

Human growth and development case study: chris



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This report will focus on the case study of Chris (appendix I) in which I shall apply my understanding of psychological perspectives of human growth and development, concentrating on my understanding of psychological theories of human behaviour.

Erik Erikson Psychosocial Stages (1902 - 1994)

Erik Erikson developed eight stages in personality development spanning birth to later years. Erikson believed that an individual's inner instincts interact with outside influences which then have a bearing on the way an individual's personality develops. Erikson's stages are:

Birth to one year - trust versus mistrust

One to three years - autonomy versus shame and doubt

Three to six years - initiative versus guilt

Six to twelve years - industry versus inferiority

Twelve to eighteen years - identity versus confusion

Eighteen - thirty years - intimacy versus role confusion

Thirty to later years - generativity versus stagnation

Later years - integrity versus despair

Chris according to Erikson's stages is at the young adult stage - intimacy versus role confusion. Chris is currently finding it difficult to form intimate and meaningful relationships with other adults. Chris does not appear to be

negotiating this stage very well as he has “ got two girls pregnant” and does “ not trust adults”. At this stage unsuccessful negotiation may mean isolation for Chris and forming of shallow relationships which may have already happened with the two girls that are pregnant. Chris may at any stage revisit challenges from previous stages or crisis that are unresolved, in order to successfully negotiate further stages as he gets older. (Case Study – appendix I) (Walker 2010) (Bee & Boyd 2003: 29)

Attachment Theory – John Bowlby (1907 – 1990)

John Bowlby is the founding father of attachment theory he argued that “ the propensity to make strong emotional bonds to particular individuals [is] a basic component of human nature, already present in germinal form in the neonate”. Secure attachments during childhood makes a person feel secure, and the first two years of a child’s life is the most important, at this stage it is believed that if close relationships with their care givers are not formed they may in later life be at risk of social and personality problems. (Bee & Boyd 2003: 128)

John Bowlby identified three patterns of attachment:

Secure attachment

Anxious resistant attachment

Anxious avoidant attachment

Chris appears to have anxious avoidant attachment. “ Between the ages of ten and seventeen he was looked after by the local authority, after his mother said she could no longer cope with his behaviour as he had been

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involved in a local gang". Chris expects to be rejected by his mother and therefore by forming an attachment with the gang he is trying to be emotionally self-sufficient and as mentioned by his step-father "hit one of his step-brothers during a visit" has developed possibly passive aggressive behaviour towards his brothers and due to this his step-father has excluded him from the family home, another form of rejection. Chris has also not formed any type of relationship with his father "he had no contact with his birth father, whom separated from his mother when Chris was two years old". Studies using fathers and their attachments to their children have found the reaction to his presence or absence can be similar to that for the mother according to Kotelchuck (1976) "although attachment to the father seems to develop more slowly". Chris found it "difficult to make friends and often did not trust adults" this is due to the lack of secure attachments he had during childhood, adolescence and middle adulthood. Patterns of attachments have a bearing on how children cope with new experiences during their informative years. (Case Study Appendix I) (Gross 1996) (Kotelchuck 1976 as cited in Atkinson et al 1993:)

"Attachment behaviour is held to characterise human beings from the cradle to the grave"

(Bowlby 1979: 129 as cited in Parkes et al 1991: 33)

Abraham Maslow (1908 – 1970)

Abraham Maslow developed a hierarchy of needs and believed in self-actualisation and described this as "the ultimate goal of human life".

Maslow's hierarchy of needs must be met in order from bottom upwards in order for a person to reach self-actualisation.

Self-actualisation

Esteem – need for superiority and respect

Love and Belonging – need to be with others not alone

Safety needs – stability

Physiological needs – Food, water and oxygen

Chris is currently within physiological needs, as these are being met. His safety needs are not as he is “currently living in a squat” and “Frequently he will sleep rough or in night shelters”. This is a lack of stability in his life however he is on the “local authority waiting list for accommodation” he will then have his own place and therefore possibly the stability required in order to maybe look at Maslow's next stage of love and belonging. (Atkinson et al 1993) (Case Study Appendix I)

Carl Rogers (1902 – 1987)

Rogers also developed a theory of personality and human development, emphasising the positive nature of human beings and their potential towards growth and self-actualisation. The main body of humanistic approach is the freeing of individuals from any “barriers within themselves and between the self and the external reality”, how individuals view themselves and their environment rather than their behaviour. (Nicholson et al 2006: 30)

Central to Rogers theory is the self-concept in Chris's case it appears that he does not have a positive self-concept of himself his ' ideal self' appears to be incongruent to the person that he actually is, in much of the way he has behaved. Chris appears to not be functioning and reaching his full potential.

“ The best vantage point for understanding behaviour is the internal frame of reference of the individual himself.”

(Carl Rogers 1951 as cited in Atkinson et al 1993)

Behaviourism B. F. Skinner (1904-1990)

The assumption of this approach considers we all begin life as a blank slate and all behaviour is learned and determined by our environment, our socialisation, our interactions and learning experiences all make us what we are.

It is considered that all behaviour whether normal or abnormal is learnt through the process of classical conditioning through association.

B. F. Skinner developed operant conditioning, reward punishment or reinforcement. How we behave is learnt from childhood Chris has no positive peer or role models to look up to and aspire to be like. According to Skinner behaviour modification can be used to change ' challenging behaviour'. In order to correct his behaviour it would be necessary to find the reinforcer and remove it. Without the reinforcement, the challenging behaviour he shows may be extinguished. On the other hand Chris's good behaviour must be rewarded. If Chris had formed solid attachments to any carers or peers the time may have been taken from an early age to encourage his positive

behaviour and therefore Chris may have felt more empowered and in turn taken a more positive approach to life. (Perlmutter and Hall 1992)

Transactional Analysis Eric Berne (1910 – 1970)

Eric Berne was the founding father of Transaction Analysis. Transactional Analysis is based on child, parent and adult ego states and the line that divides what is not transactional and whether human behaviour is explained in terms of these ego states. Eric Berne's thinking was strongly influenced by Sigmund Freud, however his theory and practice is very different from psychoanalysis and is very much a theory on personality as well as social interactions.

The notion of ego states is central to this theory and he described it as a coherent system of feelings related to a given subject as well as a set of coherent patterns. " A system of feelings which motivates a related set of behaviour patterns" (Colledge 2002)

Parent ego state is behaviours, thoughts and feelings copied from parents or parental figures

Adult ego state is behaviours thoughts and feelings which are direct responses to the here and now

Child ego state is behaviours thoughts and feelings replayed from childhood

The parent is our ingrained voice of authority from when we are younger as well as conditioning and internalised thoughts from our parents or peers. The parent can be controlling as well as being supportive.

The adult appraises reality and makes judgements. Berne likened the adult state to a computer. The adult starts at about ten months old and is how we keep our parent under control. We require the adult to change our parent or child ego states.

The child is a person's thoughts, feelings and behavioural patterns from childhood. Berne believed that we all carry within ourselves a little boy or girl who feels, thinks and responds just as we did as children. This could explain some of Chris's reactions to situations such as " hitting his step-brother during a visit" this could be seen as a child like reaction to a situation.

(Colledge 2002) (Stewart 1989) (Case Study Appendix I)

Berne defined certain dysfunctional behaviour as " games" these are in order that a person gains ' strokes' but instead " reinforce negative feelings and self-concepts and mask the direct expression of thoughts and feelings" Chris may be playing a game with the way in which he interacts within given situations. Instead of the positive strokes he wants to receive his interactions are having the opposite effect to what he may be expecting. (Transactional Analysis Association)

Chris's ' life script' is dysfunctional and is the result of decisions made during his childhood in the interest of his survival such as " His illegal activities" and involvement with a " local gang" in order to gain positive strokes Chris needs to look at changing his life scripts in order that he gains positive recognition for his decisions and interactions.. (Case study appendix I) (Berne 2010)

" As the complexities of compromise increase, each person becomes more and more individual in his quest for recognition, and it is these differentia

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which lend variety to social intercourse and which determine the individuals destiny”

(Berne 2010: 14)

Conclusion

After writing this report and case study I have found very interesting how each theory can relate to the case study of Chris. Each theory gives an insight into the actions and consequences of Chris's behaviour and the impact for those involved with him. The most important theory is attachment. During his informative years these were broken. This has had an impact of his life, even though he is now in middle adulthood it is still affecting Chris now. The lack of attachments he has and the lack of guidance from peers is having a bearing on his life path. This then brings into question the other theories. If Chris had secure attachments would he then be in a different position within Maslow's hierarchy of needs and successfully negotiated Erikson's stages of development. His behaviour may not have been so negative towards himself and others, therefore gaining positive recognition.

(1401 words without quotes)