

Life span perspective

Experience, Human Nature



Life Span Perspective Valerie D. Carson PSY/375 September 19, 2011

Matthew Warren Ph. D. Life Span Development “ The science of human development seeks to understand how and why people—all kinds of people, everywhere—change or remain the same over time, ” (Berger, 2008, p. 6).

Some questions regarding humans are answered from a scientific perspective. The life span perspective is multi-dimensional and consists of biological, cognitive, socio-emotional, and spiritual dimensions. An individual develops at his or her own pace, but is born with influences from cultural, historical, and economical societies. Development may increase or decrease as an individual grows, certain factors must be considered. The developmental process is a lifelong process. An individual's life span begins at birth and ends in death. The humanistic perspective about life contends that individuals are born with a tendency to make decisions regarding their lives and are able to control their behaviors. The perspective places an emphasis on free will and individual's ability to make decisions and choices about their lives. Segments Two segments are used regarding the life span development. The first is Dynamic-Systems Theory and this theory theorizes human development is always changing. Emphasizes is on the interaction that exist between individuals and within the individual. The second segment is the Ecological-Systems Approach which states that individuals need to be examined within his or her environment because the environment influences development. An ecological model was created as a result of the ecological-system. Five Characteristics of Development Five characteristics of development are used by developmentalist to study human life at any age (Berger, 2008). The characteristics are as follows; multidirectional,

multicontextual, multicultural, multidisciplinary, and plasticity. Within the characteristics of human development, there are three domains. The three domains of human development are: biosocial, cognitive, and psychosocial development. They are also called physical, cognitive, and social domains. These three domains are intertwined and necessary for the make-up of an individual. Development is holistic and each aspect of the development process relates one to another. Individuals are often characterized in more than one domain. No one age group the life span perspective, because the process is continuous. This perspective is also multidimensional. The physical domain is the physical changes an individual experiences. An example of this is the change that occurs during adolescence. Young boys begin to develop hair on certain parts of the boy and there is a change in their voice. The cognitive domain is the cognitive skill acquired such as thinking, memory, and decision making. Social domain focuses on the culture and environment an individual lives in. One will experience many periods or stages during his or her life span. Eight developmental periods are included in the life span perspective. Two Theories of Life Span Development There are two well know theories that deal specifically with human development, psychoanalytic theory and behaviorism (learning theory) (Berger 2008). The psychoanalytic theory is " a grand theory of human development that holds that irrational, unconscious drives and motives, often originating in childhood, underlie human behavior, " (Berger, 2008, p. 35). Sigmund Freud is known as the father of the psychoanalytic theory. His theory was a result of treating individuals who suffered from mental illness. Freud theorized there were three stages of development sexual pleasure was the common

dominator. During the stages of development, Freud concluded if sensual satisfaction was not fulfilled, then the result would be visible during adulthood, (Berger, 2008). Behaviorism, also called learning theory, is " a grand theory of human development that studies observable behavior, " (Berger, 2008, p. 38). John Watson wanted psychologist to focus more attention on the behavior of individuals because those behaviors could be documented. Watson believed things could be learned, and individuals could be taught how to behave. Two other theories are significant to life span development; social learning theory and cognitive learning theory. Within the Sociocultural theory, emphasis is place on an individual's outward influences. The epigenetic theory places emphasis on an individual's inward influences. Nature vs. Nurture Heredity and environment is often referred to as nature verses nurture. Sometimes individuals will say genetics verses learning but it all means the same. Individuals are born with specific genetic traits, but the environment does affect development. " Culture affects each human at every moment, " (Berger, 2008, p. 10). These behaviors are passed from one generation to the next. Some individuals attempt to resist traditional cultures, but the cultures still exist and are constantly changing. People may be influenced by more than one culture. Nurture is the influences of one's environment and these influences begin at birth. Nature is the traits an individual receives from his or her parent. These two, nature and nurture are intertwined and together help form developments within an individual. Both nature and nurture influence all aspects of an individual's life. Individuals are genetically predisposed to certain likes and dislikes, but the environment can influence those likes and dislikes too. Conclusion People

are constantly changing. They change their beliefs, they change their environment, and some change the way they learn. One thing that remains the same is the need for knowledge and understanding the development of people both from an environmental and social outlook. People can go through the same situations, but the outcome can differ. References Berger, K. (2008). The developing person through the life span [University of Phoenix Custom Edition eBook]. : Worth. Retrieved from University of Phoenix, PSY/375 website