

Characteristics of the lifespan development psychology essay



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The theories to be discussed will explain the main characteristics of the key life stages in each approach being used, as well as analyzing the principle theories of development. The theories to be discussed are psychoanalytic Erikson vs. Freud, The cognitive Piaget vs. The Sociocultural Vygotsky and then to compare and contrast the characteristics of the psychodynamic against cognitive. There are eight life stages that an individual passes through during their life, starting from conception; which is nine months before the pregnancy stage, throughout the pregnancy stage and through five others till reaching the final stages of life. Each life stage has characteristics of growth and development however different theorists have a different hypothesis of these stages.

There are several theories looking at the development across the lifespan in different perspectives: Psychoanalytical which believe children are driven by inborn instincts bearing in mind that child rearing is very important, which is more the nature vs. nurture approach. The learning perspective is mainly based on nurture being the key importance. Cognitive development was stated that children actively construct knowledge, which again is the nature vs. nurture debate.

Messer (1998) explains that Piaget hypothesized stages of cognitive development, starting from sensorimotor stage which starts from birth to two; Piaget said that in this stage children find the relationships between sensations and motor behavior. For example if a child is playing with a rattle, they realise that the hands belong to their body however the rattle does not. They begin to explore and understand more about the world around them.

Preoperational stage starts from two to seven; Children of this age begin to learn how to talk and play in role play, however children of this age are easily deluded by perceptions.

Concrete operations stage starts from seven to eleven; Children of this age use the method of trial and error but when it comes to hypothetical problems at this stage a child cannot apprehend them.

The formal stage which starts from eleven to twelve or older; once in this stage a child of this age becomes “ older and wiser” after many trial and errors in the previous stage they have learnt from the mistakes that was made and have developed from them.

It had been stated that it was in fact Piaget that brought to the psychoanalytic attention “ that children are in many ways the sculptors of their own development” (Shaffer, D. et al. 2009: 293). Piaget did not believe that a child was molded by pressures from peers or the opening of a genetic plan.

An article based on cognitive development by Gauvain, et al (2011) states that the research made, were influenced by Vygotsky’s ideas, that argued whether or not a child’s abilities of innate cognitive were transformed by the act of social interaction.

Piaget’s theory was being developed around the same time as Vygotsky. However, Piaget’s theory is far more developed as Vygotsky died fairly young.

Vygotsky had a theory of five life stages starting with a few he believed, that from infancy (birth to one), walking, speech and emotional reactions were the main developments at this stage. In early childhood (one to three) he noticed that speech development was initiating a new form of behavior in this stage.

Vygotsky did not continue with a rigorous definition of his theory - higher mental functioning because of his un-timely death. (Daniels et al 2007).

However, both Vygotsky and Piaget believed that children essentially make their own development by creating their own understanding of the world around them. Sigelman et al (2012) explains that although Piaget and Vygotsky were in fact along the same lines, they also had a difference of opinion. Vygotsky believed that the development varied due to social and historical contexts, where-as Piaget believed it made no difference in either context.

Freud hypothesized stages of psychosexual development starting with oral (0-1.5), anal (year and a half to three), phallic (three to six years), latency (six to eleven onwards). Freud stated that each stage poses a unique conflict which must be resolved before moving onto the next and if the conflict was not resolved then frustration would take place and this would be the main feature in their psychological make-up.

Although Erikson agreed with some of what Freud had proposed, he stated the life stages were different. He proposed a psychosocial theory of development which consisted of eight stages of development which are as follows; Trust vs. mistrust (birth to one) In this stage Erikson believed the <https://assignbuster.com/characteristics-of-the-lifespan-development-psychology-essay/>

child was trying to figure out who could be trusted. Autonomy vs. shame and doubt (one to three), In this stage Erikson believed the child gained a sense of independence.

Initiative vs. guilt (three to six), In this stage Erikson believed a child would think before acting, processing whether or not they would be successful.

Industry vs. inferiority (six to twelve), Erikson believed that the child would compare oneself to another attempting to figure out if the self was as competent as another.

Identity vs. role confusion (twelve to twenty), Erikson believed that in this stage a person would question their own identity.

Intimacy vs. isolation (twenty to forty), Erikson believed in this stage a person would decide if whether or not they were ready to start and build a relationship.

Generativity vs. stagnation (forty to sixty five), Erikson believed that at this stage a person would question whether or not their mark had been left on the world.

Finally integrity vs. despair (sixty five and onwards), Erikson believed this is where a person would question whether or not, what they had done with their life was meaningful.

According to Sigelman et al (2012) the difference between the two types of theories are that Freud believed development is what drives biology, whereas Erikson stated that he believed that biology interacts with the

environment to create the eight stages of lifespan. Both theorists however, focus on environment which makes a person who they are and both believed that development was predictable.

Cognition is a way of the thought process and the reason for it, is to get an understanding and a balance of things. Psychologists study cognitive to get a better understanding of intelligence and memory status. Equilibrium is important in cognitive development as this is the mental representations which are adapted to match the environment. However, if the environment changes this distorts the equilibrium and forces assimilation and accommodation to get back into the equilibrium, therefore is a development.

Psychodynamic theory is based on the mental process that explains how humans think, feel and behave. Bernstein (2010) states that this approach of behavior and mental process can be seen as a battle, between impulses and demands made by society to control these impulses.

Jarvis (2004) stated that it was very difficult to predict the behavior of an individual to “ falsify psychodynamic theories” and also went on to say how difficult it was to test psychodynamic ideas.

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