Theories of Human Development

Raymond Nelson, MA, NCC

Five Developmental Theories

- Freud – psycho-sexual development
- Erickson – psycho-social development
- Piaget – cognitive development
- Kohlberg – moral development
- Harlow – development of love (attachment)

Freud
Psycho-sexual Development

- Development is expressed by pleasure or comfort seeking energy (libido) expressed through a specific part of the body (erogenous zones)
  - Oral stage – birth to 1 year
  - Phallic stage – 1 to 3 years
  - Genital stage – 3 to 5 years
  - Latency stage – 5 to 12 years
  - Genital stage – 12 to 18 years

Freud – Oral Stage

- Birth to 1 year
  - Mouth is the primary means of interacting with the world

Freud – Anal Stage

- 1 to 3 years
- Physical development
  - Greater control over body
  - Greater sensitivity to body
  - Increased awareness and parental emphasis shifts attention to the bowels as a major source of physical and social comfort

Freud – Phallic Stage

- 3 to 5 years
- Increased awareness of pleasurable sensations surrounding one's genitals
- Onset of sex-role identification
- Viewed identification with same-sex parent as the foundation of conscience (super-ego)
  - Oedipal conflict
  - Elektra conflict

Frued – Latency Stage

- 5 to 12 years
- School age
- Energy is diverted to social interaction and knowledge acquisition
- Onset of ego-defenses
  - Denial *(I'm not tired)*
  - Repression *(I forgot)*

Freud – Genital Stage

- 12 to 18 years
- Puberty re-awakens sexual energy
- Mature forms of attachment and sexual identity develop at this time
- Freud suggested that unresolved or poorly resolved prior conflicts would interfere with normal ego function
  - Identity (self-concept)
  - Relationships

Erikson
Psycho-social Development

- Erikson was a psychoanalyst
  - Studied human development across different cultural backgrounds
- Shared Freud's view of distinct developmental stages
  - Each stage has a central theme or conflict
- Thought that timing and resolution of developmental conflicts was partially influenced by society or culture
- Retained Freud's notional of "fixation"

Erikson - Stages

- Basic trust vs. basic mistrust (birth to 18 months)
- Autonomy vs. shame and doubt (18 months to 3 years)
- Initiative vs. guilt (3 to 5 years)
- Industry vs. inferiority (5 to 12 years)
- Identity vs. role confusion (12 to 18 years)
- Intimacy vs. isolation (19 to 25 years)
- Generativity vs. self-absorbtion (25 to 50 years)
- Ego integrity vs. Despair (50+)

Erikson – Trust vs Mistrust

- Birth to 18 months
- Consistent attentive care teaches children that the world is safe and predictable
- Inconsistent or insensitive care teaches children not to trust
- Thought to be the origin of many personal and interpersonal difficulties

Erikson
Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt

- 18 months to 3 years
- Greater mobility and choice
- Childhood narcissism causes people to introject causality for successes and failures
- Need guidance and supervision to avoid repeated experience of failure or humiliation
- Develop a sense of self worth and self-control
- Stifled experiences lead to lack of ability to assert or apply oneself

Erikson – Initiative vs Guilt

- 3 to 5 years
- Identification with same-sex parent
- Internalize a set of social rules
- Children assert themselves beyond simple desires
  - Goal setting
  - Varied social and behavioral strategies
- Difficulties at this stage leads to maladaptive strategies for setting and achieving goals

Erikson – Industry vs Inferiority

- 5 to 12 years
- School years
- Children begin to identify themselves as successful or not
- Dangers include
  - Becoming overly focused on winning social approval through productivity or achievement
  - Developing a sense of inferiority as a result of inability or difficulty to acquire skills and abilities

Erikson – Identity vs Role Confusion

- 12 to 18 years
- Ego identity vs ego diffusion
  - Sexual identity
  - Occupational identity
- Role integration (friend, student, child, athlete, lover
- Values clarification becomes important at this stage

Erikson – Intimacy vs Isolation

- 19 to 25 years
- Ability to share oneself without fear of lost identity
- Success at this stage is strongly influenced by success at earlier stages
- People who have difficulty participating in social and intimate activities tend to have more emotional or psychological problems

Erikson
Generativity vs. Self-absorption

- 25 to 50 years
- Generativity vs stagnation
- Social regeneration
  - Parenting
  - Work or other civic activities
- Poor resolution of developmental conflicts leads to self-absorption and lack of meaningful contribution to the world

Erikson – Ego-integrity vs Despair

- Cumulative total of previous developmental stages
  - Look back with satisfaction
  - Look back at misdirected energies and missed opportunities

Piaget
Cognitive Development

- Piaget was concerned with the ways people learn and adapt
- Maturity and sophistical are expressed through the ability to develop abstract mental models (ideas, concepts, phenomena) that can be manipulated and understood cognitively

Piaget- Constructs

- Assimilation – taking in new information
- Accomodation – adapting existing concepts to fit new information
- Schema – organized responses (skills, concepts or strategies)

Piaget - Stages

- Sensorimotor period (birth to 2 years)
- Pre-operational period (2 to 6 years)
- Concrete operational period (6 to 12 years)
- Formal operational (12 years to adult)

Piaget – Sensorimotor Period

- Birth to 2 years
- Interaction with environment is by overt actiona and sensations
- Develop the ability to form and test hypothesis regarding external objects
- Object permanence

Piaget – Pre-operational Period

- 2 to 6 years
- Ego-centric functioning
  - Limited to their own perspective
  - Capable of willfulness
- Symbolic play
- Magical thinking
  - impossible causal relationships
- Language development
- Skills become more abstract and flexible

Piaget
Concrete Operational Stage

- 6 to 12 years
- Substantial development of cognitive skills
  - Conservation (amount of material)
  - Seriation (procedures)
  - Cause-effect relationships
  - Classifications and hierarchies
  - Reversibility
  - Abstraction (removed from the context)

Piaget
Formal Operational Stage

- 12 years to adult
- Ability to solve problems by isolating salient variables and manipulating them mentally
  - Some adults never reach this stage
  - Others reach it only in certain areas of their lives

Kohlberg
Moral Development

- Tried to understand the developmental changes in ways that people decide what is good or bad
  - Preconventional morality
  - Conventional morality
  - Principled morality

Kohlberg
Preconventional Morality

- Punishment / obediance stage
  - Children seek only to avoid punishment
  - Children don't cooperate because parents are right or wise
- Instrumental / relativist stage
  - Seek to do things that get rewarded

Kohlberg
Conventional Morality

- Children become invested in the expectations of others
  - Good boy / nice girl stage
    - Based on the desire to please others
    - Awareness of intent (children sometimes attempt to change intent after an action – *I didn't mean it.*
  - Law and Order stage
    - Based on desire to adhere to social norms and rules
    - What's good is what's good for my family/group/nation/etc
    - Compliance is good / defiance is bad
  - Some people never reach this stage
    - Others never advance beyond it

Kohlberg
Principled Morality

- Increased awareness of the arbitrariness of some rules
- Awareness of difficulty in universal application of some rules
- Two sub-stages
  - Social contract / legalistic orientation
    - Personal agreement and choice
  - Universal ethical principles
    - Personal responsibility for choices
    - Most people never reach this stage
    - Kohlberg began to question whether this stage exists

Harlow
Attachment and Love

- Famous experiments with monkeys
  - Wire monkeys
  - Fuzzy monkeys
- Identified 5 types of attachment and believed they emerge in a developmental sequence

Harlow - Attachment

- Infant mother attachment
    - A lot of evidence suggests this relationship influences every other relationship in life
- Peer attachment
    - People who lack strong ties to parents have more difficulty with peer relationships
- Sexual attachment
    - Children who don't play, grown and learn with peers had more difficulty developing mature intimate attachments
- Maternal attachment
    - Animals (monkeys and others) who missed developmental attachment needs tend to neglect their children more often
- Paternal attachment