

Comparison of erikson's and bandura's theories



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Albert Bandura was born on 4th December 1925 in Mundare which is a small town in Alberta, Canada. His parents were of Polish descent. His theory was developed based on his belief that previous and earlier theorists had not dealt completely with the most important psychological issues and processes. Thus, his new view was referred to as observational learning. This is a theory that discussed human learning as taking place when there is abstract observation of other people's behaviors. According to his theory, people learn by observing other people's behaviors, they obtain abstract and important information from these observations, they make decisions on which behaviors they are going to adopt and they finally perform the few selected behaviors. This is a theory that lists different social cognitive factors which influence people's learning like capacity to use symbols and to engage in intentional and firm actions in life. Via symbols, people translate observations to internal models which can be in apposition to guide our future behaviors and can also test possible courses of action before we act. Bandura's social learning theory is based on acquisition of complex behaviors which are arranged in a triangular illustration that describes the interactive effect of different factors. These three factors include environment, behavior and the internal events influencing an individual's actions and perceptions (P540 Bandura Group, 1996).

On the other hand, Erik Erikson was born in Frankfurt, Germany on 15th of June 1902. He was a product of an extramarital relationship who never knew the first husband of his mother or even his birth father. In comparison to the theory generated by Bandura he developed eight psychosocial stages that a human being goes through from childhood to late adulthood. His stages in

the theory progress cumulatively rather than linearly. According to him, the behaviors in one stage never disappear even when one proceeds to the next stage. His psychoanalytic concepts were made more consistent with the contemporary findings in the science field. The stages in his theory present a gradual series of encounters with the environment. Where the interplay in Bandura's theory is between the individual and the environment, in Erik Erikson's theory, the interplay is between psychological abilities, social influences, biological development and cognitive capacities. According to Erikson, people should see a person as a way to be in the world. Every stage in this theory has a given life crisis and this is explained as a very crucial period in life when a person cannot avoid the experienced decisive turns. For each stage, there is provision of new opportunities for given virtues, ego strengths all which are needed for development. The psychosocial gains come from the successful adaptation of the ego to the specific environment but this must be reaffirmed and nurtured continuously (Engler, 2008).

There is one major difference between Social Learning theory developed by Bandura and Erik Erikson's theory together with other past theories. The main difference is in the manner he defined learning. His theory posits that we acquire internal codes that may or may not act upon us later. His theory thus divides performance and learning to be two different and separate events. For him, learning is the acquisition of internal symbolic representations which are commonly in form of visual and verbal codes. These usually act as our guidelines in our future actions/behaviors. Observed memory codes on behavior are called representational systems. These are further divided into two different systems: verbal conceptual and

imarginal/visual. Visual/imarginal category deals with events of abstractions of distinctive features while verbal-conceptual deals with details that are in verbal form. Modeled behavior in this theory conveys important message to observers in three ways. First, it may be via social prompt where a person initiates a similar behavior in several other people. Secondly, through taking actions that either weaken or strengthen existing restraints of a learner against given behaviors performance. Thirdly, it involves transmission of new behavior patterns. According to Bandura, there are three different weaknesses that are found in Behaviorism. He postulated that in behaviorism, there are limited behaviors which can be researched in a laboratory, the theories cannot account for new responses acquisition in situations and that behaviorism focused only on direct learning (a situation where a learner will perform response to experience consequences). His theory is thus a clear description of delayed matching (indirect learning) where a learner only observes any reinforced behavior so that he may enact a similar behavior.

After conducting extensive research, Bandura concluded that an individual's behavior whether normal or abnormal, good or bad is learned through imitation of other people's behaviors. Since our infancy, we have the tendency to develop response to our specific models that are offered by the society we live in. Erik Erikson's theory explains that a child requires the comfort of the parents in the initial stages of life in order to develop trust. Failure to get this from the parents results to mistrust. But in Bandura's theory, our parents are the models from whom we learn basics such as language, acceptable behaviors and culture's customs. Bandura was clearly

an outspoken critic who explained that our societies are determined by the models that we present to our children. Violent behaviors are evident because of the amount of time children watch television, video games and movies (Albert, Dorothea and Sheila, 1963). His research on models provided to children in different societies shows that since what we see is what we become, there is no great distance between performing a violent act and watching aggressive animated characters.

There are three factors that Bandura explained as the major influences in modeling: model's characteristics, observers' characteristics and the reward consequences that are associated with behaviors. The characteristics of the model determine our tendency to copy their behaviors. In our lives, we imitate those who appear similar to us. Sex and age are some other factors of the model that may determine our tendency to imitate them. Children mostly imitate behaviors of those from their sex rather than those of the opposite sex. In addition, a model of our own age is more likely to influence us and we end up imitating the behaviors. Behavior types from the model also determine our extent of imitation. Behaviors that are so complex are not easily imitated compared to simpler behaviors. Also, the person who is observing has attributes that may determine the effectiveness of learning. People with low self-esteem and confidence are highly likely to imitate others compared to those who have high self-esteem and high self-confidence. Rewards consequences that are associated with specific behaviors affect the extent to which we may be modeled. This is a factor that in essence may even override the impact of observers' and models' characteristics. This shows that a model of high status may influence us to imitate certain

behaviors but in case the rewards are not beneficial that behavior may be disbanded and its most likely that even in future we may not be influenced again to imitate such a person.

Observational learning never takes place in a situation where the observer has not paid any attention to the model. Just exposing the learner to a model gives no guarantee that the learner will pay attention to important cues that may stimulate events. A learner must accurately perceive his model so that acquisition of necessary information is obtained for imitation of model's behavior. These are referred to as attentional processes. In his approach to personality, self is not taken as a psychic agent that causes behavior but it's rather a set of cognitive structures and processes concerned with perception and thought. There are two important aspects of the self which are self-efficacy and self-reinforcement. According to the social learning theory, self-reinforcement is important just like reinforcement administered via other characters. People set personal behavior standards and achievement standards. We have the tendency to reward ourselves the moment we exceed or meet the given expectations and punish ourselves by failing to meet the expectations. Any self-administered reinforcement may either be tangible such as a car or be emotional like satisfaction or pride for any work well done. On the other hand, self-administered punishment is expressed via depression, guilt or shame since we have behaved in a way we didn't want to. Self-reinforcement appears somehow similar to what Erikson referred to as superego or for other theorists' conscience. But according to Bandura, they don't mean the same. Much of people's behavior is regulated by a continuous process of self-reinforcement. This is a mechanism that requires

reference points, subjective criteria or performance standards against which we may evaluate behavior. Past behaviors may in one way become the reference points for evaluating current behavior. The moment we attain a given achievement level, this may not challenge satisfy or motivate us and thus we raise standards since we require more of ourselves.

Self-efficacy is the ability to control our events in life. Those of us with low self-efficacy are helpless and they always give up easily the moment they experience obstacles in life. On the other hand, those who have high scores in self-efficacy are capable of persevering in difficult tasks and their performance is of high level. We base self-efficacy judgments on vicarious experiences, physiological arousal, performance attainment and verbal persuasion. People who maintain and meet their performance standards do improve their self-efficacy but failure to do this result in reduction of it. Those of us with low self-efficacy destroy motivations, physical health, interfere with cognitive abilities and lower our aspirations. Self-efficacy also means that we believe that we can.

On the other hand, personality development under Erik Erikson's theory is described in eight stages. His theory mainly focuses on psychosocial correlates. Development process according to Erikson is determined by epigenetic principle of maturation. This is to mean that inherited characteristics become the determining forces in stages of development. Prefix epi stands for " upon" to mean development depends upon genetic forces. Environmental and social forces in which we have exposure influence the manner in which predetermined genetic stages in development are realized. This is to mean that Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory posits that

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our personality development is affected by both social and biological factors. This may also mean both situational and personal variables. There are personal conflicts in all the stages described in this theory. These personal conflicts still exist at birth in form of innate predispositions. These normally gain prominence in different stages of development as our environment from time to time keeps demanding specific adaptations. The confrontation with the environment is what is referred to as a crisis. Crisis is a change in perspective and this calls us to refocus on instinctual energy so that this can be in accordance to the needs of every stage in development life cycle. Every stage in this theory has a specific turning point or crisis and this is what necessitates change in personality and behavior. Response to the crisis is in two methods: either in an adaptive (positive) manner or in a maladaptive (negative) manner. An individual's personality development can only proceed normally if the crisis is resolved. Resolving the conflict in one stage gives an individual enough strength to cope with crisis in the preceding stage. This translates that failure to resolve crisis in the initial stages creates inability to deal with problems at later stages in the life cycle. Even if a successful outcome may still be possible it becomes very hard to achieve.

Since in every stage there is a potential positive outcome, this is a theory that gives enough optimism even if there is crisis in every stage to deal with. A person is able to resolve the situation in strengthening and adaptive manner. Where a person develops weaknesses of maladaptive response, hope is still there for the remaining stages. In this theory people are capable of consciously directing their growth throughout life. This is to mean that by

the time we attain adult ages, we cannot be taken to exclusive products of experiences in our childhood years. Influences in the childhood are important even though any events in our late stages may counteract early experiences. This theory is however partially deterministic. The experiences that we get exposed to in the initial four stages via peer groups, teachers or parents and other opportunities may be beyond our personal control. The chance to exercise free will is only available in the last stages but the strengths and attitudes formed during the initial four stages may affect the choices that we have. It's thus notable that Erikson believed that experience and learning affect personality more than heredity. The psychosocial experiences become the greater determinants in this theory but not the instinctual biological factors. The main goal for all of us is to come up with a favorable ego identity that is capable of incorporating basic strengths.

Erikson's theory is a " coherence theory of truth" and it is one of the characteristic philosophical viewpoints that may be used to comprehend personality. This theory does not lie on scientific view only but it emphasizes the presence of philosophical elements in theory development. There is a belief in him that a sound theory of personality needs a quality philosophical base. For him, vital moral commitments are there in a psychoanalytic framework. In order for him to facilitate an understanding of moral commitments, he explored superego evolution and further differentiated among adolescent ideology, infant morality and adult ethics. This is what he used to show application of epigenetic principles in conscience development. In addition, ego strengths as outlined by Erikson are ethical values via which

human race may strive. The philosophical statements of Erikson are purely explicit (Schultz, 2009).

Bandura's social learning theory explains that our environment determines our personality and the explanation given by Erikson seems to bear some similarity with this. This is so because Erikson believes that our development is determined by the epigenetic principle to mean that every stage is entirely dependent on genetic factors. But in the end, it is the environment that helps in determination of whether all have been realized. In broad context, he presented an optimistic and a flattering image of human nature. He has expounded on this in his theory to show that people have capability to resolve conflicts in a very positive manner, they can achieve basic strengths and they can also direct their growth consciously. For him people are not victims of heredity factors and experiences in childhood but the major influence in development comes from social interactions and learning.

The two theories have however faced criticism. Since Bandura's social learning theory emphasizes overt behavior, critics argue that this is a theory ignoring personality aspects like emotion and motivation. Their analogy to explain this criticism is described using patients with stomach pains. A physician dealing with overt behavior will only treat patients by requesting them to stop clutching their stomach, stop complaining and groaning. The requirement in such a case may be either surgery or medication. Thus critics argue that a physician must treat both the cause and the symptoms. But all in all, this theory is very objective. This is one of its major merits. On the other hand, Erikson's theory is not applicable to women. This theory has also been criticized by other theorists who have argued that it cannot be applied

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to people who are economically disadvantaged since in their adulthood they cannot obtain moratorium in their adolescent stages in order to explore various roles and then develop ego identity. But this is a study that entirely depended on case studies. Considerable support on research literature is available for most stages of the theory and it was able to present the image of our nature in an optimistic manner.