

INDIVIDUAL LIFE CYCLE THEORY

This educational CAPPE module is part i in section IV –

Theories of Human Development.

Co-authored by Peter VanKatwyk, M.Th., Ph.D., and Trish VanKatwyk, M.S.W., Ph.D.

Introduction

A main question in human development has been whether there is a universal course of identifiable steps leading to maturity in healthy human functioning. With a fixed developmental itinerary in place, punctuated with age related benchmarks, we could measure whether the person is on or off, delayed in or ahead of, the standard developmental trajectory.

Often psychological growth has been viewed in terms of a systematic progression through a series of stages, which occur in a predetermined order, which all children pass through, and each one of which takes the child nearer to the maturity represented by adult functioning. For the most part, there has been a concentration on the universals of development, rather than on individual differences. Rutter & Rutter

Some Questions for reflection and conversation:

Document what in your experience is most determinative in human development

- universals of growth or individual differences?
- chronological age or critical life events?
- biological processes or social involvement?
- other critical variables?

Writing your personal life story, where would you locate the marker events of change

- significant family relations?
- crisis events?
- spiritual/faith experiences?
- other change points?

This module will outline some of the traditional theories of individual human development. These theories cover a variety of content areas such as perception, cognition, language, socialization, gender and biology. In the context of spiritual care and counselling, this module highlights matters of personal development and relational dynamics. Rather than a systematic progression through a predetermined series of stages, the module will focus on life transitions marking personal change. Following Erikson's description of *crisis* as a developmental challenge in engaging a new and larger world, the human life cycle is read as a personal growth narrative. Erikson's schema of human development is holistic, based on the "epigenetic principle" that "anything that grows has a ground plan, and that out of this ground plan the parts arise, each part having its time of special ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functioning whole." (1968, 92). Such a development is comprehensive, guiding the involvement of human life towards biological, social, psychological, and spiritual maturity.¹

I. PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORIES

A. Psycho-Sexual Stages – Sigmund Freud

Freud's psychology includes a developmental stage theory that is biologically determined. The first three stages are anatomically mapped along *erotogenic zones*, primary body sources of sexual stimulation and pleasure:

1. *Oral Stage*
2. *Anal Stage*
3. *Phallic Stage*

The infant as a pleasure-oriented biological organism moves through these pre-genital loci of excitation – the mouth, the anus, and the infantile genitals – as precursors to adult maturity. The phallic stage goes beyond the physical body to include the family body of relational dynamics when the boy claims the exclusive love and attention of his mother in jealous competition with the father: the *Oedipus complex*. This stage focuses on male development while proposing a different and less distinct track for female identity formation through what is missing: “penis envy” and the “castration complex”. The *Genital Stage* as the final stage, the point of destination if all goes well, represents adult maturity in being able to combine sexual relations with social responsibilities, in Freud's famous words the time “to love and to work.”

The pre-genital stages leave their traces in adult maturity. Orality perseveres in the predilection with food and drink as well as in sexual satisfactions in later life. Freud's developmental theory informs the study of human character shaped and at times flawed by pre-genital preoccupations. For instance, Freud diagnosed infantile anal fixation in what we now call “control freaks” – the character traits of orderliness, punctuality and stubbornness.

B. Socio-Economic Types – Erich Fromm

Erich Fromm read Freud's developmental theory primarily as a theory of human character and social organization. Rather than Freud's *libidinous* delineation in erogenic body zones, Fromm followed a socio-economic, Marxist line of differentiating the kinds of a person's relatedness to the world:

In the process of living, man relates himself to the world, (1) by acquiring and assimilating things, and (2) by relating himself to people and himself...

- *Man can acquire things by receiving or taking them from an outside source or by producing them through his own effort.*
- *Man can relate himself to others in various ways: he can love or hate, he can compete or cooperate; he can build a social system based on equality or authority, liberty or oppression; but he must be related in some*

fashion and the particular form of relatedness is expressive of his character (1947, 58).

Fromm described the nonproductive character formation in terms of the pre-genital stages. Orality can be mainly receptive in a passive, masochistic process of accepting (sucking) or can be exploiting in a sadistic process of taking (biting). Anality can be a destructive process of hoarding generated and supported by a consumer culture of marketing indifferent to human needs and community values. In contrast, the productive orientation expresses Freud's genital stage of working, loving, and reasoning.

For Reflection and Conversation

- Do you see the Freudian schema of libidinous zones as a biological basis for or merely symbolic to character formation?
- Are the early years most determinative for the kind of person we are now?
- How can family or societal dysfunction contribute to developmental fixation at a particular pre-genital stage?
- Can we define infantile or sick religion in terms of oral and/or anal religion?

Some Primary Sources

- Erich Fromm. 1947. *Man for Himself*. New York: Rinehart
- Erich Fromm. 1955. *The Sane Society*. New York: Rinehart
- Wulff, D. 1991. "Erich Fromm: The Hope of a Humanistic Faith" in *Psychology of Religion*. Pp.592-601. Wiley

C. Psycho-Social Stages – Erik Erikson

Among psychoanalytic revisionists the most towering presence – both in the technical literatures and in the popular press – is Erik Erikson. No other innovator, furthermore, has given comparable attention to religious and ethical questions, or received so enthusiastic a reception in the theological and pastoral worlds. David M. Wulff in Psychology of Religion.

As a child psychoanalyst, Erikson in significant ways went beyond the Freudian developmental framework. Rather than a narrow focus on early childhood development and its potential for pathology, Erikson presents a psychology of the healthy personality, a philosophy of life, extending over the entire human life span and integrated with the "cycle of generations." Some of its major distinctive marks are the following:

- a ground plan of human growth

The *epigenetic* principle taken from the field of embryology is applied to psychosocial development: just as the fetal system is imprinted with specific times for organs to arise and become part of a functioning whole, so there is a timetable in the development of ego strengths towards a fully functioning human being.

- a psychosocial process

Human development is a triadic interplay between physical, psychological and societal factors. The human life cycle depicts a developmental process through which the person gains the “virtues” or “strengths” appropriate for ever-widening social interactions. *Hope, Will, Purpose* and *Competence* become the rudiments of virtue in childhood, *Fidelity* the adolescent virtue; and *Love, Care, and Wisdom* the central virtues of adulthood .

- a bipolar perspective

The growth stages of the individual life cycle are bipolar – one positive and the other negative. Growth does not demand the elimination of the negative pole for the positive pole to thrive. The first of the eight stages in the personal life cycle is one of *trust vs. mistrust*. The positive and the negative pole belong together, but for growth to take place there needs to be a preponderance of the positive: trust provides the thrust forward into the world with the realistic caution of a measure of mistrust.

*a story of many colors*²

Erikson uses the term “syntonic” to refer to the positive pole and “dystonic” to describe the negative one. Following up on this, Joan Erikson, his wife, has constructed a weaving in which the syntonic elements are depicted in bright colors and the dystonic elements are depicted in gray strands which are interwoven with the bright colors. She says that the gray threads represent the dystonic elements “over which the colors must maintain their dominance and brilliance, as well as their essential characteristics.”

For Reflection

How do you see and understand the following:

- An in-depth morality, rather than in black and white, comes in living colors.
- The “dark night of the soul” (John of the Cross) is an essential moment in personal transformation.
- “Every human life is made up of the light and the dark. How you think about this rhythm of moods makes all the difference” (Thomas Moore).
- Our culture is “hell-bent” on being happy (James Hillman).
- The colors in your own personal life-tapestry, with some strands dominant and others covered over.

Table 1: ERIKSON'S PSYCHOSOCIAL STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT ³

A. Psychosocial Crises	B. Radius of Significant Relations	C. Related Elements of Social Orders	D. Psychosocial Modalities	E. Psychosexual Stages/Modes (Freud)
1. Trust vs. Mistrust	Maternal Person	Cosmic Order	To Get To Give in Return	Oral- Respiratory Sensory- Kinesthetic (incorporative)
2. Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt	Parental Persons	Law and Order	To Hold (on) To Let (go)	Anal- Urethral Muscular (retentive- eliminative)
3. Initiative vs. Guilt	Basic Family	Ideal Prototypes	To Make (going after) To Make like (playing)	Infantile Genital (Phallic), Locomotor (intrusive – inclusive)
4. Industry vs. Inferiority	Neighborhood or School	Technological Elements	To Make Things (completing) To Make Things together	Latency
5. Identity vs. Identity- Diffusion	Peer Groups and Out Groups; Models of Leadership	Ideological Perspectives	To Be Oneself To Share Being Oneself	Puberty
6. Intimacy & Solidarity vs. Isolation	Partners in friendship, sexual relations, competition/ cooperation	Patterns of Co- operation and Competition	To Lose and Find Oneself in Another	Genitality
7. Generativity vs. Stagnation	Divided Labor and Shared Household	Currents of Education and Tradition	To Make Be To Take Care of	
8. Integrity vs. Despair	Mankind My Kind	Wisdom	To Be through Having Been. To Face not Being	

Some Erikson Resources and Commentaries from the Spiritual/Pastoral Care Literature:

- Browning, D. 1973. *Generative Man: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*. Westminster
- Capps, D. 1983. *Life Cycle Theory and Pastoral Care*. Fortress
- Capps, D. 1987. *Deadly Sins and Saving Virtues*. Fortress
- Erikson, E. 1968. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*.
- Erikson, E. 1985. *The Life Cycle Completed: A Review*. Norton.
- Wulff, D. 1991. "Erik H. Erikson: Religion in the human life cycle," Ch.8, 369-411 in *Psychology of Religion*. Wiley.

II. EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Attachment theory (John Bowlby) accounts for some of the individual differences in personal development. It focuses on emotional development, deprivation and enrichment within the infant's interpersonal world. Attachment is evident in the special and enduring emotional bond between a child and its caregiver(s), when a child clings to the caregiver, especially at times of stress, protests when separated and relishes being reunited. A *monotropic* bond refers to the early attachment focused on just one, the maternal, nurturing person. Multiple specific attachments are also held possible.

There are two types of attachment:

- *a secure attachment*
the child shows distress when separated but continues to play and is readily comforted when reunited with the caregiver.
- *an insecure attachment*
the child stays angry or avoidant (an active or passive style of protest) during separation and continues so when reunited with the caregiver.

A positive attachment provides a "secure base" from which the child can venture out in exploring new experiences in an ever-expanding world. Attachment is a biological process, a homeostatic process regulating infant proximity-seeking and contact-maintaining behaviors with one or a few specific individuals who provide physical and/or psychological safety. There is a *critical period* of development. Bowlby believed that if attachment is not formed within the first 2.5 years, the deprivation turns to permanent emotional damage resulting in limited capacity for social relationships and intimacy. Others speak of a "sensitive period" of 2.5 years, believing that the initial deprivation need not be terminal but can be restored and enriched to some extent later in life.

Attachment theory started with the study of the infant-mother emotional bond. Others have extended Bowlby's theory beyond infancy to the larger world of adult interpersonal relationships, with specific reference to grieving adults (Parkes, 1969), and the despair, loneliness and confusion of marital separation and divorce (Weiss, 1974, 1975). Clinical and theoretical work has continued on *adult attachment* as "the stable tendency of an individual to make substantial efforts to seek and maintain proximity to and contact with

one or a few specific individuals who provide the subjective potential for physical and or psychological safety and security” (Sperling & Berman, 1994, 8).

Attachment References

- Bowlby, J., Ainsworth, M., Boston, M. & Rosenbluth, D. 1956. The effects of mother-child separation: a follow-up study. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 29, 211-247.
- Parkes, C. 1969. Separation anxiety: An aspect of the search for a lost object. In Lader (Ed.) *Studies of Anxiety – British Journal of Psychiatry*. No.3; pp.87-92.
- Sperling M.,Berman, W. 1994. *Attachment in Adults*. Guilford
- Weiss, R. 1974. *Loneliness: The experience of emotional and social isolation*. MIT
- Weiss, R. 1975. *Marital Separation*. Basic Books

Wendy and Lucy (2008), directed by Kelly Reichart

Clip and review:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/video/2009/mar/06/wendy-and-lucy>

Wendy and Lucy is the best art-house girl-and-dog story you're ever going to see. It has the same emotional beats as a commercial girl-and-dog story - starting with girl loves dog and girl loses dog. The director, Kelly Reichardt, never hits any of the beats too hard, and though she sometimes breaks your heart, she's too wary of unearned sentiment to warm it.

She uses the bond between a girl and a girl's best friend to portray what our lower-middle-class life looks and feels like to an American who has gone into the margins. It's an unforgiving place, with few warm pockets. Wendy's dreams are modest: By the end, we realize that for her, a tidy little house with a well-groomed yard would be like paradise. But she's flat broke. She has left Indiana, where her brother and sister-in-law have no time for her (or money). She's heading to Alaska, where she has heard "they need people."

- from movie review by Micheal Sragow

For Reflection:

While this film tells a story about the significance of attachment, it also makes reference to socio-economic experience. How can we include a socio-economic consideration to our reflections about Bowlby's attachment theory?

III. COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

A. Jean Piaget

Piaget's voluminous contributions have been recognized as central to the study of intellectual development and the construction of reality in the child. The basic unit of intelligence is a *schema* – an internal representation of a specific physical or mental action. Schemas are in flux through the learning process of *assimilation* (where experiences fit into existing schemas) and *accommodation* (where schemas need to change in adapting to new experiences of the surrounding world). Cognitive development is the process by which the child changes schemas while negotiating the reality claims of the environment.

Two related metaphors:⁴

- *a conversation*

“Piaget's principal loyalty was to the ongoing conversation between the individuating organism and the world, a process of adaptation shaped by the tension between the assimilation of new experience to the old ‘grammar’ and the accommodation of the old grammar to the new experience.”

- *an evolutionary truce*

“this conversation...is marked by periods of dynamic stability or balance followed by periods of instability and qualitatively new balance. These periods of dynamic balance amount to a kind of evolutionary truce: further assimilation and accommodation will go in the context of the established relationship struck between the organism and the world.”

Piaget mapped this adaptation process along four major stages or “truces:”

- *sensorimotor stage (0-2 years)*
The world is experienced through immediate perceptual and physical (sensory and motor) means. Challenges to be negotiated are *object permanence* (objects continue to exist even when not seen or held), *egocentrism* (only one's own perspective of the world counts), and the *general symbolic function* (use of mental images and language to represent the world).
- *pre-operational stage (2-7 years)*
While continuing with an egocentric perspective, children at this stage can engage in deferred imitation, symbolic play, drawing, mental imagery and the use of language – all sharing a symbolic function.
- *Concrete-operational stage (7-11 years)*
Major acquisitions at this stage are *reversible thinking*, *the ability to center*, *classification* and *seriation*.

- Formal-operational stage (11-15 years)
This is the point where thinking begins to resemble adult functioning: ability to reason in the abstract and to use logical propositions in problem solving.

Cognitive development references

- Jean Piaget. 1955. *The Construction of Reality in the Child*. New York: Basic Books
- Beard, R. 1969. *An Outline of Piaget’s Developmental Psychology for Students and Teachers*. New York: Basic Books

IV. Social Cognitive and Moral Development - Lawrence Kohlberg

Kohlberg followed Piaget’s conceptualization of cognitive-developmental stages but focused specifically on socialization and the child as a “moral philosopher” who frames the moral order in social relations. It is a theory that expanded upon Piaget’s work by focusing most principally on the concept of justice, and positing a development that continues throughout an individual’s lifetime. Kohlberg developed three levels of moral thinking, with each level comprising two stages, as summarized in the following table:

Table 2: Moral Levels & Developmental Stages, Kohlberg 1969.

<u>LEVELS</u>	<u>STAGES</u>	<u>CONSTRUCTION OF MORAL REALITIES</u>
Preconventional	1	Punishment orientation, deference to superior power and apprehension for physical consequences of action
	2	Pragmatic concerns of need satisfaction rather than justice
Conventional	3	“good boy-good girl” orientation with approval seeking and conformity concerns
	4	Authority focus with respect for law and order
Postconventional	5	“social contract orientation” with respect for society as a whole with individual interests relativized by larger context
	6	Self-chosen adherence to ethical principles that are “logical, comprehensive, universal, and consistent.”

For Reflection – from the Urban Village to the City to the Global Village

*What we call morality began in the Mores, the life-conserving customs, of the village. When these primary bonds dissolve, when intimated visible community ceases to be a watchful, identifiable, deeply concerned group, and the “We” becomes a swarm of “I’s,” the secondary ties and allegiances become too feeble to halt the disintegration of urban community. Lewis Mumford in *The City in History*.⁵*

- Does spiritual community require an urban village culture of “maternal enclosure and intimacy and its oneness with the forces of nature” (Mumford)?
- How does religion in its moral teaching relate respectively to village and city?
- How do you understand the urban village – city – global village differentiation and connections in Kohlberg’s chart?
- What moral challenges are unique to the global village?

Some Major Sources:

- Hall, B. 1976. *The Development of Consciousness: A Confluent Theory of Values*. Paulist Press.
- Kohlberg, L. "Stage and Sequence: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Socialization" in Goslin, D. (Ed.). 1969. *Handbook of Socialization Theory*.
- Kohlberg, L. 1973, 37, 5. "Moral Education and the New Social Studies." *Social Education*.
- Munsey, B. (Ed.). 1980. *Moral Development, Moral Education, and Kohlberg*. REP.

V. Constructivist/Relational Development: Robert Kegan

Kegan has interpreted Piaget's model of development as a sequence of internalizations, a process by which something becomes less subjective, or moves from subject to object. This renders human development a cognitive process of meaning-making involving personal and interpersonal transformations:

Growth always involves a process of differentiation, of emergence from embeddedness, thus creating out of the former subject a new object to be taken by the new subjectivity. This movement involves what Piaget calls "decentration," the loss of an old center, and what we might call "recentration," the recovery of a new center. Kegan. 1982, 31

Kegan charts this developmental process between two poles of opposing yearnings: the one for autonomy, the other for inclusion – the duality in human experience that generates a lifelong tension. Every developmental stage is an "evolutionary truce," a snapshot of how differentiated or embedded the organism is in relation to its life-context:

We move from the overincluded, fantasy-embedded impulsive balance to the sealed-up self-sufficiency of the imperial balance; from the overdifferentiated imperial balance to the overincluded interpersonalism; from the interpersonalism to the autonomous, self-regulating institutional balance; from the institutional to a new form of openness in the interindividual. 108

Rather than a linear progression, the model is presented as a helix, demonstrating that there is a movement back and forth, and that each balance is provisional – we remain vulnerable to growth challenges at each level. The model affirms that human adaptation affirms both differentiation and integration, and disputes the common sexist assumptions in psychological theories that "differentiation (the stereotypically male overemphasis in this most human ambivalence) is favored with the language of growth and development, while integration (the stereotypically female overemphasis) gets spoken of in terms of dependency and immaturity" 108,109.

Reference:

Robert Kegan. 1982. *The Evolving Self: Problems and Process in Human Development*. Harvard University Press.

VI. Faith Development: James Fowler

Fowler followed the cognitive-developmental theory of Piaget and developed a correlation of stages of faith with stages of selfhood as presented by Robert Kegan: “Kegan has made a central contribution to the constructivist developmental family of theories by extending the Piaget and Kohlberg paradigms in the direction of ego development and personality theory” (Fowler, 1987, 54). Fowler has developed the following developmental chart:

STAGES OF SELFHOOD AND FAITH⁶

1. Primal Faith and the Incorporative Self

In the first two years of life the infant moves from an undifferentiated state of being to the establishment of a balance of trust and mistrust in the world as described by Erik Erikson. The first symbols of faith develop on the basis of a primal sense of goodness and badness of self and the surrounding world.

1. Intuitive-Projective Faith and the Impulsive Self

The emergence of language at about two years of age signals a beginning process of meaning-making and faith-constructions through imagination and stories. The child is embedded in its egocentric perceptions and images, and tensions between desire and fear of punishment.

2. Mythic-Literal Faith and the Imperial Self

The time between ages six and eight, the school-going years, mark a revolution in knowing and valuing through concrete operational thinking. Narrative becomes the principal means of constructing, conserving, and sharing meanings. With the ability to take the perspectives of others comes a sense of fairness based on reciprocity. God is anthropomorphic as a big parent or person who dispenses just retributions. Beyond the child years, the “imperial self” typifies the person who sees the world in concrete and literal ways through the filter of one’s own needs, wishes and interests.

3. Synthetic-Conventional Faith and the Interpersonal Self

Between the ages of eleven and thirteen a new thinking revolution shifts from concrete operations to formal operations with the ability to think in abstract terms. This shift coincides with a new dimension of social perspective called “mutual interpersonal perspective taking,” by which one can see an image of the self one sees others seeing. The term “conventional” means that the self is largely identified with or embedded in interpersonal relatedness, group norms and expectations.

4. Individuative-Reflective Faith and the Institutional Self

This dramatic shift in social perspective can emerge in young adulthood or beyond with the construction of an “executive ego” or “third-person perspective” providing an external angle for critically assessing truth claims and finding one’s own voice. This stage has been compared to a personal “enlightenment” with the accompanying “demythologizing” process of redefining conventional creeds and religious traditions. Such a faith movement can come at the cost of a sense of having “broken faith” with our betters, or fearing losing one’s faith or integrity.

5. Conjunctive Faith and the Inter-Individual Self

This stage reverses the movement of demythologizing the symbolic to the acceptance of “the multidimensionality and density of symbols and myth.” There is an integration of the basic polarities of life as described by Carl Jung and elaborated by Daniel Levinson as the mid-life transition: masculine and feminine, young and old, constructive and destructive, a conscious and an unconscious self. This involves an inclusive perspective with a “heightened sense of interdependence and solidarity with the stranger without and within, and with the human generally.”

6. Universalizing Faith and the God-Grounding Self

The “radical completion of a process of decentration from self” culminates in the practice of inclusiveness, justice and compassion envisioned in a transformed world: “a relinquishing of self into the ground of Being, a kind of reversal of figure and ground in which the person of faith now participates, albeit as a finite creature, in a kind of identification with God’s way of knowing and valuing other creatures.”

Source Materials

- Fowler, James W. 1987. *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*. Fortress
- Fowler, James W. 1981. *Stages of Faith*. Harper & Row
- Dykstra, C. and Parks, S. 1986. *Faith Development and Fowler*. Religious Education Press
- Levinson, D. 1978. *The Seasons of a Man’s Life*. Ballantine Books.

VII. Gender Differences

A. *In A Different Voice* - Carol Gilligan

Carol Gilligan was one among a number of psychologists and theorists who were beginning to examine the possibility of gender differences that were not being accounted for in the theories of psychological development that were being widely accepted and relied upon for an understanding of psychological well-being. The concern with Kohlberg's theoretical work was its privileging of the moral value of justice over and above other moral values such as that of caring. Gilligan suggested that Kohlberg's (as well as other influential theorists') work could not account for gendered differences. Her critique of much psychological theoretical work up to this point was the male-centricity that assumed that male psychological development sufficed as an account of human psychological development. She posited in her work, and initially in her most influential work of 1982, *In A Different Voice* that girls and women develop differently than boys and men. She was able to demonstrate in her research marked distinctions in the moral reasoning that girls and boys partake in. A well-known example is about an ethical question that was posed to boys and girls about a man who broke into a pharmacy to steal medicine that he could not afford, that would save his wife's life. Morally, the ethic of his conduct was judged very differently by the boys than by the girls: the girls found ethical value in his conduct, based upon the fact that it was done in the name of caring sufficiently for a significant person in the man's life, while the boys found ethical fault in his conduct, due to the fact that, quite simply, stealing is wrong.

Gilligan also took issue with some of the implications of Erikson's work. She suggests that Erikson privileges human separation over connection and links the concept of identity with separation, while distinguishing it from the concept of intimacy. Erikson's work names autonomy, initiation and industry as goals of healthy development, all in the name of identity formation. Gilligan suggests that the human whose development is being described here is the male child. While Erikson acknowledges a difference between male and female development, describing for the female an identity formation that is bound in the work of intimacy, he presents a theory of human development that does not account for these differences, and makes distinct and secondary the work of intimacy as compared to the work of identity. Gilligan suggests in her work that the relational drives of girls and women are not inferior to the autonomous drives of boys and men. She also suggests that identity and intimacy are bound concepts, but do not relegate the girl and woman to a role that is subservient to and dependent upon a connection with an autonomous, status-oriented male.

A Man For All Seasons (1966) – directed by Fred Zinneman

The story takes place in 16th century England. But men like Sir Thomas More, who love life yet have the moral fiber to lay down their lives for their principles, are found in every century. Concentrating on the last seven years of English chancellor's life, the struggle between More and his King, Henry VIII, hinges on Henry's determination to break with Rome so he can divorce his current wife and wed again, and good Catholic More's inability to go along with such heresy. More resigns as chancellor, hoping to be able to live out his life as a private citizen. But Henry will settle for nothing less than that the much respected More give public approval to his headstrong course. – written by Alfie Hitchie

Reflection:

A powerful scene in this film is when Thomas More's wife and daughter visit him in prison and plead with him to pretend to support King Henry VIII break with Rome. He refuses, and in the end is be-headed. How is gendered difference in morality reflected in this narrative?

B. *Relational Psychology* – Jean Baker Miller

Another theorist who was articulating a gender-based difference in the psychological development of men and women was Jean Baker Miller. She is widely known for her popular 1976 book, *Toward a New Psychology for Women*. In this book, she began to formalize a theory of growth, socio-psychological development and well-being. Her gender-focused work has expanded to become a relational-cultural theory whose main premise is that “people grow through and towards relationships throughout the lifespan” (literature from the Jean Baker Miller Training Institute). Rather than exploring a psychological theory of identity, Miller and her colleagues assert a psychology that is centered on relationships. Such a psychology becomes particularly relevant to individuals based on their gendered and/or cultural experience.

It all goes back, of course, to Adam and Eve -a story which shows among other things, that if you make a woman out of a man, you are bound to get into trouble
Carol Gilligan

References

- Gilligan, Carol. 1982. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Harvard University Press.
- Miller, Jean Baker. 1976. *Toward a New Psychology of Women*. Beacon Press.

VIII Postmodern/ Social Constructivism

A universal understanding of psychological development has been challenged by the work of such theorists as Gilligan and Miller. It is not, however, as simple as challenging universality. A question arises for which there is no easy answer: are the differences between genders and cultures biologically based, or the results of social constructing? Such a question takes us to the consideration of postmodern ideas about psychology and psychological development.

Postmodernity is, above all, a challenge to the concept that there can be one truth that must be discovered and then used to generalize and make predictions. Postmodernist ideas about truth assume that truths are various, created by perceptions rather than hard data. When perceptions become the guiding principle of a truth, it becomes possible for truth to become multiple, dependent upon the individual who is doing the perceiving.

Life of Pi – author: Yann Martel

“Life is the process not the knowledge” –quote from interview with author (see link)

Here is a tale that questions the importance of truth and certainty. Reality becomes unbelievable, and, at the same time, necessarily various.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BzqsKLbGpM>

How can we understand human development, when we relinquish a linear conceptualization of development and growth?

A. *Social Influences On Psychological Development* – Jacques Lacan

One of the theorists who explored the act of perception and its influence on truth and identity was Jacques Lacan. Lacan was a psychoanalyst and psychiatrist enormously influenced by Freud’s work. His influence on the postmodern movement is mostly derived from his desire to elaborate on Freud’s concept of the narcissistic ego.

While Freud develops the realistic ego as the goal of psychoanalytic treatment, Lacan discovers in the development of the narcissistic ego the development of personal identity where language acquires a primary role and function. By pursuing his interest in the narcissistic ego, Lacan brings about a shift in psychoanalysis, whereby the self, as it is being newly conceptualized, loses its intrinsic and core attributes, and instead becomes a construction of its social systems. These social systems are symbolized by and internalized/experienced as a series of signs: language. According to Lacan, language forms identity.

In order to understand how it is that language is able to have such a potent influence on the development of a person's very identity, we must briefly explore Lacan's concept of the narcissistic ego. According to Lacan, an infant's most primary experiences are completely immersed in the external world. The arms that carry her, the breast or bottle that feeds her, and the blankets that swaddle her are experienced by the infant as the one great whole that is her. This state of oneness with all cannot continue, and is interrupted by moments in which the needs of the infant are not effortlessly and promptly satisfied. She becomes aware that it is something external to herself that she must rely upon for these needs to be met. The narcissistic ego is her response, where the external world begins to be internalized, so that the needs can be symbolically met by the images of the caring other that the infant creates within herself. A sense of self is developed with the awareness that there is "other", and the narcissistic ego is the response to that awareness, which was brought about by frustration.

The infant's needs continue to be primary, and they continue to be met, now in a symbolic and internalized way. According to Lacan, as the infant develops and the encounters with the external world multiply, the symbols of the external world become increasingly available for internalization. The symbols of the external world that are most significant to Lacan are its language. Language represents the signs and structure of the social world, and, via language, the infant's sense of identity becomes structured by that social world.

Reflection: what is the language and social symbols in the following clip? How do these signs influence reality and identity? How does language describe history, culture and society?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcoT8vjs_a4&feature=related

B. *The Social as the Psychological* – Kenneth Gergen

Psychologist, Kenneth Gergen, discards "the category of self", claiming, instead, that psychological experience is a process that is entirely social (Gergen, 1991). Gergen describes the process by which individuals have become completely saturated by their social experience. The thesis for his 1991 book is that "the process of social saturation is producing a profound change in our ways of understanding the self"(p. 6). He contends that social saturation "brings with it a general loss in our assumption of the true and knowable selves" (p. 16). Gergen describes a saturated self that is the result of a highly technical culture where relentless access to global experience is unprecedented. The level at which this access is occurring leaves individuals saturated with multiple and diverse experiences, to the extent that our very ideas about truth and reality are being severely shaken. The cultural movement into postmodernism is changing the very possibility of a self and has altered what it is that constitutes identity.

According to Gergen, the postmodern self is one in which the self disappears; its manifestation is its relationships. Although he writes about the manifested relationship that is the self, he describes the result as an erasure of the self, but not an erasure of the social. The relationships within which the self is absorbed are so multiple and so constant as to cancel out the self, so that what Gergen describes is a series of relationships where the social so dominates the relationship as to completely subordinate the self. His famous remark, “I am linked, therefore I am” is a description of his argument that what is understood to be an individual psychology is actually the intersection of myriad relationships. Individual psychology is the result of those relationships and is in a state of constant flux, as relationships continue to shift, recede and occur again and again.

Some questions for reflection and conversation:

- How has your life been impacted by modern technology? How has this affected your sense of self?
- How might global existence impact a sense of individual psychological existence?
- How does the idea that truth is multiple and perception-bound begin to reshape the idea of psychological development?

C. For further study

The idea that identity and psychology are immersed in social life has had great impact on the work of contemporary psychoanalysis and philosophy. The works of psychoanalysts Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Bracha Ettinger are fine examples of the ways in which identity is being explored as an encounter, or an interdependent, inter-subjective process. Philosophical explorations of identity and truth have also been shaped by these postmodern considerations of fluid, ongoing and mutual existence.

There are some significant implications for current understanding of psychological development, as well. When we begin to embrace a conception of identity as being immersed in social life, we can begin to focus on interactions and connections. We can also begin to re-conceptualize personal autonomy. Theorists such as Ettinger and Lois McNay would refer to such autonomy as agency: the creative and particular response of individuals to their social and historical context.

Daniel Stern has taken the idea of an interactive self into his theory of psychological development. He contends that than early development is not marked by stages of separation and individuation. Rather, infants are born into a state of differentiation, and then move through “increasingly complex modes of relatedness” (1990). He also argues that this development continues on, so that the clinical issues of attachment, trust and dependency remain relevant throughout an individual’s life.

Conclusion

Postmodern considerations of identity and psychological development do not necessarily up-end the concept of epigenetic understandings. Rather, we are challenged to become less certain about the ways in which development occurs, as we take into account the complex field of interactions and social constructions. The context of an individual's life takes on a relevance that brings fluidity to psychological understanding. The linear direction and clear sense of a destination is relinquished. Rather, our understanding of psychological development is enhanced by an acknowledgement of the many structures and interactions in an individual's life. The interactivity of psychological experience is paralleled by a theoretical understanding that acknowledges a fluid, immersive, matrixed conceptualization, where separation becomes irrelevant, and with that, clean linear movement from one distinct stage to another. Rather, all movement is negotiated within an interactive field, each developmental crisis defined by and addressed within interactive space. We are defined by our interactions, we grow and expand and thrive according to our interactions, and at the same time, we influence the growth, expansion and thriving of our interactive environments.

Postmodern/Social Constructivism Resources

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NOTES

¹ See module IV, iv, *Healthy Functioning and Spiritual Growth*

² Donald Capps. 1983, 22.

³ Modified from Erikson, 1985.

⁴ Taken from Robert Kegan. 1982, 43,44.

⁵ Quoted by Brian Hall. 1976, 2,3.

⁶ The following description of the stages follows James Fowler's *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*, 1987.