

# DSST Lifespan Developmental Psychology Practice Exam (Sample)

## Study Guide



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## **Questions**

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- 1. Projection as a defense mechanism is best described as:**
  - A. Suppressing emotions until they surface**
  - B. Expressing feelings proactively**
  - C. Transferring your thoughts and feelings onto others**
  - D. Creating rational explanations for behavior**
- 2. What development stage occurs from conception until the fetus is fully developed?**
  - A. Embryonic stage**
  - B. Fetus period**
  - C. Postnatal period**
  - D. Neonatal stage**
- 3. Who is credited with developing the concepts of fluid and crystallized intelligence?**
  - A. Howard Gardner**
  - B. Raymond Cattell**
  - C. Jean Piaget**
  - D. Albert Bandura**
- 4. What is it called when a person believes they will fail and therefore does not attempt a task?**
  - A. Learned helplessness**
  - B. Self-doubt**
  - C. Motivational decline**
  - D. Cognitive dissonance**
- 5. What is NOT a factor of psychosocial health?**
  - A. Emotional well-being**
  - B. Social support**
  - C. Physical health**
  - D. Mental health**

- 6. What is preconventional morality based on?**
- A. Social contracts and individual rights**
  - B. Universal ethical principles**
  - C. Obedience and punishment**
  - D. Interpersonal relationships**
- 7. How is humanism best described?**
- A. As the belief that people are inherently good**
  - B. As a psychological theory focusing on abnormalities**
  - C. As an approach primarily concerned with social behavior**
  - D. As a belief in strict determinism**
- 8. What does the psychoanalytical approach emphasize?**
- A. Actions are based on observable behavior**
  - B. Actions are influenced by unconscious motivations**
  - C. Actions are determined by cognitive processes**
  - D. Actions are shaped through conditioning**
- 9. What cognitive abilities are evident during the period of concrete operations?**
- A. Symbolic play**
  - B. Abstract reasoning**
  - C. Logical thought and multiple classification tasks**
  - D. Egocentric speech**
- 10. According to Freud, at what age does the phallic stage occur?**
- A. 2-3 years old**
  - B. 3-6 years old**
  - C. 6-12 years old**
  - D. 0-2 years old**

## **Answers**

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1. C
2. B
3. B
4. A
5. C
6. C
7. A
8. B
9. C
10. B

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## **Explanations**

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**1. Projection as a defense mechanism is best described as:**

- A. Suppressing emotions until they surface**
- B. Expressing feelings proactively**
- C. Transferring your thoughts and feelings onto others**
- D. Creating rational explanations for behavior**

Projection as a defense mechanism involves individuals attributing their own unacceptable thoughts, feelings, or motives to someone else. This mechanism allows a person to externalize their internal conflicts and anxieties, enabling them to deal with uncomfortable emotions by placing them onto others. For example, if someone feels angry but cannot acknowledge that anger within themselves, they might accuse others of being angry or hostile instead. This helps them avoid facing their own emotions directly. In contrast, the other choices describe different psychological processes. Suppressing emotions until they surface refers to avoidance or repression rather than projection, where an individual consciously tries to ignore or mask their feelings. Expressing feelings proactively highlights a healthy communication of emotions, which does not involve misattributing them to others. Creating rational explanations for behavior pertains to rationalization, where a person justifies their actions without necessarily deflecting feelings onto others. Overall, projection specifically involves misattributing one's own feelings to another, making it a distinctive and recognizable defense mechanism.

**2. What development stage occurs from conception until the fetus is fully developed?**

- A. Embryonic stage**
- B. Fetus period**
- C. Postnatal period**
- D. Neonatal stage**

The correct choice is the fetus period, which refers to the stage of development that occurs after the embryonic stage and lasts until birth. During this time, the developing organism is referred to as a fetus, and significant growth and maturation happen. The fetal period is characterized by the development of bodily structures, refinement of the organ systems, and overall physical growth that prepares the fetus for life outside the womb. This stage generally encompasses roughly the second trimester (week 13) through the end of the pregnancy. The embryonic stage occurs prior to the fetal period, lasting from conception through the eighth week of pregnancy, during which the foundational structures and major organ systems begin to form. The postnatal period refers to the phase following birth, focusing on development after the neonate is born. The neonatal stage specifically pertains to the time immediately after birth to around two weeks of age, concentrating on the transitional adjustments a newborn must make outside of the womb. Thus, the fetus period accurately captures the timeframe from conception through full fetal development just before birth.

**3. Who is credited with developing the concepts of fluid and crystallized intelligence?**

- A. Howard Gardner**
- B. Raymond Cattell**
- C. Jean Piaget**
- D. Albert Bandura**

The concepts of fluid and crystallized intelligence were developed by Raymond Cattell. Fluid intelligence refers to the ability to reason and solve new problems independently of any knowledge from the past, while crystallized intelligence involves the ability to use knowledge that was previously acquired through experience or education. Cattell proposed that these two types of intelligence operate differently and are influenced by different factors, such as age and cultural background. In contrast, Howard Gardner is known for his theory of multiple intelligences, which outlines various ways people can demonstrate intellectual capabilities beyond traditional notions of IQ. Jean Piaget focused on cognitive development during childhood, exploring how children understand and interact with the world as they grow, which is unrelated to the concepts of fluid and crystallized intelligence. Albert Bandura is famous for his work on social learning theory, emphasizing the role of observational learning, imitation, and modeling in behavior, which also does not relate to the distinction between fluid and crystallized intelligence. Thus, understanding who pioneered these specific theories helps in grasping the broader landscape of cognitive psychology.

**4. What is it called when a person believes they will fail and therefore does not attempt a task?**

- A. Learned helplessness**
- B. Self-doubt**
- C. Motivational decline**
- D. Cognitive dissonance**

The concept being described is best identified as learned helplessness. This psychological phenomenon occurs when an individual perceives they have no control over their situation, leading them to believe that their efforts are futile. As a result, they may become passive and fail to attempt tasks, assuming they will not succeed regardless of their actions. This mindset can stem from past experiences of failure that diminish their confidence and motivation. In the context of the question, learned helplessness illustrates a significant barrier to performance and achievement. It highlights how negative beliefs about one's abilities can inhibit action, reinforcing a cycle of failure and inaction. This understanding is crucial in developmental psychology, as it demonstrates the impact of belief systems on behavior and mental health. The other options relate to different psychological concepts. Self-doubt involves uncertainty about one's abilities but does not necessarily lead to inaction. Motivational decline describes a general decrease in motivation, which may not be specifically linked to a belief in failure. Cognitive dissonance refers to the discomfort one feels when holding conflicting beliefs, which doesn't directly address the phenomenon of not attempting a task due to a belief in failure. Understanding these distinctions helps to clarify why learned helplessness is the most fitting answer in this scenario.

## 5. What is NOT a factor of psychosocial health?

- A. Emotional well-being
- B. Social support
- C. Physical health**
- D. Mental health

Psychosocial health encompasses various interrelated factors that contribute to a person's overall well-being, specifically how psychological and social aspects affect mental health and emotional states. Emotional well-being refers to how individuals manage their feelings and cope with stress, which is vital in contributing to psychosocial health. Social support involves the networks of family, friends, and community that provide emotional assistance and help mitigate stress, again tying back to psychosocial health. Mental health is another crucial component, encompassing cognitive and emotional functioning. It involves conditions such as depression and anxiety, which directly impact how individuals perceive and react to the world around them. In contrast, physical health pertains primarily to bodily functions and the absence of disease or illness. While physical health is certainly important and can influence psychosocial health indirectly (for instance, illness can affect emotional well-being or social interactions), it is not classified under psychosocial health itself. Hence, the correct choice is indeed physical health, as it does not fall within the psychosocial domain's psychological or social aspects.

## 6. What is preconventional morality based on?

- A. Social contracts and individual rights
- B. Universal ethical principles
- C. Obedience and punishment**
- D. Interpersonal relationships

Preconventional morality, as outlined in Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development, is primarily centered around direct consequences and individual needs. This stage reflects a focus on obedience to authority and the avoidance of punishment. Individuals at this level make moral decisions based on how actions will be perceived by those in power and the immediate outcomes of their behavior, often asking questions such as "Will I be punished?" or "What will I gain from this?" In this context, the notion of obedience and punishment captures the essence of preconventional morality, where moral reasoning is dictated by an individual's own experiences and the potential repercussions of their actions rather than broader societal norms or ethical principles. The emphasis on personal gain and the fear of punishment highlights a developmental stage characterized by a simplistic and egocentric understanding of right and wrong. Thus, the correct answer reflects the foundational aspects of how people reason about morality at this early stage, focusing on consequences rather than abstract principles or social contracts.

## 7. How is humanism best described?

- A. As the belief that people are inherently good**
- B. As a psychological theory focusing on abnormalities**
- C. As an approach primarily concerned with social behavior**
- D. As a belief in strict determinism**

Humanism is best described as the belief that people are inherently good. This perspective emphasizes the intrinsic value and potential of individuals, asserting that, given the right conditions, people will strive for self-actualization and personal growth. Humanistic psychology focuses on individual experience and the subjective nature of human existence, fostering the idea that people can choose to improve themselves and lead fulfilling lives. Key proponents of this approach, such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, underscored the importance of personal agency, self-reflection, and the pursuit of meaningful experiences. By viewing individuals as fundamentally good, humanism emphasizes nurturing positive aspects of human nature rather than merely addressing dysfunction or pathology, which is often the focus of other psychological theories. In contrast, the other options suggest different psychological frameworks or beliefs that do not align with the central principles of humanistic thought. For instance, a psychological theory focusing on abnormalities would not emphasize the inherent goodness of individuals, while an approach primarily concerned with social behavior would prioritize social contexts over individual potential. Likewise, a belief in strict determinism is contradictory to humanism, which values personal choice and autonomy in shaping one's life.

## 8. What does the psychoanalytical approach emphasize?

- A. Actions are based on observable behavior**
- B. Actions are influenced by unconscious motivations**
- C. Actions are determined by cognitive processes**
- D. Actions are shaped through conditioning**

The psychoanalytical approach, founded by Sigmund Freud, centers on the idea that human behavior is largely influenced by unconscious motivations and conflicts. According to this perspective, many of our feelings, thoughts, and actions are driven not by conscious choices, but by underlying unconscious forces that can include repressed memories, desires, and instinctual drives. Freud proposed that early childhood experiences play a crucial role in shaping these unconscious influences, which can affect behavior throughout a person's life. This approach contrasts with other psychological theories, such as behaviorism, which focuses on observable behavior and the influence of the environment, and cognitive psychology, which emphasizes mental processes such as thinking and reasoning. The psychoanalytical view highlights the importance of exploring these underlying, often hidden motivations to truly understand an individual's behavior. Through techniques like dream analysis and free association, psychoanalysts aim to bring these unconscious thoughts to the conscious mind, providing insight into the person's actions and emotional responses. By emphasizing unconscious motivations, the psychoanalytical approach provides a unique lens through which to understand human behavior and personality development.

**9. What cognitive abilities are evident during the period of concrete operations?**

- A. Symbolic play**
- B. Abstract reasoning**
- C. Logical thought and multiple classification tasks**
- D. Egocentric speech**

During the period of concrete operations, typically occurring between the ages of 7 and 11, children demonstrate significant advancements in cognitive abilities that enhance their understanding of the world around them. One of the hallmark features of this developmental stage is the ability to think logically about concrete events and objects, which allows them to perform tasks that require logical reasoning. Logical thought during the concrete operational stage includes the ability to understand concepts of conservation, where children realize that quantities remain the same even when their shapes change. They can also apply logic to classify objects according to multiple dimensions, engaging in multiple classification tasks where they can group items based on several characteristics simultaneously, such as color, shape, and size. This cognitive development marks a significant transition from the earlier preoperational stage, where thinking is more intuitive and egocentric. Children in this stage become capable of understanding rules and applying them systematically, which enhances their problem-solving skills and helps them navigate social relationships more effectively. This logical reasoning is foundational for further cognitive development and sets the stage for more complex abstract thinking that will emerge in later developmental stages. Hence, logical thought and multiple classification tasks represent key abilities that characterize the period of concrete operations.

**10. According to Freud, at what age does the phallic stage occur?**

- A. 2-3 years old**
- B. 3-6 years old**
- C. 6-12 years old**
- D. 0-2 years old**

The phallic stage, according to Freud's psychosexual development theory, occurs between the ages of 3 to 6 years old. This stage is characterized by a child's exploration of their own body and an interest in the physical differences between boys and girls. During this period, children develop a sense of sexual identity and begin to identify with the parent of the same sex. Freud suggested that the dynamics of this stage play a crucial role in the development of the child's personality and can influence their relationships and behavior throughout life. Understanding this stage is essential in the context of Freud's broader theories of childhood development, where issues arising in this period can lead to specific fixation-related behaviors in adulthood.