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Module Overview



Biological and Cognitive Foundations

Biological and Cognitive Factors

The biological basis of development allows students to understand behavior from a different perspective. These ideas confronted a long-established belief that behavior and, more importantly, pathology (mental illness) were based on mental processes only. For instance, according to Sigmund Freud, concepts of psychoanalysis are mainly based on people's experiences and not biological constructs. Freud developed the concepts of id, ego, and superego, which had little to do with neurochemistry and brain processes. As technology and understanding of the brain and its functioning improved, so did the knowledge about the perspective that development has a biological or, more precisely, a neurochemical basis.

In the book *Teaching About Adolescence*, Lawrence Shelton (1998), drawing from the work of Astin (1993), posited, "cognitive development in the college years is fostered by courses that emphasize scientific inquiry, the development of writing skills, and interdisciplinary approaches" (p. 4). Lawrence goes on to suggest that courses on adolescent development, in contrast to courses in child development or lifespan, offer unique opportunities for students to obtain an understanding of their own formal thinking.

Piaget's theory of formal operations explains many cognitive changes between pre-



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