

Student Name

Professor Arizona Western

FAS/PSY 238 Human Development

23 October 2020

“Theories and Issues Poised by the Lifespan Perspective”

Development is a subject that can be defined and expressed in many ways. When discussing development you may hear about the Lifespan perspective which is an insight that “... development is (1)lifelong, (2)multidimensional and multidirectional, (3)highly plastic, and (4)affected by multiple interacting forces ...” (Berk 5-6). While on that note, remember that there is more than one type of development. Human development is involved with three basic issues and the Lifespan perspective takes a bearing on these issues. Just as well there are three theories that also focus on these issues. As we go on we will find out what these issues and theories are and how they are correlated to the Lifespan perspective. More importantly, is human development really enduring and truly agile enough to convert to our more fragile and most ultimate desires?

**Continuous or Discontinuous** An individual is born with certain skills and as they grow older those skills are strengthened and further developed, hence Continuous development. Discontinuous development is described as learning skills in steps; such as one way as a child then a completely different way as a teen and another way as an adult. The Lifespan perspective embraces both sides of the Continuous and Discontinuous issue because development is multidirectional. An individual’s interlude with puberty is typically viewed as occurring only during the preteen – teen years. Puberty, “... actually is part of an often prolonged life course process connecting childhood to adolescence and adolescence

to young adulthood” (Johnson, Crosnoe and Elder 2011). After closely reading this statement, puberty can be considered Continuous. Discontinuance can be described as learning skills for a fast food job as a teen; learning new skills after college as a writer then later in adulthood learning new skills and becoming an advertiser for fast food restaurants.

**One Course of Development or Many** Take two people who grew up in similar situations. Abandoned at young ages, both children were born to drug dependant mothers. They grew up in the same rundown area of town and both had problems in school with bullies. One grew up to be a successful business man. The other turned out to be a bully, thief and drug addict; jail being his ultimate destination. The Lifespan perspective illustrates on the issue by saying that development is multidimensional meaning our development depends on many, “... biological, psychological and social ...” (Berk 6), influences. This issue is also plastic in that human development, “... allows evolutionary change ... in response to environmental events ...” (Causey, Gardiner and Bjorklund 2008).

**Nature – Nurture Controversy** An individual’s development can either be innate or educated material. Born with the ability to be a great artist like dad or excel in math like mom is Natural development. A child not knowing what miss match clothes are, later being taught to match then later becoming a fashion designer is Nurturing development. There are various forces that influence an individual’s development. These forces are, “... biological, historical, social and cultural” (Berk 7). The Lifespan perspective comes into play with these forces. Not everyone sees the Nature-Nurture Controversy in the same light. Just as there is always a new theorist coming up with a new theory there are also, “Present-day psychologists that [do not] subscribe ... to the idea that the mind is ... genetically determined. Today, the nature–nurture debate is about how genetic and

environmental influences interact in the development of phenotypes ..." (Ploeger, Maas and Raijmakers 2008). Phenotypes are the visible features of an individual resulting from the interaction of genetics and surroundings.

**Psychoanalytic Perspective Theory** There were only two theorists that put in the most belief of this subject, Freud and Erikson. Sigmund Freud's psychosexual theory portrayed that in stages throughout development a parent could manage a child's sex and aggression drives which in turn would later determine how a child's personality develops. While Freud's theory had five stages Erikson's had eight. Erikson's Psychosocial theory is focused on the child's ego and acquiring a good attitude and skills based on cultural lifestyle along each stage of development so the child will be able to function in society with ease. Both the Psychosexual and Psychosocial theories have stages of development, apply to all humans and regard how parents raise their children. The Psychoanalytic theory is discontinuous, has only one course and it is natural and nurturing.

**Behaviorism Theory** John Watson infused classical conditioning into human development. He proved that a human's growth is based on their environment and that parents could shape their children by simply controlling the stimuli within that environment. Another theorist, B. F. Skinner, introduced operant conditioning believing that an individual's behavior incidence will increase if diverse reinforcers were used. It can be decreased by measurements of discipline. Behaviorism is increasingly learned and will have a different affect on every individual depending on how they were raised and when they picked it up in life. This makes Behaviorism continuous, have many possible courses and nurturing.

**Cognitive-Developmental Theory** According to Jean Piaget children are able to

learn material and gain their understanding of the world through stages of exploration and manipulation. As a child's brain is developing they are able to experience more. This will move them up Piaget's stage chart. This theory moves in stages, applies to all humans and happens while the child's brain is developing. We also see Cognitive-Development in this theory because an individual will learn when they are young and old. The Cognitive-Developmental theory is discontinuous, has one course and is natural and nurturing.

From my perception human development has more than one course. It can also be Continuous and Discontinuous. This is due to the fact that we as human beings have the ability to change the direction or course taken with their careers, education, health and relationships at any time we feel it to be necessary. I also believe that human development is both natural and nurturing. Humans are born with the natural abilities to do many great things but they are also taught as well as they learn to do so much more. Throughout a human's life expectancy an individual continues to learn something new every day. They can change their decisions at anytime or continue to grow and develop as they further their education for future career choices or changes. An individual also has the ability to mold themselves to how they see fit. If the person does not like the way they act, talk, laugh or dress they will find a way to better suit their liking. This firmly shows the agility of human development and that development truly is life lasting.

Work Cited

Berk, Laura E. *Exploring Lifespan Development*. 2nd ed. Boston:

Pearson, 2010. 12 – 16, 22. Print.

Johnson, Monica Kirkpatrick, Robert Crosnoe, and Glen H. Elder.

"Insights on Adolescence from A Life Course Perspective." *Journal of Research On Adolescence* (Blackwell Publishing Limited) 21.1 (2011): 273-280. Academic Search Premier. Web. 27 Oct. 2012.

Causey, Kayla, Amy Gardiner, and David F. Bjorklund.

"Evolutionary Developmental Psychology and The Role of Plasticity In Ontogeny and Phylogeny." *Psychological Inquiry* 19.1 (2008): 27-30. Academic Search Premier. Web. 31 Oct. 2012.

Ploeger, Annemie, Han L. J. van der Maas, and Maartje E. J. Raijmakers. "Is Evolutionary Psychology A Metatheory for Psychology? A Discussion of Four Major Issues in Psychology from an Evolutionary Developmental Perspective." *Psychological Inquiry* 19.1 (2008): 1-18. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 31 Oct. 2012.