

Life-span development: from birth to death



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

One's personal, physical and emotional development is cumulative. The nature of experiences and development during each state of the life-span will have an impact on how subsequent stages are experienced for better or for worse. The following is a concise overview of the changes and normative patterns relating to the life-span. Thus, the discussion will provide a brief examination of each phase, including the prenatal, infancy, early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle adulthood and late adulthood stages. This will contribute to a general understanding of the way that experiences, exposures and environments will impact one throughout one's life.

Introduction

The process of human development is assessed according to multiple phases, each of which carries its own distinct set of expectations in terms of emotional growth, psychological development, physical maturation and social awareness. With each phase will also come a distinct set of life cycle considerations and a set of both socially and self-imposed pressures to participate in certain rites and elements of the life cycle. The intercession of these realities produces what are referred to in psychology and sociology as the stages of development. These will tend to be distinguished from one another in a normally developing individual by an array of physical, mental and sexual changes that will significantly shape the course of one's life. The concept of emotional development is described in Erik H. Erikson's 1963 text, *Childhood and Society*. Here, the sociologist asserts that the ability of one's parents during the formative stages of life to earn the infant's trust will impact directly the success of his development. To the point, in elucidating

the stages of emotional development which contribute to the mental and psychological growth of a human being, Erikson pays a great focus to the matter of trust and nurturing.

Discussion

Every one goes through many stages in life beginning at the time of conception, throughout life, and finally in death. Human development is important to psychologists because it can provide insight about a person and the stage he or she may be experiencing in life based on age-related changes in behavior, emotions, personality, and thought processes (Boyd & Bee, 2009). The interest of changes throughout a person's life, from childhood through adulthood, has developed into a psychological area of study called the lifespan perspective. This modern perspective believes that interdisciplinary research is important in the understanding of lifespan development as well as understanding that each individual, of all ages, can change and develop through many different contexts (Boyd & Bee, 2009).

The following stages, according to Annenberg Media Learner (2010), start at birth. Although Boyd & Bee (2010) state that prenatal is the very first stage of development. While going through the website Learner's (2010) periods, put in parentheses will be the label that Boyd & Bee (2009) give to each stage. The first period is birth to age two (infancy), second is ages two through six (early childhood), third is ages seven to nine (middle childhood), fourth is 10 to 12 (middle childhood), fifth is 13- 15 (adolescence), and sixth is 16 to 19 (early adulthood). These first six stages are all under 20 years of age. A large amount of development is going on during these years.

The seventh period is ages 20 to 40 (emerging adulthood), eighth period is 40 to 65 (middle adulthood), and the last period is 65 and older (late adulthood). Plenty of changes and development are going on in the adult years but not as rapid as in the younger years. Theories within the lifespan perspective arena like Freud's or Erikson's psychosocial stages are similar in age ranges but differ slightly. Each category under the lifespan perspective will somewhat vary within each theory and the different domains of physical, cognitive, and social aspects. A key concern in the lifespan perspective is the nature versus nurture debate. In earlier days, many developmentalists only believed in one or the other. It hasn't been until lately that this perspective has changed and many are considering the factors of both in human development (Boyd & Bee, 2009)

The focus is on concern with standard epidemiology methods that tend to discard the role that genetics play in risk factors for disease as well as genetic studies that ignore environmental risk factors for disease. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism has done ongoing studies since the 1970s with adopted children. Although their environments with the adoptive parents could either facilitate or suppress the onset of alcohol abuse. A second area of concern is the context of development. According to Boyd & Bee (2009), it is important to look at the context of change of a child and adult according to the environment he or she is changing in and not solely within the immediate family. This includes the school the child is in, the neighborhood, the types of relationships the parents have with each other and other people, the occupation and attitudes toward these

occupations of the parents, and so on. Parenting style also plays a large role in the context of child development.

All interact together with the personality traits of the individual to make each person's lifespan development unique. In conclusion, the modern theory of human development lies within the lifespan perspective. It integrates all aspects of research coming from different perspectives and their expertise. It also integrates the power of genetics with the power of the environment, which plays a large role in an individual's progress through different stages in life. The lifespan perspective can be broken down to 10 different stages of life, starting with conception, within three different domains- biological, cognitive, and psychosocial. The context in which a person progresses through life changes assimilates all the aspects of each domain, interdisciplinary research, the multi-contextual nature, and the unique characteristics of the individual.

Prenatal

The womb is this first place that a baby knows. During the later parts of pregnancy, when the cerebral cortex has developed and the fetus begins to gain a sense of awareness, recognition and tactile sensation, the environment provided by the womb is critical to development. The unborn child will be impacted by the safety, health and equanimity of this environment or by any conditions to the contrary. To this end Synthesis (2009) indicates that there is a deep interconnection between the emotional orientation of the mother and the fetus, explaining that the emotionality of the mother carries the implicit potential for a profound influence on the child-

to-be. If the mother is constantly anxious, fearful, depressed " or joyfully ecstatic " the embryonic child-body will be grown and molded by this prevailing affective environment and will be subtly but inexorably conditioned and programmed to live with and to process in utero, whatever emotional experience passes through the mother. (Syncretis, 2009) This provides a consistent foundation for what is likely to occur during the child's infancy as well.

Infancy

In infancy, the first crucial human relationship which a person has is that which he shares with his mother, already established in the prenatal stage. It is within the confines of this relationship that a child may be expected to develop feelings of security. In his text, Erikson asserts that the firm establishment of enduring patterns for the solution of the nuclear conflict of basic trust versus basic mistrust in mere existence is the first task of the ego, and thus first of all a task for maternal care. (Erikson, 1963) This, he explains, is what enables the child to begin to experience a sense of comfort even while achieving an awareness of his dependency on others. Constituted by the certainty that though she has left the room, the mother will soon return, a child comes into a sense of himself as he relates to other people according to the parameters of this first relationship. Trust, in this context, may be interchanged with confidence, which the sociologist explains is a virtue gained on the strength of one's ability to first trust others and then, with maturation, trust himself. As we explore throughout this discussion, the manner in which one experiences each of the stages of development, Erikson believed, will have a cumulative effect on the individual. Thus, in <https://assignbuster.com/life-span-development-from-birth-to-death/>

infancy, we find that these issues of trust and comfort are absolutely imperative to the healthy development of the child. The absence of these can have stultifying, even emotionally devastating effects on the development of the individual's ego-orientation. According to Harder (2002), stated that if one fail to develop trust with persistent frustration due to one needs not met, will end up with a sense of worthlessness and do not feel secure with the environment one is in. However, researchers found that suicides and suicide attempts correlate with the early years in development of simple acceptance that the world is trustworthy and individual are support to be here (Harder, 2002).

Early Childhood

As the extreme consequences potential in this period denote, the rate of early childhood development is impacted as much by its environmental surroundings as by its individual capabilities. With the right framework and support structure, it is possible to facilitate the proper socialization in a child, thus encouraging the appropriate development of physical, emotional and cognitive abilities. Likewise, a suitable setting for these faculties would offer a stable test sample by which to measure individual progress. The home environment is a key role-player in shaping the early capabilities of children toward all manner of induction, socialization and emotional stability as are the first social contexts into which a child is entered. Erikson's view on early childhood was that this is a period of extremely dynamic integration of stimuli. Erikson formulates that at this stage one will learn to accept and work on master skills themselves. Learning to walk, talk and feed one self, they learn finer motor development, in addition, to toilet training. Self-esteem and <https://assignbuster.com/life-span-development-from-birth-to-death/>

autonomy develops which will help the individual to learn and gain control over our bodies while acquiring new skills. (Harder, 2002).

Middle Childhood

The effectiveness with which the child is able to navigate this period will lead to the phase known as middle childhood, which is distinguished by the first identification of paths toward validation through the nurturing of positive personal relationships. The social tendencies, the loyalty and the dedication which conform with the development of complex ethical cognizance will all play a part in a phase of development which demands the refinement of social instincts, promoting the composition of problem-solving skills and demanding participation in more formal social activities, serving as an ideal lens through which to reflect on the early emergence of either talents or handicaps which would mold future learning patterns. Here, the schema encountered through one's early childhood may be integrated into more meaningful and self-directed views of the world.

According to Huitt (2003) behavior (adaptation to the environment) is controlled through mental organizations called schemes that the individual uses to represent the world and designate action. This adaptation is driven by a biological drive to obtain balance between schemes and the environment (equilibration). (Huitt, 2003) It is during this phase of middle childhood that we begin to develop an understanding of moral schemes as something more complex than simply that which is defined by consequences. This conforms to Piaget's idea about moral growth as it coincides with the stages of development. This research found that at about

10 or 11 years, moral thinking in children will endure modifications. However, the younger the child their moral judgments are based on consequences, and older children are more of intentions. An example, young children making a comparison between a child breaking 15 cups and another only breaking 1 cup trying to help their mother, with this the young child will believe that breaking 15 is worse than 1. The young child studies the amount of damage and consequences. The older child will study the motives of what when wrong in trying to help his mother (Crain, 1985)

Adolescence

Accordingly, this is a point in individual personal development in which we are able to observe the intrinsic value of actions and decisions rather than simply viewing them in terms of personal repercussions. This leads into a greater sense of the world as separate from ourselves. In the segue into adolescence, we begin to view ego orientation separately from society, ethical coding and the formation of relationships both formal and information. The period of our lives which passes between the ages of 12 and 20 is subject to a remarkable array of changes. During this time, one passes from childhood through adolescence and into early adulthood. This is a period especially distinguished by puberty and all which that implies. As KGI (2007) indicates, dramatic physical changes are the hallmark of early adolescence and these physical changes are important to your adolescent. They signify that he or she is developing like his or her peers. (KGI, 2007)

Individuals will notice significant changes in themselves in terms of physical alteration, emotional tumult and sexual awareness. This will tend to manifest

most concerted in one's relationship to such social contexts as school, family and neighborhood. And to the point, this adolescent period is an important time in terms of cultivating a loose but increasingly intimate social network. This conforms with general research on this stage of development, which is highlighted by a transition from a life dominated by home and family to one increasingly more divided to the pursuits of school, extra-curricular activity, athletic team membership and information social gathering. These tend to function as substitutes in certain areas where previously only the family fulfilled certain needs.

Young Adulthood

During this stage the young adult is more focus on consistent with expectations intimately with others. They explore relationships and commitments with other than parents or family members. When one is successful in this stage, this will lead to happy relationships and sense of commitment, security, and care within their relationship. Avoiding intimacy, fearing commitment and relationships can lead to isolation, loneliness, and sometimes depression. (Waters, 2008) It is also at this point that one begins to develop what can be considered to be a moral compass to be applied where dilemmas and internal conflicts are encountered. Again, this is an age where a growing awareness of personal identity, combined with a clearer insight into the ethical implications of our actions as described earlier, helps us to project ideas about that which we might like to accomplish in our lives.

Though career aspirations will typically change in nature many times for some people, this is an age where the path begins to grow slightly clearer.

According to Waters (2008), during adolescence, the transition from childhood to adulthood is most important. Children are becoming more independent, and begin to look at the future in terms of career, relationships, families, housing, etc. During this period, they explore possibilities and begin to form their own identity based upon the outcome of their explorations. (Waters, 2008) Identity is perhaps the key function of one's transition into early adulthood. This is a period which is often extremely tumultuous due to the social constructs which surround it. Particularly, it is here that expectations are foisted upon the individual to enter into a career and to achieve financial independence. Young adulthood is a moment which Erikson argues is impacted by a bevy of expectations and the sense that one must live up to these expectations without a fully developed sense yet of how to accomplish this. Accordingly, Wilder (2003) tells that writers, such as Harville Hendricks have developed descriptions of what adults are like if they get stuck at one of these developmental crises.

Hendricks particularly focuses on the effects which getting stuck produces in love relationships and mate selection. Notice the importance of this connection between the failure to grow up properly and adult life. Omitting or distorting any stage of development will produce a deficit in all the stages that come afterwards. Once again we see the power of a hierarchical model, this time of maturation. (Wilder, 2003) To this point, Erikson points us toward the consideration of the pressures implied by the need to select a mate, engage in a fulfilling romantic life, to establish meaningful and satisfying friendships within one's peer group and to being the process of starting a family. These preoccupations and the success with which one is able to

satisfy them will often be determinant in the capacity of individuals to mature properly into adults with the capacity for healthy and mutually fulfilling relationships. As Erikson's framework reports, If negotiating this stage is successful, we can experience intimacy on a deep level. (Harder, 2002) By contrast, a failure to successfully negotiate this state will yield some critical shortcomings in one's ability to be a suitable mate, an effective provider or a capable partner in parenting.

Middle Adulthood

As we consider the transition into middle adulthood, this seems a useful point upon which to restate the overarching importance of Erikson's view on the cumulative nature of development, denoting that there is a direct correlation between one's healthy experience of all the normal stages of development and one's long term mental health, stability and functionality. Among the normal stages of development that one must go through, the desire to establish one's self professionally, financially and romantically is crucial. For the young adult, this pressure should serve as a motivation for diligent work and conscientious reflection on both career and personal aspirations. Middle adulthood, according to available research, seems to bring about a set of developmental changes that, in the healthy and functional individual, may best be described as the refinement and solidification of certain personality features.

Though some disagreement amongst sociologists and psychologists has persisted with regard to the extent to which adult characteristics actually change during the transition into middle adulthood, it seems most

reasonable to claim that some personality traits are subject to change while other traits may be more rooted in individual tendencies which are not subject to change. (Srivastava et al, 2003) This confirms Erikson's view that middle adulthood is a crucial point at which many of the tensions between ego orientation and the limitations of youth should be resolved. Here, the Harder text denotes that middle-age is when we tend to be occupied with creative and meaningful work and with issues surrounding our family. Also, middle adulthood is when we can expect to 'Eöbe in charge,' the role we've longer envied. (Harder, 2002) It is thus that self-actualization will have become very important during this period to individuals. Indeed, Erikson indicates that a primary risk to the emotional health of adults during this stage is the continuing need to find meaning and to be fulfilled in the way that one occupies one's time. Erikson warns that this is especially true as critical relationships are altered.

Particularly, the relationship between parenting and one's sense of self-actualization is altered when children mature to the point of leaving the house. Here marks a challenge for the adult to achieve or retain a sense of meaning independent from this critical role as a parent, nurturer and provider.

Late Adulthood

In a sense, this brings our discussion to consideration of the single most important premise expressed in Erikson's theoretical model. Namely, the transition from middle adulthood into late adulthood is a critical nexus at which the developmental preparation experienced by the individual will

predict his or her relative 'success' in life. Accordingly, Harder tells that Erikson felt that much of life is preparing for the middle adulthood stage and the last stage is recovering from it. Perhaps that is because as older adults we can often look back on our lives with happiness and are content, feeling fulfilled with a deep sense that life has meaning and we've made a contribution to life, a feeling Erikson calls integrity. (Harder, 2002)

Conclusion

This view of integrity is also what Erikson argues would allow individuals to make the final emotional and psychological preparations for the terminal stages of life. Healthy development and the achievement of self-actualization during adulthood would significantly factor into the ability of the individual to cope with the reality of his or her own mortality. For those who have achieved the meaning and identity required for personal contentment, Erikson argues that this stage should bring about a sense of acceptance for the inevitable.

The lifespan perspective on human development, as mentioned, includes research from different perspectives, such as psychology, economics, biology, anthropology, and education. Developmentalists also understand that through each stage of development, an individual changes within his or her family environment, society, their neighborhood, and culturally, and does so in certain stages of development (Boyd & Bee, 2009). Development is defined with three different elements. The first element is change. Change is development that involves progress from one state into another. The second

element is that this change has a permanent influence or impression on the individual.

Although developmental change is not just any change. The advancement through a certain stage, otherwise called maturation is the last element of development. Annenberg Media Learner. Org (2010) explains that these stages are called domains and that the lifespan perspective has three: biological, cognitive, and psychosocial. Biological, or physical, development is bodily changes, maturation, and growth. Cognitive development is the mental growth processes that include attention, memory, learning, reasoning, problem-solving, knowledge, perception, language, and thinking. Psychosocial, or societal, development includes changes in social interactions. Boyd & Bee (2009) also point out that social development includes personality traits and one's own self perception. Within the three domains of lifespan development, each domain has nine periods. It is also important to remember that each period is an approximate age and progress to and through these stages differ slightly between individuals.