maturity in children and developmental theories reminds us that children have the potential for growth and at every point of development there are characteristics and abilities which differ from the previous. Knowledge of developmental theories helps caregivers ask the right questions in their practices and formulate personal goals and objectives for ministry.

Fourth, developmental theories provide a framework for educating children for spiritual growth. Knowing the growth process helps

the caregivers and educators place relevant learning experiences in their proper order. Developmental theories show that there are patterns of growth in every child and children should not be rushed through their development. To allow room for growth is to trust God to do his work in the child (Downs, 1994, 78).

However, a total dependence on developmental theories as the final judgement of a child's development can become an "anti-child" response. An "anti-child" response is when educators and caregivers use developmental theories to limit the children's performance or list a child as a "slow developer" when expected age grade developmental characteristics are not evident. Also developmental theories suggest that adults are "more" and children, "less". Moss stressed that "... if these different statements (theoretical proposals) are

reasonable and consistent with each other then a coherent stage theory may be detected. But it is the assumption of natural regularity that underpins the stage theory, not the reverse" (Moss, 1995, 49).

Developmental theories must be given its rightful place within the sciences of development and psychology. In recent years, Christian educators and caregivers have looked to developmental theories as guides to develop strategies for child nurture. The role of developmental theories is to understand and respect that children grow in their God-given design and are not *tabular rasa* (blank slates). A holistic approach to education and care-giving of children is to understand the presuppositions of the scientists and then to search deep into the theories, for somewhere in that search you will find that God has been there.

Summary

The HCD course *Child Development and Functioning in Families and Communities* taught at the Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary, Penang seeks to address the nurture of children by understanding their development from a Christian perspective. Efforts are made to: 1) define child functioning, 2) understand the four debates in child development, 3) know the theoretical paradigms of child development, and 4) use the developmental theories to inform nurture of children.

The underlying principle for teaching is that children, in the image of their Creator (Gen. 1:27) are purposed to fulfil that given

experience. From a Christian perspective, child functioning can be defined as the way children live, breathe and move according to their being in Jesus Christ. If we hold to Cavalletti's words that the "children's responses are indicative of deep, vital needs in the child... to the Christian message", then our concern as caregivers and advocates is to study these responses (child functioning) and reflect deeply on ways by which we can facilitate the responses in the "most embracing evidence of the continuing work of a creative God" – the children.

From a Christian perspective, child functioning can be defined as the way children live, breathe and move according to their being in Jesus Christ.

Appendix

A Teaching Syllabus for *Child Development & Functioning In Families & Communities*

Course Description	19	Units of Study	21
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course investigates relevant theories of child development that address the psychoanalytic, psychosexual, cognitive, behavioural, and social dimensions of growth. The course is taught in line with the understanding that children are created in the *imago Dei* and purposed to experience that reality. During the study, students will examine components of major developmental theories and make appropriate responses in view of Christian anthropology and ministry to children living in normal and difficult circumstances.

COURSE RATIONALE

This course was developed in line with one of the five competencies of the M.A. in HCD program:

... to examine relevant theoretical approaches to childhood, the impact of negative factors on child development, and to formulate appropriate intervention strategies for effective child functioning.

COURSE GOAL

The course goal is to help students understand the various paradigms in child development from a Christian perspective and to make appropriate responses to guide best practices in caring for children who are at risk.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, the students should be able to:

1. Explain how developmental theories help us to understand children.
2. List the four main debates in child development.
3. Explain child functioning from the Christian perspective of holistic child development.
4. Identify and discuss the six major theories of child development taught in the course.
5. Apply acquired knowledge to a research paper.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Class attendance	15%
Daily reflection papers 5 x 4	20%
Reading Log (800 pgs)	10%
Genogram	20%
Major paper	35%

Full class attendance is compulsory and the MBTS passing grade is 70%.

1. Requirements for the daily reflection

Students are to submit a two page reflection of the day's learning. The reflection paper should be a 'confession' of the student's experience in learning. The suggested frame for reflection is as shown below.

Having understood ... (name subject for the day) on child development and functioning, I, as a child advocate believe that God has intended children to ... (your convictions of child development as a Christian) and as such, my role in advocacy is ... (how are you going to respond as an advocate for children?)

2. Requirements for the Genogram

Write a 3-4 page account of the child nurturing practices in your family covering at least three generations

(grandparents, parents, and yourself). Compare the culture, family economic status, and major crisis that affected family wellbeing.

3. Requirements for the major paper

Write a 6-8 page, font 12, New Times Roman, double-space research paper on a topic related to the class discussion. Your paper must reflect 1) a specific context, 2) a people group, and 3) an issue of research. The bibliography should consist of at least five references. Your paper will be graded on factual research and appropriate application of the developmental theories learned in class.

Some examples of research topics are:

- Cognitive Development and Social Functioning of Street Children in Calcutta
- Correlation between Emotional Development and Stability of Relationships among Children of the Chin Tribe in Northern Thailand
- The Process of Decision Making in Moral Issues for Primary Aged Children in Papua New Guinea
- Filipino Culture as Agent for Formation of Youths in the *Barangay* of Luzon
- Gender Roles and Child Functioning among the *Dalit* Children in Uttar Pradesh, India

- f) Identifying Post Modern Trends of Aggression among Singaporean Youths

STUDY RESOURCES

Students will receive a study guide. This study guide consists of the course syllabus and power points for the lectures. As a course requirement, the students are expected to read 800 pages from the *Suggested Readings* and submit a reading log. Students can also opt to complete the reading requirements from other texts on child development.

METHODOLOGY

This course will employ various methods in the teaching-learning process. The morning sessions will begin with reflection and prayer. Course content will be delivered by lectures and audio visual presentations. Students will also learn through discussion, case studies, group presentations, and role plays.

THE LEARNING CONTRACT

As students enrolled in this course, you will:

- 1) Be part of the community of learners
- 2) Respect your colleagues and their opinions

- 3) Be open to new ideas
- 4) Be punctual for all sessions
- 5) Complete all assignments required for this course
- 6) Pray for the facilitator and yourself

As facilitator for this course, I will:

- 1) Be part of the community of learners
- 2) Respect the students' opinion and be open to suggestions
- 3) Be punctual for all sessions
- 4) Be well prepared to lead the class
- 5) Be fair in the grading and evaluation process
- 6) Pray for the students throughout the course

UNITS OF STUDY

The units of study are divided into three sections with a total of 12 topics. Each unit is approximately 2 ½ -3 hours of teaching-learning time.

- 1) Section One: Foundations for Thinking (Units 1-3)
- 2) Section Two: Developmental Theories and Child Functioning (Units 4-12)
- 3) Section Three: Conclusion – An Eclectic Approach to Child Development and Functioning

SECTION ONE

Foundations for Thinking

This section sets the foundation for thinking about child development and the limits for the course discussion. The three units of study in this section give us a background of the origins of developmental theories and their contribution to appropriate childcare practices. We will briefly look at a portion of history to see how children were treated, discuss the four debates in child development and clarify the definition of child functioning. Deriving a personal conviction along the learning process is helpful because ...

A theory of child development is like a lens through which we view children and their growth. The theory filters out certain facts and gives a particular pattern to those it lets in... (and) the theory chosen for interpreting facts about children determines the meaning assigned to those facts. (Murray, 2005, 4)

The three units of study in this section are:

- 1) Unit One – Childhood: A Modern Invention?
- 2) Unit Two – Four Debates in Child Development
- 3) Unit Three – Defining Child Functioning

UNIT ONE

CHILDHOOD: A MODERN INVENTION?

UNIT DESCRIPTION

Through history children and childhood have been defined and redefined by society's changing values. Each historical narrative is a component of a larger picture of the manner by which children have been viewed and treated; and together they are like a set of nested Russian dolls each revealing a little of the former. The discussion in this unit is confined to the development of childhood within a particular frame in church history.

UNIT GOAL

This unit of study helps students to be more aware of the presence of children by tracing the history of childhood in earlier Christian faith communities, the way these communities view children, and issues that dominated their concerns.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

- 1) Explain childhood as a “modern invention”.
- 2) List some issues that arose from children's presence in the three periods of church history discussed in class.

UNIT TWO

FOUR DEBATES IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

UNIT DESCRIPTION

Best practices in advocacy for children should be guided by both theological and theoretical reflections.

Developmental psychologists are often confronted by four debates relating to the course of development (nature or nurture), emergence of functions (continuity or discontinuity), experiences (universal or context specific), and children's agency (active or passive). The continual struggle to develop a holistic approach to child development demands that the advocate come to terms with the four main debates of how children grow.

UNIT GOAL

This unit of study investigates the four debates surrounding child development and provides guidelines for the students to draw their own conclusions on how children grow and function.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

- 1) Ask the four fundamental questions in child development and explain how each view affects the nurturing approach.
- 2) Justify a personal conclusion based on knowledge of the Scriptures.

UNIT THREE

DEFINING CHILD FUNCTIONING

UNIT DESCRIPTION

The definition for child functioning is normally explained from a solely developmental perspective. This view teaches that children are “make up” of five different domains of functions (physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual). A solely developmental perspective however tends to fragment thinking and behaviour of children and also hints that the “spiritual part” of the child is but one of the many components of personality. Therefore we need to formulate an alternative definition which will be in line with Christian thinking.

UNIT GOAL

This unit of study analyses various definitions of child functioning from developmental perspectives and derives a definition based on an integration of theoretical and theological arguments.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

- 1) Describe a normative child functioning process.
- 2) Explain the limitations of adopting a solely developmental view of child functioning.
- 3) Discuss the statement “seeing the spiritual in the developmental”.

SECTION TWO

Theories of Child Functioning

This section investigates several developmental theories to help us understand how children function. The theories (from the facilitator's viewpoint) are NOT binding and this will be the position that we take in this class. Bearing in mind that "all truths are God's truths", students are encouraged to think critically and analyse each theory and its application for meaningful ministry.

The nine units of study in this section are:

- 1) Unit Four – Psychosexual Development and Personality
- 2) Unit Five – Cognitive Development and Mental Competency
- 3) Unit Six – Emotional Development and Self Confidence
- 4) Unit Seven – Moral Reasoning and Altruism
- 5) Unit Eight – Attachment and Well Being
- 6) Unit Nine – Aggression and Social Behaviour
- 7) Unit Ten – Ecological Systems and Formation
- 8) Unit Eleven – Cultural Preferences and Gender Typing
- 9) Unit Twelve – Children and Play

UNIT FOUR

PSYCHOSEXUAL DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONALITY

UNIT DESCRIPTION

The psychosexual theory maintains that human behaviour and personality is a result of unaware motives and conflicts in the inner self. "Behaviour is merely a surface characteristic ... (of) the deep inner workings of the human mind" (Santrock, 36). Hence to understand why children function in particular manners we may have to look beyond the visible to the subconscious.

UNIT GOAL

This unit of study basically discusses Sigmund Freud's psychosexual theory and the implication that subconscious experiences in childhood can affect development of personality. Students will draw personal conclusions and make appropriate responses to care-giving.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

- 1) Briefly explain Freud's psychosexual stages of child development including the three levels of consciousness in functioning.
- 2) Discuss the implication that *repression is a defence mechanism children use to avoid confrontation with anxieties and fears.*

UNIT FIVE

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND MENTAL
COMPETENCY

UNIT DESCRIPTION

Cognitive development is the gradual and sequential process by which mental abilities and overall intelligence mature. Although new theories have developed in recent years to further explain cognitive development in children, the most well known cognitive theorist is Jean Piaget (although recently surpassed by Vygotsky).

UNIT GOAL

This unit of study explores Piaget's theory of cognitive development in children and discusses more recent research that further Piaget's viewpoint. The goal is for students to understand how children think and the qualitative differences at each stage of thinking.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

- 1) Discuss Piaget's "Three Mountain Problem" in light of Donaldson and Vygotsky's research.
- 2) Explain how cognitive development contributes to mental abilities in functioning.

UNIT SIX

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SELF
CONFIDENCE

UNIT DESCRIPTION

Emotional development addresses the feelings and attitudes of children and Erikson's theory suggests that childhood experiences influence adult personality. For this unit, we will concentrate on the *Eight Stages of Man*. Erikson built on Freud but proposed that positive personality is tied to crisis resolution instead of inner sexual drives.

UNIT GOAL

This unit of study explains Erik Erikson's psychosocial stages and guides the students to understand the correlation between emotional development (or non development) and crisis resolution.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

- 1) Identify significant events and social influences that can become risk factors in children's lives.
- 2) Compare Erikson's "Eight Stages of Man" with the Apostle Paul's confession, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*" (2 Cor. 5:17) *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me...* (Gal.2:20)

UNIT SEVEN

MORAL REASONING AND ALTRUISM

UNIT DESCRIPTION

Moral reasoning is the thinking process of right and wrong, ethical and unethical practices. Lawrence Kohlberg asserted that altruism and pro-social behaviour hinges on the level of moral reasoning; and children respond according to their cognitive maturity levels. Kohlberg's theory on the stages of moral development was developed by posing moral dilemma to children and gauging their judgement.

UNIT GOAL

This unit of study introduces Kohlberg's 3 levels in moral judgement and helps students to understand the basis of decision making in children that relates to moral issues and provides guidelines to facilitate pro-social behaviour.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

- 1) Discuss Kohlberg's moral developmental stages.
- 2) Identify some cultural issues which may affect the process of decision making in moral issues.
- 3) Apply Kohlberg's theory to a given case study.

UNIT EIGHT

ATTACHMENT AND WELLBEING

UNIT DESCRIPTION

This unit concerns attachment and the wellbeing of children. John Bowlby's theory will be investigated. He suggested that an infant's emotional tie to the parents or caregiver is an "evolved response" that promotes survival. He maintained "the psychoanalytic idea that the quality of attachment to the caregiver has profound implications for the child's feelings of security and capacity to form trusting relationships" (Santrock, 271).

UNIT GOAL

The unit goal is to understand the definitions of attachment and how attachment impacts child development, especially the emotional stability of children.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

- 1) Explain Bowlby's definition of "attachment".
- 2) Clarify how children can become emotionally detached in relationships.
- 3) Discuss the correlation between temperament and attachment. Define "social learning" or "social-cognitive learning".

UNIT NINE

AGGRESSION AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

UNIT DESCRIPTION

The intentional definition of aggression is: any action intended to harm or injure another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment. There are various explanations to aggression in children and these explanations can be derived from several developmental theories. Caplan's claim that "*the seeds of instrumental aggression have already been sown by the end of the first year*" is food for thought and discussion in this unit of study.

UNIT GOAL

This unit of study looks at various bases for hostile behaviour in children and identifies the elements that contribute to pro- social and antisocial behaviour.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

- 1) Explain various definitions of aggression.
- 2) List reasons of aggression in children.
- 3) Discuss Caplan's claim that "*the seeds of instrumental aggression have already been sown by the end of the first year*".

UNIT TEN

ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS AS AGENTS OF FORMATION

UNIT DESCRIPTION

Urie Bronfenbrenner explained that there are multiple social agents in the environment that impact child development. He argued that the environment from family to economics and structural governance are integrative parts of life which affect children and adults. "Each system sets the stage for the occurrence and the systematic study of developmental phenomena" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 17).

UNIT GOAL

This unit of study helps students to understand the interrelatedness of the environmental systems and variables that affect children's relationship with people, events, and their interpretation of experiences.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

- 1) Explain the family unit as a stabilizing factor for child functioning.
- 2) Discuss the importance of peer interaction and friendship for children's well being.
- 3) Highlight significant cultural agents for childhood formation.

UNIT ELEVEN
CULTURAL PREFERENCES AND
GENDER TYPING

UNIT DESCRIPTION

Gender typing helps children be aware of their roles in society and in turn contribute to pro-social functioning. But what if these traditional typecasts are no longer useful in the post modern society, or the assigned roles are found to limit one's development or are gender bias? How should we respond? How have these roles been redefined by societal needs and what are the consequences of such practices? The discussion in this unit addresses the above concerns.

UNIT GOAL

This unit of study examines different cultural preferences that contribute to gender typing and guides students to evaluate the validity of traditional social roles in a post modern society.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

- 1) Identify practices in one's culture that contribute to gender typing.
- 2) Discuss how culture determines gender roles and functioning.
- 3) Identify some issues that are results of post modern thinking on gender typing.

UNIT TWELVE
CHILDREN AND PLAY

UNIT DESCRIPTION

Traditionally, play is seen as an activity which children engaged in until they are old enough to work. Are there other perspectives to this thinking? In this unit we will investigate the nature and mystery of children's play and how it contributes to their wellbeing.

UNIT GOAL

This unit of study examines the different definitions of play and the processes that allow children to practice the social and living skills they will need as adults. Students will also learn how play allows children to find out ways to deal with people, things, and who and what they are themselves. And as the subject suggests, students in the class will also play.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

- 1) List the six categories of play.
- 2) Discuss how play contributes to children's social and living skills.
- 3) Clarify how cognitive maturation and physical development affects the play process.

SECTION THREE

Conclusion – An Eclectic Approach to Child Development and Functioning

Theories are guides to good practice and each theory contributes to understanding a specific dimension in child development. In recent years, most developmental theorists have come to agreement that no single theory is capable of explaining the complexity of child development and functioning. Relying on a single theory to explain child development limits one's perspective of understanding children and childhood. Hence child caregivers and advocates should take an eclectic approach to understand the children. Further, as a faith community we must also consider the Scriptural teachings on children and childhood.

In conclusion to our study on Child Development and Functioning in Families and Communities, students will summarize the theories and make applications of their learning to a specific case study of children who live under difficult circumstances, i.e. children who are at risk. Each student will submit a context-specific case study (major paper) that demonstrates an objective perspective of child development and functioning by analysing the risk factors, resilience characteristics, and

behavioural outcomes from a theological and theoretical approach.

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