

Going through this course and the materials involved, especially the textbook “The Journey of Adulthood”, has been an absolute blessing for me. It is kind of like viewing the course of human life through a biopsychosocial perspective wherein the very fundamental components of our reality, such as health, aging, intelligence, and sociocultural environment, are explained in detail from an angle that perhaps challenges much of what laymen would have thought really constitutes reality. In this reflection, I am going to address three areas of this course that I found to be the most important to me, namely cognitive abilities/intelligence, Bronfenbrenner’s theory of bioecological system and its use in real life, and aging. I will also connect each of these areas to my future professional practice.

Growing up, I always heard people making comments on a person being smart or ‘slow’ based on a single factor, whether it is the person’s conversational skill, memory, or sensorimotor skill. For a long time, I followed suit, attributing a single behavior that a person exhibits to the person being ‘dumb’ or smart. It was not until I acquired an understanding of the cognitive components of intelligence in this course that I realized people can be ‘smart’ in one domain while being slow in another. There can be people who drastically exceed others in terms of memory and processing speed but are lacking in motor skills and showing ineptitude in sports. As a result, some may witness their extraordinary memory abilities and comment that “they are really smart” instead of “they are really good at memorization” while paying little to no attention to their motor skills. It is essential for us to adopt a comprehensive perspective and see a person as a whole so that we avoid overlooking other cognitive abilities that make up

a person as a whole. A more appropriate narrative can perhaps be “that person is really good at memorizing words” or “that person’s abstract thinking is out of sight”. Now, it is salient to my aspiring future professional goal of working alongside children. Being able to see that intelligence is made up of many domains of cognitive abilities and helping children utilize their strengths to achieve the best version of themselves is extremely important. The importance of this awareness also helps us avoid making comments on people being ‘slow’ based on a single factor when in fact they can be good in areas that we do not see in the moment. The concept of cognitive abilities and intelligence is something invaluable to me from the textbook, though the course itself did not spend a substantial amount of time discussing it.

Just a side note pertaining to intelligence here. There seem to be several different schools of thought on intelligence and cognitive ability. For example, Cattell and Horn proposed the theory of crystallized intelligence and fluid intelligence, another way to view various domains of cognitive abilities. Crystallized intelligence refers to cognitive abilities such as executive function and problem-solving while fluid intelligence includes abstract thinking, reasoning, and motor skills. Therefore, these two types of intelligence are essentially a method of categorizing cognitive abilities. However, as I thought more about it, it appears that the development of some cognitive abilities depends heavily on that of other cognitive abilities. To put it into perspective, we need to draw from experience, past mistakes and successes, and a range of other factors to make decisions for a task, all of which would require proactive memorization and analysis on our part throughout our lives. So executive

function and decision-making, which fall under crystallized intelligence, do not function independently of fluid intelligence including memorization, reasoning, etc. Now, since cognitive abilities are interrelated, I can see how the generic comment that someone is smart makes sense since their overall level of cognitive abilities is high. But also given that someone can excel in certain areas while being incapable in others, it is still more objective to say that someone is good at something instead of making a generic comment, especially when the comment is made about someone being slow.

Another important theory I learned from the textbook that I think I could integrate into my future practice is Bronfenbrenner's theory of the bioecological system. Upon learning this theory, I thought to myself "Is not it obvious that our environment is composed of these things and why was Bronfenbrenner making a big deal out of it"? but as I delved deeper, I saw the value behind it. Specifically, the theory of the bioecological system can serve as an effective way to identify factors involved in certain scenarios. One issue I often think about is how we can mitigate substance abuse among teenagers, and with this theory, I can effectively map out different parties involved in the mitigating process. There are people within the abuser's microsystem: his/her parents, peers, and teachers. There are parties within his macrosystem: community centers, rehabs, and so on. The bioecological system can come in handy for parents who are seeking solutions because otherwise, they may not be able to immediately see all the parties involved that can potentially serve as sources of help. It relates to my future practice as well because education professionals often encounter behavioral, familial, and emotional challenges among

the pupils, and being able to always map out people and social agencies that can influence or help the pupil with the challenge is of great help. Also, I want to point out that the chronosystem within the bioecological system can perhaps be thought of as containing normative, non-normative, history-graded events, which are some other concepts I find interesting, though Bronfenbrenner did not make the connection.

I also want to reflect on the materials about life course in general. Certainly, as a person aspiring to be an education professional, some of the materials of this course and the textbook can be very useful, such as Erik Erikson's theory of stages of development and Piaget's cognitive development theory, to name a few, because I can be aware of what stages my pupils are in, which in turn allows me to tailor my pedagogy and practices according to the attributes inherent to those stages. But more importantly, I find the materials about the life course extremely appealing. We take on different roles during different ages, transition through the intricacies of life, cope with the death of our significant others, and have to face our own demise in the end. I personally always had this fear toward aging and death, but knowing that aging does not always equate to decreasing quality of life and happiness kind of made me not as worried. For example, Erikson's theory details that later-life fulfillment, a term he referred to as ego integrity, depends on if conflicts of previous stages are dealt with, which made me just more want to dedicate myself to living every day as if it is the last day because I know I am sort investing for the fulfillment when I become old.

Overall, this course has been an enjoyable journey. It endowed me with many things I had not thought of before, or rather, perspectives and theories that enabled me

to put my observations into coherent thoughts and words.

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