

On golden pond essay



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The movie On Golden Pond represents three stages of development: adolescence, middle-adulthood, and late-adulthood. In the movie, Billy, Chelsea and Norman, three of the main characters symbolize the three stages of development by specific behaviors related to biosocial, cognitive, and psychosocial developments. It was necessary for the three characters to break down during hard situations in their lives to start appreciating the different seasons of their lives, the transition from adolescence to adulthood to aging and the people around them.

In this paper I will discuss how these characters develop as individuals through the lenses of biosocial, cognitive and psychosocial development, and I will also end my discussion by explaining how Erick Ericson's psychosocial theory is the most suitable for individual's development. After childhood, adolescence emerges by transforming a child into young adult. Most of the times, those changes are hard to handle, especially when a teenager is going through life challenges like Billy. He is the symbol of adolescence, as it is noticeable by his biosocial, cognitive, and psychosocial developments.

Biosocial entails the interaction between social and biological factors of an individual. Puberty is a sign of biosocial maturation that defines and differentiates adolescence from childhood. Adolescents develop a full sexual desire generally towards the opposite sex. Billy apparently developed this biosocial maturation. He has interest in girls and he is proud of it. He told Norman that he "sucked face" in his free time. Impulsiveness is a synonym of maturation due to hormonal changes that adolescents undergo.

That is why adolescents many times act like children—they cannot help but follow their impulses without giving a thought on what the consequences might be. In the movie Billy showed impulsive tendencies. For example, when he was allowed to steer the boat he endangered himself and steers the boat in a high speed. Cognition is the ability to reason and to think abstract ideas. Adolescence is the stage where one makes a transition from taking things as they appear to start understanding what is beneath one's sight.

This ability of reasoning leads adolescent to be rebellious, because they can understand that adult's rules are not necessarily legitimate all the time. For instance, " A 14-years- old becomes acutely aware of the difference between what adults say they do and how they really act. " Billy showed this kind of cognitive ability, and he was rebellious towards his father Billy Ray and especially to Norm. He said to Norman " don't tell me what to do".

Adolescents develop a hostile perception about adults. They become critical about their parents and the community they live in as a whole.

Another cognition maturity that adolescents reach is the development of adolescent egocentrism—the distorted feeling that one's own action is the centre of everything. In the movie, Billy showed this distorted feeling. He wants to proof to everyone that he can do anything that an adult is able to do. For example, he wants to steer the bout and explore the world by himself. Psychosocial development addresses the interaction between psychological and social factors. Billy was in Erickson's psychosocial stage— Identity versus role confusion.

In the beginning, he seemed confused about his identity, and he did not get along with Norman. This indicates that he lacked someone to identify with. Later on, the time he spent with the couple on Golden Pond and his relationship with Norman made him progress psychosocially. When Norman was accidentally thrown out of the boat and hit his head to the rock, Billy quickly jumped into the water to save Norman. This example showed how much Billy cared about Norman. He started to become more cooperative, joyful, and teachable.

In fact, Billy and Norman came across complementing each other on what they were lacking when it came to the father versus son relationship, besides the fact that the character Billy and Norman were from different generations. After, one progresses towards middle adulthood which then takes us to our later life. This journey of maturation and progression throughout life leads to aging bio-socially. Chelsea is at the middle adulthood stage. The body gets rigid and loses elasticity which leads to the development of wrinkles.

Chelsea is predictably developing wrinkles at this point of her life. As we get older cognitive development slowly declines. This decline is resulted by the pruning away of neurons that we do not use for a long time at the synapses. However, when it comes to intelligence at this stage there are two types of intelligence: crystallized intelligence and fluid intelligence. The crystallized intelligence refers to the knowledge gained throughout one's life. The other type of intelligence, fluid intelligence, involves one's ability to reason quickly when facing new intellectual challenges. Crystallized intelligence increases with age whereas fluid intelligence peaks at about twenty and declines as one ages. Chelsea was successful woman as mentioned in the movie, and

she felt that she was in charge when she was in LA. For example, if her job was involved in crystallized intelligence such as teaching, it would be an advantage for her because of her increasing age and maturity. However, it would not be a benefit for her if the job demands quick-thinking such as piloting.

Erickson's psychosocial theory —generativity versus stagnation points out that the main goal of middle-aged adults is to become generative, to care of the next generation and to find purpose in life. Erickson explains that if adults do not find a purpose in life, they become stagnated. For Chelsea's case, she seems to be developed well at this stage, because she was looking forward to caring about the next generation by raising Billy and building a family. Finally, when comes to the stage of late-adulthood, Norman was well-represented in this stage for describing his capacity of limited locomotion and security.

Norman was a negative 80-years-old retired man and was having pre-dementia and chest pains. Although Norman looked fit physically for his age, he was mainly dependent on his wife, Ethel, because he had limitations on what he was able to do by himself. For example, in the movie, he was struggling to make a fire and had the matches in the wrong way. Norman did not embrace aging and he was frustrated about the limitations that came with it. In this stage of later life, one's cognition deteriorates which results in memory loss. Norman was losing his memory which explains that his cognition declined.

He was in denial the fact that he was losing his memory. When Chelsea asked Ethel whether he was losing his memory, Norman overheard them and said to Billy “ Let me show you where the bathroom is if I can remember. ”

This shows that he is not accepting that he was cognitively aging. Erickson’s psychosocial stage of despair versus integrity—an adult looks back on one’s past life and achievements. This results in feeling of fulfillment and satisfaction whereas failure results in regret and bitterness. Norman’s psychosocial development changed from despair to integrity over the time.

At first, he did not accept his age for the fact that he was getting old. He was in such despair that he was complaining about his life. He was also mad at his life and never appreciated Chelsea because he wanted a son. For that reason, he was never nice to her and always picked on her. These factors made him unhappy and depressed about his age. As he got along with Billy as a friend, he found his integrity in his life and began to enjoy his life. Ethel said “ I should have gotten 12-year-old long time ago. ” Erikson’s psychosocial theory is highly regarded, and useful.

Erickson was a psychoanalyst and a humanitarian so his theory goes beyond psychoanalysis. Although it is an extension of Freud’s, unlike Freud, Erickson’s theory is not limited to biology. It emphasizes the interactions between biology and environment. His theory is not limited to a certain stage of development. His eight stage theory is broad and sheds light on how we develop from childhood to death. Unlike other theories, Erickson’s stages of development are not clear cut and does not indicate that we move from one stage to another in a sequence where one stage ends exactly at a point and another starts.

He addresses the impracticality of that kind of approach in the dynamic, complex human development. His theory addresses this complexity. He pointed out that transition between stages is overlapping. His stages are respectively: trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilty, industry versus inferiority, identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, Generativity versus stagnation, and integrity versus despair. These stages all make sense and could be directly applied to human development.

For example, in the stage, identity versus role confusion describes a practical reality that we all face in adolescence. This stage as I mentioned in Billy's analysis is where adolescents struggle with the question " who am I? " Also if you look at the stage, integrity versus despair occurs in one's later life and addresses how the individual reflects on the past in order to look forward and accept death. His theory is practical that you do not need to be a trained psychologist to make sense of it.

Finally what makes his theory so appealing is his emphasis on the interaction between the person and the environment which many theorists in his field ignored. In conclusion, the movie was a great learning experience. I was able to think and reflect on the interactions that happen between individuals and their environments. We must never neglect the importance of the interactions between individuals and their environments, and we should look deeper and try to understand how these interactions shape us.