

Free essay on social psychology #6

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- The study of a person's psychology as it relates to individual development is known as developmental psychology. Feldman defines it as "the branch of psychology that studies the patterns of growth and change that occur throughout life" (p. 333). Developmental psychologists study the question of nature versus nurture, "the issue of the degree to which environment and heredity influence behavior" (p. 333). When studying someone's development, one normally focuses on whether or not their behavior and personality are the result of heredity or their environment; people could be certain ways depending on their genes or on how they were raised.

Psychologists study developmental psychology by focusing on developmental theories that handle varying ends of this nature-nurture spectrum; some believe that nature is more of a determinant, and vice versa. There is the interactionist perspective, in which both nature and nurture play a factor (p. 334). Researchers often use cross-sectional research to "compare people of different ages at the same point in time," thus showing how their different upbringings can affect their personalities (p. 335). Other methods include longitudinal research, which "traces the behavior of one or more participants as the participants age" (p. 336). There is also sequential research, which "combines cross-sectional and longitudinal approaches by taking a number of different age groups and examining them at several points in time" (p. 336). These varying methods and more are how psychologists study developmental psychology.

- If I were to create a policy toward notifying people with identifiable genetic disorders through genetic testing, I would focus it on open communication with the patient. In no way would I ever fail to disclose a disorder, regardless

of severity or fatality; the individual has a right to know about their body and what is happening or could happen to them. While no one can change what is contained in their chromosomes and genes, they still have a right to understand what they can do to continue their lives in light of this information.

That being said, I would like to manage the information and how it is presented in light of the severity of the illness. For instance, if people with fatal, untreatable genetic disorders in their genetic code were interested in family planning, I would advise them to think very carefully about having children – their child could be in for a very difficult, and short, life. I would certainly make a distinction between treatable and untreatable disorders as well; if they were treatable, I would make sure to notify them of their treatment options as soon as we knew, so that way they could take that information into consideration when planning to have children. All of these options involve full disclosure, as more knowledge is preferable to less. In order to combat these negative outcomes, school culture needs to change. The sexual and emotional maturity that adolescents experience in puberty must be normalized and accepted, instead of vilified by school culture. Often, sex education is somewhat lacking, with many schools still insisting on abstinence-only sex education – more comprehensive measures must be taken to educate teenagers about their bodies. Furthermore, anti-bullying initiatives must take place to reduce the psychological problems that lead to suicide and other traumas. Early-maturing girls and late-maturing boys can benefit from targeted education that might accelerate or delay sex education depending on when they start to actually mature

sexually. Same-sex schools might also help as institutions that could provide LGBT children and adolescents a safe space to explore themselves and learn more about who they are in a caring, nurturing environment.

- Sigmund Freud was the pioneer of psychoanalytic theory; according to Feldman, this theory is “ Freud’s theory that unconscious forces act as determinants of personality” (p. 385). The unconscious, as defined here, is “ a part of the personality that contains the memories, knowledge, beliefs, feelings, urges, drives, and instincts of which the individual is not aware” (p. 385). In essence, Freud argued that there were many different causes of our own personality quirks, often stemming from things we do not even think about. Childhood traumas, the treatment of us by our parents, and more heavily influence our behavior and personalities, according to Freud.

In recent years, Freud has been reevaluated to not have much scientific data supporting his psychoanalytic theories (p. 389). There are instances of individual case studies, but there is no conclusive evidence toward proving his specific theories regarding the stages of psychosexual development, and Freud’s ideas of personality are incredibly abstract. However, Freud was still an innovator in taking this path toward treating psychological disorders; looking inside at the unconscious and determining the underlying psychological factors through psychoanalysis are important and enduring aspects of psychology. The focus on the unconscious by Freud is also supported by “ current research on dreams and implicit memory” – he still had the idea of repressed thoughts and memories coming through in dreams (p. 390).

- B. F. Skinner focused on behaviorism in his approach to personality – in

essence, he believed that operant conditioning allowed people to change their behavior through repetition and appropriate stimulus. According to Skinner, you can condition someone to do anything through the right approach; this is the essence of behaviorism (p. 398). “ If one is able to control and modify the patterns of reinforcers in a situation, behavior that other theorists would view as stable and unyielding can be changed and ultimately improved” (p. 399).

This approach can be applied to correctional institutions; the population of these facilities are people whose behavior is so aberrant as to force society to isolate them for the good of all. With the help of cognitive behaviorist approaches like those theorized by Skinner, it would be possible to use operant conditioning to correct their behavior. Programs to do this operant conditioning in these institutions would eventually yield positive results, allowing criminals to stop feeling compelled to follow along with whatever social trait led them to commit crimes. For example, if a career rapist were conditioned to not want to do that behavior or find it unacceptable, it is entirely possible that the rapist would not be compelled to perform sexual assaults again (if the treatment were administered properly).

References

Feldman, (2011). Essentials of Understanding Psychology (9th Edition). McGraw-Hill.