

Ch. 2- Theories of Development

What is a theory?

- (1) set of ideas; theories are not proven facts!
- (2) many people criticize theories as "impractical"; the truth is everyone is a "theorist"
- (3) good theories have a research base that provides evidence; they are testable

What do theories do for us?

- (1) they help us to explain what we observe in persons' behavior
- (2) provide methods for conceptualizing problems in persons
- (3) suggest strategies for helping people to change
- (4) provide a means for evaluating the results

There are several basic issues that all theories attempt to address

- (1) What is human nature like? Good? Bad?
- (2) What do others contribute to our development? (nature vs. nurture)
- (3) What do we contribute to our development? (activity vs. passivity)
- (4) What does development look like? (continuity vs. discontinuity)
- (5) Do all persons follow the same developmental path? (universality vs. context specificity)

SUMMARY: While theories vary to some degree, they are generally grouped into "schools" of thought. NO single theory is comprehensive enough to explain all of human behavior

Psychoanalytic (Freud & Erikson)

Sigmund Freud's work provided a foundation for many contemporary theories of development. Freud's theory is known for 3 major emphases:

(1) unconscious motivation for human behavior

(2) structural model of personality

- Id

- Ego

- Super-Ego

(3) Psychosexual stages of development

- Oral

- Anal

- Phallic

- Latency

- Genital

Erikson was a protege of Freud; he revised and expanded on Freud's work. while Erikson considered himself a Freudian, today he is considered a "neo-freudian"

- whereas Freud emphasized psychosexual themes, Erikson emphasized the psychosocial

- Erikson developed an 8 stage model of development that went beyond adolescence

- each stage of the model has a developmental "task" that is primary to that stage EX: Trust vs. Mistrust

Learning theories

There is a group of theories, associated with behavioral psychology, which basically view human development as learning:

(1) Classical conditioning

- based on the original research of Ivan Pavlov EX: "Pavlov's dog"
- further developed by John Watson; sought to demonstrate that all fears and phobic reactions were learned through classical conditioning
- when stimuli or responses are spoken of as "unconditioned", they are unlearned; to describe such as "conditioned", implies learning has taken place

(2) Operant conditioning

- B. F. Skinner is associated with operant conditioning
- emphasis is placed on reinforcement (R) and punishment (P); when a consequence is received, whether R, or P, it is considered "positive"; when the consequence of a behavior is something being taken away, it is considered "negative"
- R is of two natures: extrinsic (external) and intrinsic (internal)
- R, in theory, by definition, always strengthens behavior; P always weakens behavior

(3) Social Learning theory

- Albert Bandura is associated with SLT
- emphasizes observational learning; a person will observe a model engaging in behavior and being rewarded; they will imitate that behavior with the expectation of reward
- Reciprocal Determinism: there is a mutual, reciprocal interaction between our behavior and our environment

Contextual systems theory

Theorists associated with this approach include: Bronfenbrenner (p.22), Vygotsky, etc.

-emphasizes the effects of both nature and nurture

-human development is affected by 4 environmental systems; the influences are reciprocal; humans operate in all systems simultaneously

NOTE: in trying to help individuals with their problems, there are always systems issues at work, of which we need basic understanding