Quick Study: Developmental Stages

Freud’s Psychosocial Developmental Theory

- Freud believed that personality developed through a series of childhood stages in which the pleasure-seeking energies of the id become focused on certain erogenous areas.
- This psychosexual energy was described as the driving force behind behavior.
- Psyche includes: Id (a human’s basic, instinctual drives); Ego (attempts to mediate between id and reality); and Superego (reflects the internalization of cultural rules usually learned from parents).

Stages of Psychosexual Development

**Oral Stage:** (birth-1 year) An infant’s primary interaction with the world is through the mouth. The mouth is vital for eating, and the infant derives pleasure from oral stimulation through gratifying activities such as tasting and sucking.

**Anal Stage:** (1-3 years) Freud believed that the primary focus of the libido was on controlling bladder and bowel movements. Toilet training is a primary issue with children and parents. Too much pressure can result in an excessive need for order or cleanliness later in life, while too little pressure from parents can lead to messy or destructive behavior later in life.

**Phallic Stage:** (3-6 years) Freud suggested that the primary focus of the id’s energy is on the genitals. At this stage children become aware of their gender identity.

**Latent Stage:** (6-Puberty) Sexual feelings are dormant. Children develop social skills, values and relationships with peers and adults outside of the family.

**Genital Stage:** (Puberty-Adult) The onset of puberty causes the libido to become active once again. During this stage, people develop a strong interest in the opposite sex. If development has been successful to this point, the individual will continue to develop into a well-balanced person.

Piaget’s Developmental Theory

- Based on the premise that people actively construct higher levels of knowledge.
- Motivation for cognitive development occurs when there is a state of ‘disequilibrium’ brought on by a discrepancy between the person’s current understanding of the world and reality.
- Equilibrium is then achieved through a combination of *assimilation* (incorporation of new information into existing schemas) and *accommodation* (modification of existing schemas), which both lead to *adaptation*.
Piaget’s Stages of Development

Sensorimotor Stage: (birth to 2 years) Infants and young children learn primarily through sensory input and action. There are 3 achievements during this stage:

1. **Object Permanence** allows the child to recognize that objects continue to exist even when they are out of sight. Ex: A child searches for a toy that is hidden under a blanket, even if the toy cannot be seen.

2. **Causality** is when the child to recognize that certain events cause other events. Ex: A child realizes that they can use their hand to pick up and move a toy to a different spot.

3. **Symbolic Thought** is when the child to use language (symbols) to think about actions before performing them. Ex: A child begins to understand that words represent an object such as a dog or cat.

Preoperational Stage: (2 to 7 years) A key characteristic of this stage is the **symbolic function**, which allows the child to learn through the use of mental images, language and other symbols that represent objects that aren't present. Children during this stage engage in symbolic play and can solve problems mentally.

Concrete Operational Stage: (7 to 11 years) Children are capable of performing mental operations using logic and abstract thinking. This allows children to classify and problem-solve in more sophisticated ways.

Formal Operational Stage: (11+ years) During this stage, the adolescent or young adult is able to think abstractly, hypothetically, and in a relativistic way. Adolescents can develop competing hypotheses about a problem and strategies for testing the hypotheses. There is an increase in “thinking about thinking” and some return to egocentrism during this stage.

Erikson’s Developmental Theory

- Based on Freud’s emphasis on unconscious motivation
- Greater emphasis on the **ego**
- Assumes that people are basically rational and that behavior is largely due to ego functioning.
- Each of the 8 stages involves a **psychosocial task** that is to be mastered. If not mastered, the person still continues to develop, but the ego is damaged and subsequent stages will be affected.

Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development

Trust vs. Mistrust: (0-18 months) The psychosocial task during this stage is to achieve a balance between trust and mistrust. Basic trust develops in the context of the relationship between the infant and the primary caregiver and forms the foundation for all other stages of development. Failure to master the task can result in pervasive mistrust of others OR dependent, unthinking, rigid adulation of others.

Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt: (18 months to 3 years) The toddler’s psychosocial task during this stage is to achieve a sense of independence over her
own body in the context of relationships with primary caregivers. If a child experiences autonomy (in walking, exploring, etc.), she will gain confidence and pride, which then become ego strengths. If the child is overcontrolled or prohibited from exploring or becoming autonomous, she is likely to feel doubtful of her own abilities and excessive shame.

**Initiative vs. Guilt:** (3-6 years) The child’s psychosocial task during this stage is to set goals and carry out plans without infringing on the rights of others. Exerting too much control (or taking action that does infringe on the rights of others) results in disapproval from adults and subsequent feelings of guilt. Those feelings of guilt, then, prohibit the child (or adult) from effectively making plans or setting goals in the future.

**Industry vs. Inferiority:** (6-12 years) The child’s psychosocial task during this stage is to develop a sense of competence by beginning school and learning to do things on his own which instills a sense of pride and confidence. A child’s peer group also begins to be of greater significance in this stage as well and contributes to a child’s self-esteem. If adults do not support the child in his initiative, then a sense of inferiority is likely to develop where the child doubts his own abilities, making it more difficult to reach his potential.

**Identity vs. Role Confusion:** (12-18 years) The adolescent’s task is to learn the roles that s/he will occupy as an adult while developing a sense of personal identity. Peer relationships help them to explore various identities. Success in this stage leads to fidelity where the adolescent feels comfortable with others who have varying values, while remaining true to her own identity. If the adolescent fails to develop a sense of identity, than she may feel role confusion or a weakened sense of self.

**Intimacy vs. Isolation:** (18-40 years) The task during this stage is to begin forming intimate relationships with other people. An individual develops comfortable relationships with a sense of commitment and care. Failure to develop intimacy can lead to isolation, loneliness, and a feeling of exclusion.

**Generativity vs. Stagnation:** (40-65 years) The psychosocial task during this stage is to participate in activities that give the individual a sense of purpose such as a career, raising children, and creating positive changes that benefit others. If an adult does not feel this sense of purpose, he may then feel little connection to others and a sense of uselessness or rejection.

**Ego Integrity vs. Despair:** (65-death) The psychosocial task during this stage is for older adults to look back on life and feel a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment. This wisdom allows for them to face the end of life and accept successes and failures, aging, and loss. Those who see their lives as unproductive or with many regrets may develop a sense of despair and guilt that can lead to depression and hopelessness.