Theories of Human Development

Psychology 117
Theories

- Parsimonious
- Internally Consistent
- Falsifiable
- Heuristic
- Supported
Key Themes in Developmental Psychology

- Nature/Nurture
- Organismic (active)/Mechanistic (passive)
- Continuity/Discontinuity
  - Quantitative vs. Qualitative
• Figure 2.2 The course of development as described by continuity and discontinuity (stage) theorists.
Key Themes in Developmental Psychology

- Universality/Context-Specificity
Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to introduce the various theoretical perspectives and to allow you to realize how much you already know.

Get into small groups (3-4 students) and come up with terms, ideas, and “great psychologists” associated with each of the following theoretical perspectives:

- Psychoanalytic
- Learning/Social-Learning
- Cognitive
- Biological/Ethological
- Ecological
Psychoanalytic Perspective

Freud’s Psychosexual Theory
- Unconscious motives are repressed
- Development is a conflictual process
- Three Components of Personality
  - Id
  - Ego
  - Superego
### Table 2.1 Freud’s Stages of Psychosexual Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychosexual stage</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>Birth to 1 year</td>
<td>The sex instinct centers on the mouth because infants derive pleasure from such oral activities as sucking, chewing, and biting. Feeding activities are particularly important. For example, an infant weaned too early or abruptly may later crave close contact and become overdependent on a spouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anal</td>
<td>1 to 3 years</td>
<td>Voluntary urination and defecation become the primary methods of gratifying the sex instinct. Toilet-training produces major conflicts between children and parents. The emotional climate that parents create can have lasting effects. For example, children who are punished for toileting “accidents” may become inhibited, messy, or wasteful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phallic</td>
<td>3 to 6 years</td>
<td>Pleasure is now derived from genital stimulation. Children develop an incestuous desire for the opposite-sex parent (called the Oedipus complex for boys and Electra complex for girls). Anxiety stemming from this conflict causes children to internalize the sex-role characteristics and moral standards of their same-sex parental rival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latency</td>
<td>6 to 11 years</td>
<td>Traumas of the phallic stage cause sexual conflicts to be repressed and sexual urges to be channeled into school work and vigorous play. The ego and superego continue to develop as the child gains more problem-solving abilities at school and internalizes societal values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genital</td>
<td>age 12 onward</td>
<td>Puberty triggers a reawakening of sexual urges. Adolescents must now learn how to express these urges in socially acceptable ways. If development has been healthy, the mature sex instinct is satisfied by marriage and raising children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Psychoanalytic Perspective

Freud’s Psychosexual Theory
– Contributions and Criticisms
  ▪ Little evidence
  ▪ Contributions
    – Unconscious motivation
    – Impact of early experiences
    – Emotional side of development
Psychoanalytic Perspective

- Erickson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development
  - Comparing Erickson with Freud
    - Children are active explorers, not passive slaves to biological urges
    - Emphasis on cultural influences, less on sexual urges
  - Eight Life Crises (Psychosocial Stages)
    - Emerge at a time dictated by biological maturation and social demands
    - Must be resolved successfully for satisfactory resolution at next stage
    - Extend throughout life
### Table 2.2 Erickson’s and Freud’s Stages of Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate age</th>
<th>Erikson’s stage or “psychosocial” crisis</th>
<th>Erikson’s viewpoint: significant events and social influences</th>
<th>Corresponding Freudian stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth to 1 year</td>
<td>Basic trust versus mistrust</td>
<td>Infants must learn to trust others to care for their basic needs. If caregivers are rejecting or inconsistent, the infant may view the world as a dangerous place filled with untrustworthy or unreliable people. The primary caregiver is the key social agent.</td>
<td>Oral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 3 years</td>
<td>Autonomy versus shame and doubt</td>
<td>Children must learn to be “autonomous”—to feed and dress themselves, to look after their own hygiene, and so on. Failure to achieve this independence may force the child to doubt his or her own abilities and feel shameful. Parents are the key social agents.</td>
<td>Anal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 6 years</td>
<td>Initiative versus guilt</td>
<td>Children attempt to act grown up and will try to accept responsibilities that are beyond their capacity to handle. They sometimes undertake goals or activities that conflict with those of parents and other family members, and these conflicts may make them feel guilty. Successful resolution of this crisis requires a balance: The child must retain a sense of initiative and yet learn not to impinge on the rights, privileges, or goals of others. The family is the key social agent.</td>
<td>Phallic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 12 years</td>
<td>Industry versus inferiority</td>
<td>Children must master important social and academic skills. This is a period when the child compares him- or herself with peers. If sufficiently industrious, children acquire the social and academic skills to feel self-assured. Failure to acquire these important attributes leads to feelings of inferiority. Significant social agents are teachers and peers.</td>
<td>Latency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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- **Table 2.2** Erickson’s and Freud’s Stages of Development
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 to 20 years</td>
<td>Identity versus role confusion</td>
<td>This is the crossroad between childhood and maturity. The adolescent grapples with the question “Who am I?” Adolescents must establish basic social and occupational identities, or they will remain confused about the roles they should play as adults. The key social agent is the society of peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 40 years</td>
<td>Intimacy versus isolation</td>
<td>The primary task at this stage is to form strong friendships and to achieve a sense of love and companionship (or a shared identity) with another person. Feelings of loneliness or isolation are likely to result from an inability to form friendships or an intimate relationship. Key social agents are lovers, spouses, and close friends (of both sexes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 65 years</td>
<td>Generativity versus stagnation</td>
<td>At this stage adults face the tasks of becoming productive in their work and raising their families or otherwise looking after the needs of young people. These standards of “generativity” are defined by one's culture. Those who are unable or unwilling to assume these responsibilities become stagnant and self-centered. Significant social agents are the spouse, children, and cultural norms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old age</td>
<td>Ego integrity versus despair</td>
<td>The older adult looks back at life, viewing it as either a meaningful, productive, and happy experience or a major disappointment full of unfulfilled promises and unrealized goals. One's life experiences, particularly social experiences, determine the outcome of this final life crisis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Table 2.2 Erickson’s and Freud’s Stages of Development (continued)
Psychoanalytic Perspective

Erickson’s Psychosocial Theory
– Contributions and Criticisms
  ▪ Rational, adaptive
  ▪ Social conflicts
  ▪ Vague about causes
  ▪ Descriptive
Psychoanalytic Perspective

- Psychoanalytic Theory Today
  - Largely rejected
  - Necessitates the clinical method
Learning Viewpoint

- Watson’s Behaviorism
  - Observations of overt behavior
  - Continuous
  - Habits develop from learning experiences
  - Depends on environment
Learning Viewpoint

- Skinner’s Operant Learning Theory
  - Repeat acts if outcomes are favorable, suppress acts if outcomes are unfavorable
    - Operant
    - Reinforcer
    - Punisher
  - Passive
  - External stimuli
Learning Viewpoint

- Bandura’s Cognitive Social Learning Theory
  - Active information processors
  - Observational learning
  - Rejects Watson’s environmental determinism
  - Proposed reciprocal determinism
• Figure 2.4. Bandura’s model of reciprocal determinism. ADAPTED FROM BANDURA, 1978.
Learning Viewpoint

Contributions of Learning Theories
- Amount of information
- Precise and testable
- Clinical insights and practical applications
Learning Viewpoint

- Criticisms of Learning Theories
  - Oversimplified
  - Study in natural settings
  - Too little attention to cognition
Cognitive-Developmental Viewpoint

- Piaget’s View of Intelligence
  - Scheme
  - Active construction of knowledge
Piaget’s View of Intelligence

- Four Stages of Cognitive Development
  - Sensorimotor (0-2)
  - Preoperational (2-7)
  - Concrete-operational (7-11/12)
  - Formal operational (11/12 – beyond)

- Invariant developmental sequence
Piaget’s Viewpoint

- Contributions
  - Legitimized study
  - Social cognition
  - Education

- Criticisms
  - Underestimated
  - Training can improve performance
Cognitive-Developmental Viewpoint

- Sociocultural Influences: Vygotsky’s viewpoint
  - How is culture transmitted from generation to generation?
  - Socially mediated
  - Progression can be culturally specific
Cognitive-Developmental Viewpoint

The Information-Processing Viewpoint
- The mind is like a computer, information flows in, is operated on, and is converted to output (answers etc.)
- Cognitive development
  - Changes in brain and mental processes
  - Maturation and experience
  - Continuous
Cognitive-Developmental Viewpoint

Information-Processing Viewpoint

– Contributions
  - Insights
  - Filled gaps
  - Approach to problems
  - Errors
  - Strategies
Cognitive-Developmental Viewpoint

- Information-Processing Perspective
  - Criticisms
    - Everyday thinking
    - Model may underestimate
  - Both are being addressed by researchers
Ethological Viewpoint

- Ethology: scientific study of evolutionary basis of behavior and the contributions of evolved responses to survival and development
  - Assumptions of Classical Ethology:
    - Biologically programmed behaviors
Ethological Viewpoint

- Assumptions of Ethology
  - Focus on instinctual responses
  - Study in natural environment
Ethological Viewpoint

Ethology and Human Development
- Crying (for example)
- Critical periods
- Sensitive periods
Ethological Viewpoint

Contributions

- Adaptive, genetically preprogrammed characteristics
- Value of everyday settings
- Value of comparing to other species
Ethological Viewpoint

- Criticisms
  - Difficult to test
  - Retrospective explanation
  - Learning can modify
Ecological Systems Viewpoint

- Bronfenbrenner – ecological systems theory: a detailed analysis of environmental influences
  - Contexts for Development
Ecological Systems Viewpoint

- Bronfenbrenner’s Contexts for Development
  - Microsystem
  - Mesosystem
  - Exosystem
  - Macrosystem
  - Chronosystem
Figure 2.5. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model of the environment as a series of nested structures. The microsystem refers to relations between the child and the immediate environment, the mesosystem to connections among the child’s immediate settings, the exosystem to social settings that affect but do not contain the child, and the macrosystem to the overarching ideology of the culture. BASED ON BRONFENBRENNER, 1979.
Ecological Systems Viewpoint

- Contributions
  - Rich description
  - Natural settings
  - Ways to optimize development

- Criticisms
  - Biological contributors
  - Normative development
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Active vs. Passive Child</th>
<th>Continuous vs. Discontinuous Development</th>
<th>Nature vs. Nurture</th>
<th>Holistic vs. Modular Development</th>
<th>World view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychoanalytic perspective</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Discontinuous</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Modular</td>
<td>Mechanistic: children passive, development driven by environment Or Organismic: children active, development driven by child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning perspective</td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>Nurture</td>
<td>Modular</td>
<td>Organismic: children active, development driven by child Or Organismic: children active, development driven by child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piaget's cognitive developmental theory</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Discontinuous</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Holistic</td>
<td>Organismic: children active, development driven by child Or Organismic: children active, development driven by child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethological perspective</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>Holistic</td>
<td>Organismic: children active, development driven by child Or Organismic: children active, development driven by child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information-processing perspective</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Modular</td>
<td>Contexual: children active, development driven by child Or Organismic: children active, development driven by child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vygotsky's sociocultural theory</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Holistic</td>
<td>Contexual: children active, development driven by child Or Organismic: children active, development driven by child</td>
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<td>Ecological systems perspective</td>
<td>Both</td>
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My Viewpoint (from Concept Check 2-1)

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- Table 2.4 A summary of the Philosophies Underlying Seven Major Developmental Perspectives
Match Quips/Quotes to Theories

- Russian proverb: No matter how much you feed a wolf, he will always return to the forest.
An apple never falls far from the tree.
Match Quips/Quotes to Theories

- Spare the rod, spoil the child.
Match Quips/Quotes to Theories

- The things we remember best are those better forgotten.
  - Baltasar Gracian
We are not hypocrites in our sleep.

– William Hazlitt
Chinese proverb: By nature all men are alike, but by education, widely different.
English proverb: Everyone must row with the oars he has.
Custom determines what is agreeable.
– Pascal, Pensees, 1670