

A Snapshot of Early Development

Amy Wagenfeld, PhD, OTR/L, SCEM, FAOTA

STORIES FROM PRACTICE

Many years ago, I worked in an outpatient pediatric clinic in the South. One of my patients was an infant who had been severely injured in a car accident. Mom was a young single woman. She was black and poor. I clearly recall working with Lilla late one afternoon, several months into our time together. It must have been a tiring session for Lilla because she had fallen asleep on the mat after we had finished our last activity. Mom and I were quietly resting on the mat for a few minutes while we let Lilla nap. Although we had always talked throughout Lilla's sessions, conversation was instructional, always focused on Lilla and ways that Mom could carry over what we had done in therapy at home. This time, Mom initiated a conversation that continues to haunt me, nearly 3 decades later. She said to me, "Amy, you are not like other white people." I must have looked shocked (I certainly was), because I simply said, "Whatever do you mean?" Mom replied, "You listen to me and treat me like a human being. You don't look down your nose and me, and you treat me with respect." To which I said to Mom, "This is both the kindest thing and the most horrible thing I have heard." To be treated with disrespect for being young, poor, and black is simply wrong, in every sense.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- Recognize and identify the basic premises of psychoanalytical, social-cognitive, ecological, information processing, learning, and humanistic theories of development.
- Discuss the processes associated with typical development.
- Understand the basic principles of motor, cognitive, and social-emotional development.
- Recognize the contexts and role of the occupational therapy assistant associated with facilitating developmental skills with young children.

INTRODUCTION

Recognizing and embracing each child's individuality is one of the most exciting aspects of pediatric occupational therapy practice. Although developmental theories and occupational modalities provide the basic framework for pediatric service delivery, respecting a child's unique and diverse qualities is also a crucial part of successful client-centered intervention. In essence, there is no (and should be no) cookie-cutter prescriptive approach to working with children and their families. To best adapt to the ever-changing, unique, and rewarding challenges presented by all children, understanding developmental processes is