

Major theories of human development

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1. Epigenetic theory (Erikson)

Erikson's epigenetic theory depicts personality development as a passage through eight sequential stages of ego development from infancy through old age. According to Erikson, the developing individual must master and resolve, to some extent, a core conflict or crisis during each stage by integrating personal needs and skills with the social and cultural demands and expectations of the environment. Passage to each developmental stage is dependent on the resolution of the core conflict of the preceding stage. No core conflict is completely mastered, however (Mandleco 2004).

2. Psychoanalytic theory (Freud)

According to Freud, human behavior is motivated by psychodynamic forces within an individual's unconscious mind. Driven to act by these internal forces, individuals repeatedly interact with their external environment. An individual's personality and psychosexual identity are developed through the accumulation of these interactional experiences. Personality consists of three components: id, ego and superego. The id is inborn, unconscious and driven by biologic instincts. The ego is a conscious and rational faculty. The superego is the internalization of the moral values learnt from parents and elders (Madleco 2004).

3) Behaviorist theory (Watson)

Behaviorism contends that human behavior can be explained as just a relationship between a stimulus and a response, and learned behavior is just a conditioned response. Everything from speech to emotional responses are

simply patterns of stimulus and response. Watson denied completely the existence of the mind or consciousness. Emotions are regarded simply as conditioned bodily responses to outside events. Thinking is explained simply as talking quietly. Watson believed that human behavior should be studied in a manner that allows the researcher to predict and control those behaviors (Klein 1989).

4) Classical conditioning (Thorndike, Skinner)

Building upon the work of Thorndike, Skinner distinguished two types of behavior. Respondent behavior is based on reflexes and does not require learning. For example, if one touches a hot surface, one will quickly remove one's hand. Operant behavior, however, is learnt, and is performed spontaneously rather than as an automatic response to a situation. According to Skinner most human behavior is operant. Whereas classical conditioning depends on developing associations between events, operant conditioning involves learning from consequences of our behavior (Klein 1989).

5) Social learning theory (Bandura)

In social learning theory, primary focus is given to learning experiences that occur through reciprocal social interactions. Environmental or situational determinants are important, but interactions are thought to be the conduit for internalization of social and nonsocial cues for behavior. Bandura and colleagues investigated the effects of modeling and imitation on the behavior of young children. They postulated that modeling and imitation are the primary interaction processes through which behavioral repertoires are

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acquired. Social learning theory emphasizes the socializing influence of the family (Lerner 1996).

6) Cognitive theory (Piaget)

According to Piaget's cognitive theory, children's development is marked by periods when they are particularly sensitive and responsive to outside influences. However, children are not blank slates on which teachers compose whatever they desire. Children, who have inherent dispositions and tendencies and are subject to their external environments, develop and grow intellectually in an invariable sequence from birth through adolescence and adulthood. To teach effectively, teachers should be aware of the materials and approaches most appropriate for a child's readiness to learn (Sigelman & Rider 2005).

7. Humanism (Maslow)

The humanistic theory centers its attention on the experiencing person, emphasizes on qualities such as choice, creativity, valuation, and self-realization, with an ultimate concern for valuing of dignity and worth of a man, and an interest in the development of the potential inherent in every person. Maslow has referred to his psychology as holistic, dynamic psychology, and most of all it is known as self-actualization psychology, which expresses that people possess potentiality which could become actualities through the process of wholesome growth (Coon 2004).

8. Stages of moral development (Kohlberg)

Kohlberg postulated that human beings tend to progress through six stages of moral development. People tend to make decisions and judgments about right and wrong for different reasons, depending on the stage of development they have achieved. Kohlberg's six stages of moral development are: 1) Right is obedience to power and avoidance of punishment. 2) Right is taking responsibility for oneself 3) Right is being good in the sense of having good motives 4) Right is maintaining the rules of a society 5) Right is based on recognized individual rights within a society 6) Right is an assumed obligation to principles applying to all humankind: justice, equality, and respect to human life (Lerner 1996).

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