

Compare and
contrast two
competing
psychological
theories



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The purpose of this essay is to compare and contrast two competing psychological theories of human behaviour. The two theories will be Erikson's psychodynamic (stage 7, middle adulthood) and Rogers humanistic, concentrating on the adulthood years.

Erik Erikson (1968) psychodynamic theory was highly influenced by Freud's psychosexual stages of development, he also believed that everyone was born with a superego (formed during the phallic stage); a child learns how to internalise parental values, learn what is right & wrong, an ego (mediator between id & superego); reduces conflicts that arise from the demands of the id and moralistic views of the superego, and id (pleasure); we desire instant gratification (Billingham et al, 2008), and that development is determined by genetic biological programming (body), psychological (mind) and ethos (cultural influences). (Harder, 2009)

Erickson believed that a person's life was organised into eight stages from birth to death; Stage 1 - Infancy birth to 18 months: Trust vs. Mistrust, Stage 2 - Early childhood 18 months to 3 years: Autonomy vs. Shame, Stage 3 - Play age 3 to 5 years: Initiative vs. Guilt, Stage 4 - School age 6 to 12 years: Industry vs. Inferiority, Stage 5 - Adolescence 12 to 18 years: Identity vs. Role Confusion, Stage 6 - Young adulthood 18 to 35 years: Intimacy and Solidarity vs. Isolation, Stage 7 - Middle adulthood 35 to 55 years: Generativity vs. Self absorption and Stage 8 - Late adulthood 55 or 65 to death: Integrity vs. Despair. (Harder, 2009)

According to Erikson, stage 7 is when " A person does best at this time to put aside thoughts of death and balance its certainty with the only happiness

that is lasting: to increase, by whatever is yours to give, the goodwill and higher order in your sector of the world" (Erikson, 1974)

During this stage the task is for an adult is to perpetuate their culture and to transmit the values they have learnt through to the family (younger generation), in order for this to be done a person has a need to establish a good stable environment for all members of the family, they have a need to find a way to support and satisfy the next generation. (Erikson, 1974) A person may have a fear of becoming inactive and do not want to experience meaninglessness in their lives. (Harder, 2009) An example of this is a woman in her thirties may be experience a need to have a child or want to develop her career further, if these needs are not met then in turn they can become a development crises. (Nicolson et al, 2006) The crises can then become more severe especially if the adult had had a disruptive childhood or did not gain any trust in other people in earlier stages of their lives by being abused. If an adult cannot get through these crises they can become self-absorbed/stagnated, in order to get through the crises they need to find a new meaning and purpose to life. (Nicolson et al, 2009)

Erikson believed that how we behave and our actions give us a sense of competence, and we need to be competent in our lives. If a person is successful during stage 7 then they feel they are contributing to the world, they will often be active in the home and local community. If a person is unsuccessful they will feel unproductive and uninvolved in the world. (Cherry, 2010)

The limitations to the psychodynamic approach are they can be considered as to be falsifiable and unscientific, case studies lack generalisation, therapy actioned using this method is questioned by the comparison of the proportion of patients who have recovered from atypical disorders.

(Billingham et al, 2008)

In comparison to the psychodynamic model the humanistic theory of Carl Rogers (1959) (a founding father) believed in a holistic approach (positive growth from within), that it can be related to all living things, whether it is human or animal, that people are not patients but clients, there is no age or stages that living things go through, counsellors are there to assist the client grow, to focus on the immediate situation rather than their past (psychoanalysis theory) and are not there to solve the clients problems, he called this client centred theory. (Billingham et al 2008)

Nicholson et al quote how Rogers came about on the humanistic theory “ Roger’s work in particular was derived from his therapeutic/counselling work and like, Freud, he developed a theory of personality and human development based on his clinical experience”

(2006, pp. 30)

Rogers maintained that humans have a strong tendency to want to grow, develop, to reach their maximum potential in life, he called this Actualising Tendency and that it was common to all living things. (Presitelli, 1996)

Rogers found this when he was a young boy, he noticed that when they stored their winter potatoes in the basement below a window, the potatoes would begin to sprout white pale roots growing towards the light coming
<https://assignbuster.com/compare-and-contrast-two-competing-psychological-theories/>

through the window, he noticed they would never reach their full potential to grow or mature, and to be sown in the field to become the next years food. Actualising tendency can become dormant if a person is for example a drug user or suffering from abuse, they are unable to see a future to reach their goals (Delcorte Press, 1977)

Through the humanistic approach they believe that a person must be congruent with their sense of self in order to achieve their personal goals and that there are three 'selves'; the self-concept, organismic self and ideal self. (Billingham et al, 2008)

The self concept was how people see themselves based on the life experiences they have had (usually acquired through infancy), if a child had little love or lots of criticism from parents in early life they will probably have a poor self concept in adult hood. (Presitelli, 1996)

Rogers stated " many psychological problems experienced as adults e. g. worthlessness or low self esteem, were due to a lack of positive regard from our mothers as children".

(Billingham et al, 2008, pp. 19)

Organismic self is the real inner life to a person, it is everybody's purpose in life is to grow in maturity to reach self actualisation, adults want to be harmonious. The organismic self can become lost or obscured later in life (adulthood), if as a child there is no sense of worth or no positive regard given to a child. (Presitelli, 1996)

Finally, there is the ideal self, it is a response created to the self concept, an ideal that is never reached, if the ideal self is achieved then there will be another ideal self created to replace the old ideal self e. g. wanting to pass your driving test. (Presitelli, 1996)

Actualizing tendency can be distorted if maladjustment has occurred, behaviour can become destructive, not only to others but also oneself. If the true self becomes alienated, actualisation and self-actualisation tendencies can become crossed, the organismic self will move in one direction and the persons conscious will struggle with each other steering the person in two directions, thus creating incongruence. (Presitelli, 1996)

Rogers theory has been tested by many over the years, it was found that the importance of self-esteem and positive regard given to a child in the early years are vital when in adulthood, these are supported by psychologists, however, congruence and the valuing process are not yet proven to be testable. (Jarvis, 2009) His theory is subjective and rely purely on the reliability of Rogers patients and how he interpreted them to be, he believed that people strive to fulfil their potential, this theory cannot be used for all cultures. (Jarvis, 2009)

The psychodynamic and humanistic have some similarities to each other: they both believe the importance of a person's childhood experience can affect their adult personality, both theories are now outdated as families and cultures have changed, they are also both unique but totally different from each other. Psychodynamic is more negative and pessimistic, it is geared towards sex and aggression, that people have three types of personality (the

ego, superego and id) whereas the humanistic view is that everyone are good, they have a free choice, free will, people are simplistic and the belief in their self. (Squidoo, 2010)

There are limitations to the humanistic approach it rejects the use of the scientific method, lacks empirical support, humanist psychologists can over emphasise a person's ability to change or develop and individual emotions are often hard to study objectively. (Billingham et al, 2008)

In conclusion Erikson's psychodynamic theory believes that we need to go through each stage in order to progress, that a person's development is determined by the genetic biological programming, psychological and cultural influences. (Harder, 2009) For example when stage 7 is reached if a person is unable to create a stable environment or have no meaning to life then they can experience a ' mid-life crises', become self-absorbed/stagnant, only if they can get through this crises can they progress and find a new meaning or purpose to life. (Nicolson et al, 2006)

Rogers humanistic theory believe that it can be related to humans or animals and that people are not patients like the psychodynamic approach but are clients, there is no age or stages that people go through and counsellors are there to assist the client grow, to focus on the immediate situation and that everyone has a tendency to reach their maximum potential (actualising tendency). (Presitelli, 1996) He believed people must become congruent with their self in order to achieve and that there are three ' selves'; the self-concept (how people see themselves based on the life experiences they have had), organismic self (the real inner life to a person) and ideal self

(response created to the self concept, an ideal that is never reached).

(Billingham et al, 2008)

Word count 1544