**Instructor Guidance**

WEEK TWO

This week you will

1. Describe the role self-esteem plays during childhood.

2. Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of self-regulation in infancy and toddlerhood.

3. Examine how gender awareness impacts the socialization process.

4. Demonstrate an understanding of how peer groups help in the socialization process of infancy and toddlerhood.

5. Develop appropriate strategies for teachers and parents to utilize to build positive peer groups.

You may have studied the work of Piaget in earlier psychology or child development courses.  Jean Piaget had a very long career, beginning in the early 1900’s and continuing until his death in 1980.  The length and impact of his work is even more impressive when one considers that much of his research was conducted with his own children.  He studied them extensively from birth, and into adulthood.  Piaget’s theory of development is the basis for many of today’s child educational programs.

Erik Erikson’s professional career occurred over roughly the same time period as the research of Piaget.  Erikson studied child development as well but considered development over the entire life span of the human.   According to Erikson, an individual must successfully progress through each developmental stage by resolving specific conflicts.  Both Erikson and Piaget emphasized the relationship between specific developmental stages and interactions with the environment.    In this week’s first Discussion you will consider Erikson’s theory in the context of the “mean monkey”.  You may strengthen your response by comparing how the “mean monkey” would be explained by Piaget or other child development or learning theorists.  A variety of child development theories may be found at <http://www.education.com/reference/article/child-development-changing-theories/>

*Theory of Mind* considers the degree to which children can attribute what they think, feel, or do to themselves or to others.  It is the understanding that other people can have different thoughts, opinions, values, and beliefs than they have.   The ability to do this is achieved during normal child development, but can be either enhanced or inhibited by one’s environment and the people who are important in the life of a child.  In recent years research “theory of mind” research has focused on autism and the degree to which children who experience this challenge are able to develop normal levels of empathy.  An article that considers this issue relative to Asperger’s Syndrome may be found at <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/aspergers-diary/200805/empathy-mindblindness-and-theory-mind>

[www.utdallas.edu](http://www.utdallas.edu/)

Self-esteem is a critical part of child development.  Low levels of self-esteem result in hesitancy and a tendency to avoid risk taking behaviors.  Lacking confidence in themselves and a sense of their own identity, children with low self-esteem fail to explore the world and exercise their ability to influence the environment around them.  Instead they make choices focused on staying safe and comfortable.  In contract, children with high levels of self-esteem understand that trial and error is a healthy part of development.  They view failures as temporary set-backs that can be overcome with additional attempts.  Teaching a child to have high self-esteem requires one to have self-esteem.   Parents, teachers, and peers are critical influences in helping an individual to develop self-esteem.    Even the earliest experiences one can recall may be a factor in long term feelings of self-esteem.

Discussion Two will provide an opportunity to reflect and consider self-regulation.  The “marshmallow experiment” has been replicated many times, and the results seem to be consistent.  The ability to delay gratification is an important factor in long-term success.  If identified early, it is possible to help children to develop this skill.  However, even into adulthood there are many individuals who find it impossible to make short-term sacrifices so that long-term benefits may results.

Gender identity is a particularly critical part of human development.  This week you will consider how one’s parent may support or hinder appropriate growth in this area.  Perhaps you are aware of examples of high profile celebrities who have struggled with gender identity issues.  For example, Chastity Bono chose to change her gender to male and is now living his life as Chaz.  The complexities and importance of healthy gender development have only in recent years become more understood as it has been increasingly apparent that that some experience significant trauma related to this issue.  You can read about understanding the concept of gender along continuum at <https://www.genderspectrum.org/understanding-gender>

Peers become an increasingly powerful influence as children approach adolescence.  This week’s written assignment will ask that you consider how parents, teachers, and others can either support or interfere with healthy peer relationships.  It can be tempting for an overly protective parent to impose too many restrictions on a growing adolescence, or at least that is how it is often perceived by such youth.  Finding the appropriate level of structure that allows for the needed independence and experimentation without exposing a younger person to great risk or harm is not easy.   It is often a series of trial and errors, conflicts and misunderstandings, and even regrets.  But even that is part of the natural and normal development of healthy maturity.  Through this process children begin the necessary process of creating greater autonomy from their parents.  A failure to do this may result in long-term dependency and over reliance on one’s family, even into later adulthood.  What began in early childhood as an understanding of one’s self as distinct from others matures as an adolescent comes to create and live consistently with his or her own values, beliefs, and goals.  Peers seem to be the major area of focus during adolescence, as they define the characteristics of their own generation.  Many of you may remember this period of your life as particularly traumatic and emotional.  But over time as one moves further into adulthood, there may be an appropriate migration back to family.  The ebb and flow of dependence, independence, and eventually interdependence allow the individual to define themselves and obtain needed self-esteem to be a healthy and contributing member of society.

As you complete this week’s assignments, reflect on your own experiences.  Connect what you learn from the required and optional resources with examples from your life.  This will demonstrate not only that you understand the material, but that you can apply and generalize it.

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| **Overview Assignment**  | **Due Date**  | **Format**  | **Grading Percent**  |
| The Theory of Mind  | Day 3 (1st post)  | Discussion  | 3  |
| Self-Regulation  | Day 3 (1st post)  | Discussion  | 4  |
| Week Two Quiz  | Day 6  | Quiz  | 2  |
| Gender Issues  | Day 7  | Journal  | 2  |
| Influence of Peers  | Day 7  | Assignment | 8   |