

Introduction to psycholog

[People](#)



Development does not end once a person reaches physical maturity, but continues throughout life. Developmental psychologists seek to describe and analyze the regularities of human development across the entire life span. It focuses primarily on those aspects of development that make one person similar to another as a species (Atkinson, 1993).

Four theories of human development shall be taken into consideration and they are Freud's psychosexual stages, Erikson's psychosocial stages, Piaget's Cognitive stages, and Vygotsky's sociocultural stages.

Discussion

Just prior to maturity is the stage of adolescence. This is the period where the physical and psychological changes take place. The beginning of adolescence is indicated by changes known as puberty.

~Puberty.

Generally, girls mature earlier than boys. Girls between the ages of 10 or 11, develop breasts and their hips become more rounded. These physical changes affect personality, as when girls become more ladylike.

Boys undergo certain changes, such as a change in voice, rapid growth in height, growth of hair on the face, chest, and other parts of the body. Radical changes in attitudes and interests may occur, but there is consciousness in acting the role of adults. Conflicts may be experienced or may arise as a result of psychological behavior patterns in the attempt to achieve maturity.

A. Psychosexual Stages by Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) hypothesized that each individual goes through five psychosexual stages. The psychosexual stages are five different developmental periods - oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital stages - during which the individual seeks pleasure from different areas of the body associated with sexual feelings.

Freud emphasized that the child's first five years are most important to social and personality development. Freud pointed out that satisfying one of the child's needs becomes a source of potential conflict between the child, who wants immediate gratification, and the parent, who places restrictions on when, where, and how the child's needs should be satisfied.

Freud's psychosexual stages are part of his larger psychoanalytic theory in personality. Thus according to him, a child will encounter different kinds of problems in infancy and childhood, which will shape his social and personality development (Atkinson, 1993).

B. Psychosocial Stages by Erik Erikson

In addition, according to Erik Erikson, a child will encounter different kinds of problems in infancy and childhood, which will shape one's social and personality development.

A child according to Erikson will encounter a particular psychosocial problem at each stage. If he successfully solves the problem, he will develop a good social trait that will help him solve the next problem. If he is unsuccessful, he will develop a bad social trait that will hinder his or her solving new problems at the next stage.

These stages, according to Erikson, are concepts that succinctly capture the distinctiveness of each particular stage (Atkinson, 1993).

Erikson labels his stages accordingly as Trust versus mistrust, Autonomy versus Shame and doubt, Initiative versus guilt, Industry versus inferiority, Identity versus role confusion, Intimacy versus Isolation, Generativity versus stagnation, and Integrity versus despair (Atkinson, 1993).

C. Cognitive Stages by Jean Piaget

Piaget's theory of cognitive development refers to how a person perceives, thinks, and gains an understanding of his or her world through the interaction and influence of genetic and learning factors. Jean Piaget, who was both a biologist and psychologist, developed one of the most influential theories of cognitive development.

Piaget's work led to the current view that children are actively involved in their own cognitive development. By active involvement, Piaget meant that children are constantly striving to understand what they encounter, and in such encounters they form their own guesses or hypotheses about how the world works (Atkinson, 1993).

Piaget's cognitive stages refer to four different stages – sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational stages – each of which is more advanced than the preceding stage because it involves new reasoning and thinking abilities.

Although Piaget believed that all people go through the same four cognitive stages, he acknowledged that they may go through the stages at different rates. Piaget's hypothesis that cognitive development occurs in stages was

one of his unique contributions to developmental psychology (Atkinson, 1993).

D. Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory

Vygotsky's theory is more known by his concept of zone of proximal development. Whereas the three preceding viewpoints focus at the unique facet of an individual's growth and development, i. e. Freud, mainly on the psychosexual aspect, Erikson, on the psychosocial one, and Piaget, on the cognitive feature on the other hand;

Vygotsky had made his mark on the study of human development by looking into how children assimilate the traditions, customs and mores of society and blend these with their interpretation and way of thinking, public or communal dealings and /or interfaces, and insights or degree of awareness in themselves (Thomson, 2005). According to Ross Thomson on Child Development,

Vygotsky's " Sociocultural theory . . . explains why children growing up in different societies are likely to have significantly different skills." (Thomson, 2005).

Vygotsky believes differently from other developmental psychologists mainly in the sense that he is not persuaded that children go through stages as others do. Children achieve certain skills and abilities because of the accrued values basically coming from their surroundings; these are from the influences and guidance of adults and others around them or those that comprise their immediate environment.

According to Vygotsky, adults who guide and function as teacher or tutor to these children enable the latter to reach what he termed as zone of proximal development in which a child has abilities or skills that make him/her adept at many human activities although with adult assistance.

The chief criticism on the theory however, lies on its disregard of the impact of genetic or organic maturation directing the development and growth of the child separate from the cultural and environmental influences (Thomson, 2005).

Summary and Conclusion

In the foregoing discussion, four theories were presented in précis. These theories by famed psychologists Freud, Erikson, Piaget and Vygotsky, have made their unique places in the understanding of human development. By highlighting their concepts and perspectives, each theory also, opens “itself” to criticisms mainly because the limitations will become either obvious or explicit by its respective descriptions, and implicit because, there are inquiries in many facets of the complexities of being human that simply cannot be described or explained by any single theory.

However, each in their own right, has given us insights into many details of individual's growth and development that otherwise cannot be known or understood.

The reader or behavior science enthusiast is left to develop critical thinking into the many weaknesses and strengths of the individual theories and make his/her own possible integration of these theories together. Notwithstanding,

all four psychologists are forever etched in the annals of scientific endeavor in the study of human development.

Reference

Atkinson, R. L., R. C. Atkinson, E. E. Smith, D. J. Bem, and S. Nolen-Hoeksema, 1993. Introduction to Psychology, 13th ed. New York: Harcourt College Publishers.

Thompson, Ross A. " Child Development." Microsoft® Encarta® 2006 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2005.