

1.1.1

Approved Learning Framework



Critical Reflection

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- **developmental theories** that focus on describing and understanding the influences on, and processes of children’s learning, development and wellbeing over time. Describe a time, or an experience when working with children that has made you think that you need to critically reflect from a development perspective.

What development theorist could help you think deeply about your above description. You might like to look at:

- **Sigmund Freud The Psychoanalytic** approach emphasised the importance of unconscious motivations, emotional conflicts, and early experiences for shaping personality and behaviour.
- **Erik Erikson Psychosocial theory** emphasis on social influences such as peers, schools and culture. In effect, Erikson’s approach breaks development across the life-span into eight psychosocial conflicts stages that are driven by both nature and nurture.
- **John B. Watson’s Learning Theory.** "Give me a dozen healthy infants, well formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in, and I’ll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select – doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant, chief, and yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors."
- **B.F. Skinner Behavioural learning theory.** Operant Conditioning is a form of learning where behaviours become more or less probable depending on the consequences they produce. So, this theory works on the logic whereby an initial action or behaviour is associated with the positive or negative consequences that follow it.

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- **Albert Bandura Social cognitive theory.** Bandura’s social cognitive theory suggests that human development involves the individual actively shaping their surroundings (nurture) according to what they observe as rewarded behaviours of other people (observational learning). One example is that children will exhibit increased aggression when watching violent acts on television.
- **Jean Piaget Cognitive Developmental Theory** explains that development is driven by humans independently construct new understandings of the world by exploring their surroundings. By observing that children of similar age make similar errors, Piaget rationalised that humans progress through four distinct biological stages of cognitive development
- **Urie Bronfenbrenner, The Ecological Model** emphasises the roles of both nature and nurture is the Ecological Model of Urie Bronfenbrenner. Urie’s model focuses on the developing person as they interact with a series of environmental systems which include the Microsystem, setting in which the individual lives; Mesosystem, the relations between microsystems; Exosystem, the 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.

Would any of the theories above help you better understand what you describe above in the first box? If so how.

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- **Socio-cultural theories** that emphasise the central role families and cultural groups play in children’s learning and the importance of respectful relationships and provide insight into social and cultural contexts of learning and development. Describe a time, or an experience when working with children that has made you think that you need to critically reflect from a **socio-cultural** perspective.

What **socio-cultural theories** could help you think deeply about your above description. You might like to look at:

Vygotsky Sociocultural Theory follows the idea that development is driven by humans constructing new understandings of the world through social interactions with others. Vygotsky argued that cognitive development is shaped by the sociocultural context in which it occurs and grows out of children’s interactions with members of their culture (Vygotsky, 1934/1962, 1935/1978). According to this approach culture provides its members with certain tools of thought which are used to solve problems. These tools are passed from generation to generation via culturally embedded language (oral and written communication) which ultimately shapes the thoughts of those immersed in it. According to Vygotsky, this is the reason that cognitive development is not the same universally, as it is contextualised socially and historically. Vygotsky believed children were active in their development and he saw them as social beings who develop their minds through guided participation in culturally important activities.

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- **Practice theories**, such as affordance theory that asks educators to think, for example, about the possibilities for activity that the physical environment offers children. Describe a time, or an experience when working with children that has made you think that you need to critically reflect from a **practice theories** perspective.

What **practice theories** could help you think deeply about your above description. You might like to look at:

Affordance Theory (J. J. Gibson) - American psychologist James Jerome Gibson was influential in changing the way we consider visual perception. According to his theory, perception of the environment inevitably leads to some course of action[1][2]. Affordances, or clues in the environment that indicate possibilities for action, are perceived in a direct, immediate way with no sensory processing. Examples include: buttons for pushing, knobs for turning, handles for pulling, levers for sliding, etc.

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- **Ancestral knowledges** are ways of knowing and understanding shared through history and culture, in the written, oral and spiritual traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Describe a time, or an experience when working with children that has made you think that you need to critically reflect from an **Ancestral knowledges** perspective.

Could **Ancestral knowledges** help you think deeply about your above description. You might like to look at:

First Nations learning and memory systems could be used and how they connect to newer research in psychology.

If you could not write, read a book, or search the web how would you be able to remember and find information? Pre-colonial Australian Indigenous languages systems had no alphabet or writing as we know it. However vast amounts of knowledge for living, survival and law was memorised by using the landscape and rituals. This system is known today as “songlines” and modern psychology studies of embodied cognition are finding many similarities.

Bruce Chatwin (1988) first described how Indigenous language and song are coded with cultural rituals, initiations, stories, dance, and landscape in the ‘songlines’ process. Songlines are used as a map to move from location to location without getting lost and are a form of travel writing, where the surrounding environment is mapped into the physical body and mind through a person’s five sensors (Morrison, 2018).

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Movement in the landscape is one important part of the memory system as the different locations and features are used as to storage device for memory (Kelly, 2015).

Lynne Kelly (2016) has looked closely at how the location and rituals are used to both learn and memorise information needed for survival. She has identified that rituals represent the knowledge needed to survive and these rituals are location specific.



For example, the kangaroo dance has two types of characters, the kangaroo, and the hunters. Within the dance is all the information needed to successfully hunt a kangaroo in that location. The people playing the kangaroo know the exact details of the ear movement of the kangaroo that will tell the hunter if they have been detected by the kangaroo, which means don't waste your time and energy to go after them. The dance is a "how to" instruction book, but instead of reading it, you dance it.

Tyson Yunkaporta (2019), an Indigenous man who has written extensively on traditional knowledge, says the rituals are well crafted codes that are structured and repeatable. They are taught by Elders to the younger members of the community through initiation ceremonies and Lynne Kelly has also been told by Elders that it can take up to forty years to learn all the songlines and rituals of an Indigenous Nation.

Image 1: Tarelle Jones and Leroy Jones in character as the hunter and kangaroo. Wilcannia, NSW. Photographer, Matthew Stapleton (2017).

Psychologists who study embodied cognition are very interested in the Songline processes. They are discovering how people learn from the interaction with their body and the physical environment and how these are connected to our cognitive or mental processes (Barsalou, 2008). When we learn by adding movement, the better we can recall what we have learnt compared to when we have just read or heard it (Kubik, Söderlund, Nilsson, & Jönsson, 2014). This process is called enactment, and significant improvements in learning, thinking, memory and problem-solving are gained when use our whole body and the physical environment as a learning device (Glenberg, 2013).

Myrto Mavilidi (2019), an educational psychologist has been exploring these ideas of enactment with four year old children and can show that movement along with singing and the use of images can improve learning and memory. She tested these ideas across a range of learning domains; language, maths, science, and the children in the groups that used this enactment process improved significantly compared to the children who did not.

Songlines and the enactment process use a holistic whole of body five sensors approach. The similarities are striking, and both could potentially be used as an effective teaching strategy to revitalise Indigenous languages and enhance learning of traditional western knowledge.

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- **Place-based sciences** that foster community connections in ways that build on local (children, families, communities and educators) funds of knowledge (experiences and understandings) that assist in building thriving learners and communities. Describe a time, or an experience when working with children that has made you think that you need to critically reflect from a **Place-based sciences** perspective.

Could **Place-based sciences** help you think deeply about your above description. You might like to look at:

John Dewey (1859–1952) included place-based knowledge as an essential part of his Progressive curriculum. According to Dewey: From the standpoint of the child, the great waste in the school comes from his inability to utilize the experiences he gets outside the school in any complete and free way within the school itself; while on the other hand, he is unable to apply in daily life what he is learning in school. That is the isolation of the school—its isolation from life. When the child gets into the schoolroom he has to put out of his mind a large part of the ideas, interests and activities that predominate in his home and neighbourhood. So the school being unable to utilize this everyday experience, sets painfully to work on another tack and by a variety of [artificial] means, to arouse in the child an interest in school studies. . . . [As a result there is a] gap existing between the everyday experiences of the child and the isolated material supplied in such large measure in the school. (1956, pp. 75–76)

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- **Critical theories** that invite early childhood educators to challenge assumptions about curriculum, and consider how their decisions may affect children differently. Describe a time, or an experience when working with children that has made you think that you need to critically reflect from a **Critical theory** perspective.

Could **Critical theories** help you think deeply about your above description. You might like to look at:

- Critical theories aim to change and critique society as a whole by finding the underlying assumptions in social life that prevent people from participating in a “true democracy.”
- Critical Theory developed in the Frankfurt school from scholars such as Horkheimer and Adorno with an emphasis on examining and deconstructing fascism and mass media.
- Habermas continued the tradition of Critical Theory through his notion of the lifeworld and the public sphere. He theorized that political and economic institutions had invaded public life, leading to a lack of nuance in discourse and preventing people from participating in a “real democracy.”
- Critical Theory morphed into critical legal theory in the latter 20th century, which eventually gave rise to branches such as critical race and critical gender theory.
- Critical theories of gender are concerned with the ways in which literature and other cultural media reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of people of various genders.

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- **Feminist and post-structuralist theories** that offer insights into issues of power, equity and social justice in early childhood settings. Describe a time, or an experience when working with children that has made you think that you need to critically reflect from a **feminist and post-structuralist theories** perspective.

Could **Feminist and post-structuralist theories** help you think deeply about your above description. You might like to look at:

- A feminist post-structuralist perspective offers an alternative paradigm for the study of gender bias in History texts. It focuses on multiple perspectives and open interpretation, opens up space for female voices of the past and present, and deconstructs realist historical narrative.
- Poststructuralism encourages a way of looking at the world that challenges what comes to be accepted as 'truth' and 'knowledge'. Poststructuralists always call into question how certain accepted 'facts' and 'beliefs' actually work to reinforce the dominance and power of particular actors within international relations
- You might be thinking that **truth is truth**. It’s objective. Things are either true or they aren’t. **Poststructuralists would disagree**. They think truth is up for debate: your truth and my truth may be completely different. To use a simple example: a Hindu and a Christian have fundamentally different ideas about whose god is real. These two people have different ideas about the ‘truth’. Now extend that debate out to other debates like climate change (man-made or natural?), evolution, historical recounts of wars and the settlement (or colonization?) of the new world, homosexuality (sin or not?), and so on.

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- So, who determines **what we teach as the ‘true’ account** of each of these things in early childhood?

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