

The evolution of developmental psychology

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The Evolution of Developmental Psychology Jennifer Haag Walden's University
Lifep Development September 9, 2012 Over the course of history, many scholars and researchers have discovered the evolution of developmental psychology. However, there are certain people throughout the course of history who have made more significant process in shedding light on developmental psychology as it is known today. The three best known theorists that helped people understand, or at least consider psychology, were Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, and Jean Piaget.

These three men were able to develop and test theories that formed the modern idea of psychology. Without the vital research and theories, one might never have understood the inner workings of the mind and how nurturance, nature, and other factors affect a personality over time. Using research methods such as observation, correlational design, and several other methods, researchers are able to put together a bigger picture of developmental psychology. With research comes responsibility; a responsibility to protect the rights of those who are researched.

Therefore, there is an ethics policy designed by the federal government that researchers are not supposed to violate. Psychology is an ever evolving unit and is something that will always change as life goes on. Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, and Jean Piaget are some of the best known psychological researchers ever known. Freud contributed several theories and had many followers of his teachings. One of his theories is the psychosexual theory. This theory emphasizes how parents manage their child's sexual and aggressive drives in the first few years are crucial for healthy personality development (Berk, 2010).

Even though the theory may be somewhat controversial, it is one that contributes to the evolutionary development theory by suggesting that something that happens in childhood helps to form the adult. Erikson believed that there were significant psychological changes with each stage. His psychosocial theory emphasized that in addition to mediating between id impulses and superego demands; the ego makes a positive contribution to development, acquiring attitudes and skills at each stage that make the individual an active, contributing member of society (Berk, 2010).

With this theory, a person develops based on needs and the ability to control one's self. Erikson was the believer in stages unlike Freud who believed that a single event in a child's life would have such a big impact on adulthood. He introduced the time line of development from birth to late adulthood showing how the person changes with maturity. Adding to both of these theories is Jean Piaget's cognitive-development theory which explains that children actively construct knowledge as they manipulate and explore their world (Berk, 2010).

This theory extends into adulthood as well. People learn new things everyday by manipulating things around them. Therefore, if a child learns to manipulate things at a young age, they are capable of continuous learning or an ever evolving development of the mind. These three men helped shape the concept of psychology and helped researchers understand it better today by testing their theories over and over again. Research is the basis for any theory. Without research, there would be no foundation for anything.

Therefore, studies must be conducted, people must be observed, interviews must be done, and information gathered. It has been known for some time

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that people are all different; the way they think, the way they react to different stimuli, and the way they interact with others. It is known that experiences and influences have quite a significant impact on a person's psych. However, this would not have been known without the hours of laborious research conducted through studying people under different circumstances. One research method is observation.

Observations can be done in many different ways. One is through correlational design. This is where researchers gather information on individuals, generally in natural life circumstances, without altering their experiences. Then they look at relationships between participants; characteristics and their behavior or development (Berk, 2010). This type of observation is the most natural and non-evasive way of conducting research and one of the best ways to get pure information. Using an evasive form of research can be useful as well, however.

Interviews can help researchers in a big way by getting information straight from the subject without trying to guess what the person is thinking or what the person might do when faced with a situation. There are different ways to conduct interviews such as clinical interviews where a person takes part in an open conversation or structured interviews where a person takes a questionnaire, test, or simply answers a few questions. There are many ways to conduct research but there is just one thing; people must be respected and treated fairly when doing so which leads to ethics.

Thus, the federal government came up with ethics codes to protect those being studied. There are certain rights a person has when being studied or evaluated for any type of mentalhealthresearch. The rights of research

participants include: protection from harm, informed consent, privacy, knowledge of results, and beneficial treatments. Protection from harm is the right to be protected from physical or psychological harm. Informed consent means that all participants or guardians of participants must sign their permission for the research to continue.

Privacy means that information regarding them personally, identity, cannot be shared with outside parties. Knowledge of results means that those participating in the research have a right to know the outcome of that research and beneficial treatments is if experimental treatments believed to be beneficial are under investigation; participants in control groups have the right to alternative beneficial treatments if they are available (Beck, 2010). Without these rights in place, people would not have any say in what was done to them or how the research was collected.

People would, in essence, be nothing better than cattle told what to do in the name of research. Over all, research is necessary to help discover all the possibilities there are regarding psychological development. Researchers and theorists like Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, and Jean Piaget helped shed light on the evolution of psychology and how it is ever changing. Researching and gathering information is the only way to continually develop theories and test possibilities regarding mental health.

In doing this, it is imperative to remember that those who are researched and observed have rights that need to be respected meaning an ethics code must be followed. Psychology, although centuries old, is still an enigma to be discovered with constantly evolving aspects that researchers may never fully understand. Reference: Berk, L. E. ,(2010). Development Through the Lifep.

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