
Foundational Theories of Human Development

Description of theories

Sigmund Freud, Margaret Mahler and Alfred Adler significantly contributed to understanding the psychoanalytic models in psychology through their concepts and theories relating to human development. First, Sigmund Freud significantly contributed to the personality theory through his involvement in the proposition of the psychodynamic model of personality (Alidemi & Fejza, 2021). Freud noted that individuals exhibit distinct personalities due to the conflict that arises from the aspects of the human mind involving the id, ego and the superego, which endeavor satisfaction from diverse desires. The id is concerned with the instant aspects of gratification of an individual's basic life requirements. Besides, ego acts as a mediator between the id and the ego components of the human mind, with the superego relating to how a person perceives the social rules in society (Hogan & Sherman, 2020). According to Freud, the human mind is divided into the conscious mind that relates to an individual's awareness of emotions, feelings, and thoughts and the unconscious mind associated with their childhood occurrences and experiences.

Second, through an emphasis on child development, Mahler pointed to different phases in a child's progress and how the initial bond with their mother results significantly in their progressive autonomy and self-reliance (Bahn, 2021). Through Mahler's theory, the three main phases include; the normal autistic phase, the normal symbiotic phase and the separation-individuation phase. In the normal autistic phase comprising of the first month when the child is unresponsive to external incentives while focusing on their innate satisfaction. The normal symbiotic phase, which lasts for five months, involves a situation in which the child develops a relationship bond with their mother and potential for acquiring assistance from an external source. The period enhances a child's acquisition of their fundamental psychological and physiological needs critical for their future engagements in society.

Further, the separation-individuation phase comprises four sub-phases; differentiation, practicing, rapprochement and object constancy. The phase underscores the period between five and twenty-four months in which the child recognizes their mother as a different entity and sense of personal self in their life. Through the sub-phases, the child grows progressively, attaining ages for independence and comprehension of care from different individuals.

Adlerian Approach

Further, Adler highlighted that individuals are unique exhibiting varied motivating factors and indivisibility during their development. According to Watts & Ergüner-Tekinalp, (2017), Adler noted that the rationale for an individual's behavior and beliefs involved the desire to struggle for power and more superiority while countering any inferiority complex they may experience course of their growth. Through the theory of individual psychology, individuals are products of their creativities with the need to reflect on a holistic perspective of an individual. Indeed, Adler's theory on individual psychology is more appealing to me as compared to that of Freud and Mahler. Adler's theory on perceiving an individual in their totality is specific in effectively understanding a person and advancing positive goals. Further, Adler's theory is imperative to group counselling due to its prominence in comprehending an individual's social environment (Johansen, 2017). Besides, group therapies would promote the adoption of positive behaviors while facilitating the institutionalization of appropriate social frameworks for the individuals.

Comparison and Contrast

The Mahler and Freud theories exhibit specific similarities as they define the process of child development. Mahler underscores that a child's development process regards their effective separation from their mother (Bahn, 2021). Freud notes that a child's development goal relates to their ability to attain emotional reliability, a

departure from childhood experiences and engagement with others within societal settings. Besides, the two pose similarities in designating the child development process. While Freud highlights the gradual development from birth and in their later years, Mahler observes the child's development from delivery to three years. Contrary, Mahler's development phase focuses on the definite perspective in which children accomplish specific behavioral attributes upon which they move to the next stage of their growth (Tan & Hutagalung, 2020). Elsewhere, Freud's theory emphasizes that a child may bypass specific development stages through their gradual changes. As such, the two theories are different in their approach to clarifying progressive child development.

Moreover, while Freud focused on an individual's comprehension as a subset of different mind structures, Adler's theory emphasized the need to promote an all-inclusive understanding of human behavior, heightening the aspects of superiority and inferiority as development attributes. Whereas Mahler's theory intensifies the mother-infant relationship and attention on a sense of self for development, Winograd (2016), Adler's theory points to the distinctiveness of individuals throughout their development from childhood.

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Freud's personality model would be integral as it highlights the diverse components of the human development phases. Mahler's mother-infant relationship is imperative to realizing the impact of childhood experiences on an individual's progress. In addition, Adler's perspective provides an integral approach to undertaking psychotherapy for nurses. It advances a critical approach to the holistic appreciation of an individual's situational circumstances in promoting appropriate therapy (Johansen, 2017). In conclusion, nurse psychotherapists need to comprehend development theories to effectively comprehend their client's circumstances and thereby provide a basis for implementing operational decisions and therapy sessions.

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