

# Life span perspective

Life



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The process of human development starts as early as the embryonic stage and continues to progress throughout life. These changes have been examined by leading theorists in the psychology field who were looking to establish guiding principles and concepts. There have been a number of developmental theories that seek to explain the questions that we have related to human development. I will examine these theories, as well as, provide backgrounds for the most influential theorist for each.

I will also examine the life span perspective and how heredity and the environment influence human development. One of the most leading theories of human development is the psychoanalytic theory. Many contemporary theories of counseling or psychotherapy are extensions, variations, or responses against psychoanalytic theory. Psychoanalytic theory examines the factors that motivate behavior by focusing on the role of the unconscious. Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson are examples of theorists who support this approach.

Freud was an innovator, his psychoanalytic theory of personality and his psychosocial placement theory led to his predecessors' development of their own philosophies. Erik Erikson expanded on Freud's theories in many ways and created his own theory of psychosocial development. "Psychoanalytic theory's strength lies in its awareness of unconscious motivation and the importance of early experiences on development." (Rounds, 2010) Since there is a lack of concrete evidence to support the claims of psychoanalytic theory, psychologists became increasingly interested in developing a more scientific approach.

In order to do this, some researchers began to study only those things that could be measured and quantified. This led to the beginning of learning theories. Learning theories focus on how behavior is learned. Ivan Pavlov was a Russian scientist who discovered the term classic conditioning. Classic conditioning is a learning process that occurs through associations between an environmental stimulus and a naturally occurring stimulus. Pavlov conducted his experiment by using mammals, he observed the digestive process in dogs and the relation between salvia and food.

His study was extremely influential in establishing triggers (conditioned responses) that stimulated the salvia when feeding the dogs. He name to realize that the dogs began to salivate not only when they saw food but when they saw the scientist in lab coats. The dogs associated food to the white lab coats which triggered the salvation. He also conducted an experiment with the use of a bell. He would ring a bell when it was time to eat and subsequently the same conditioned responses were stimulated and the dogs reacted in the same manner as in the lab coat experiment.

His developments influenced American psychologist John Watson experiment on a nine month old baby named Albert. He wanted to prove that classic conditioning work on humans as well. His famous study for this was called the Little Albert Experiment in which he theorized that children have three basic emotional reactions: fear, rage, and love. He wanted to prove that these three reactions could be artificially conditioned in children. Watson used Albert to test his theory.

He repeatedly presented Albert a rat in conjunction with a sudden, loud noise to classically condition fear of the rat. He went on to prove that humans can be conditioned as well. His work formed ideas that would become a whole branch of psychology called behaviorism. (Watson, 1913) Behaviorism operates on the principle of stimulus-response, the subject whether human or mammal can have his/her behavior shaped through positive or negative reinforcements.

Behaviorism concludes that any being can be trained to perform any task, subsequently internal stimulus such as; genetic background, personality traits, and internal thoughts are not factors when considering this school of thought. Many critics of behaviorism argue that it is, a one-dimensional approach to human behavior. Many say that it misses the mark when it comes to other factors such as free will and internal influences like moods, thoughts, and feelings. Lifespan perspective is in relationship with human development, and is lifelong. This study within psychology is continuous.

Lifespan perspective has three developmental domains. These domains are physical domain, cognitive domain, and social domain. Physical development refers to the growth of the body, organs, physical systems, signs of aging, change in motor abilities, and all physical changes (Salesman & Rider, 2009). The next development has problem-solving, mental process, memory, perception, language, and learning from the cognitive development. The last developmental stage is psychosocial stage; this stage encompasses the personal and interpersonal aspect of development.

The developmental aspects for psychosocial are: emotions, personality traits, interpersonal skills, motives, family roles, relationships, and society. Lifep development also has five characteristics useful for understanding any age of human development (Berger, 2008). Multidimensional characteristics accounts for change in every direction, as change does not have to be in a straight line. Embedding in lives of humans context can include constraints, family patterns, and historical conditions this characteristic offers to multi-contextual characteristics.

The last of the five developmental characteristics is plasticity, which states that every person has traits that can be altered at any point in life, and change is ongoing (Berger, 2008). In conclusion, human development is continually changing its guidelines and principles. As we evolve so does the techniques and developmental theories. The human personality can be trained and cultivated to be whatever the influencer desires. We have also learned that the impact from the environment as well as heredity plays an important role in each individual's lifep development.