Basic Concepts to Understand Individuals

“Traditional” perspectives to understanding individual behavior

Freud—psychodynamic or psychoanalytic model
Assumes humans have instinctual psychological energy (id)
Ego – part of our mental life that puts bounds on expression of the id
Superego – internalized and often unconscious messages from parents and others that have capacity to rule the ego (e.g., conscience)
the unconscious element of our mental lives is very powerful as a determinate of behavior
early stages of development are very important in determining later behavior (e.g., oral, anal, phallic)

Skinner—behavioristic model of individual behavior
Views individuals as “programmable” by environment
Reinforcement—element in the environment that follows an individual behavior and increases the likelihood that this behavior will occur again

Maslow and Rogers—humanistic model of behavior
Views humans as having a weak motivation toward growth
Views behavior as being in conscious (being aware) control
Maslow emphasizes hierarchy of needs (physiological, safety and security, belongingness and love, esteem/respect, and self-actualization (growth)
Rogers emphasizes the importance of ego (sense of self)

Erikson—eight ages of “man” (ages are approximate)
Trust vs mistrust (0-1 year; crisis is establishing trust)
Autonomy vs shame and doubt (1 -3 years; crisis is parental restrictions vs autonomy)
Initiative vs guilt (3-6 years; crisis is taking initiative without guilt)
Industry vs inferiority (6-12 years; crisis is striving for competence)
Identity vs role confusion (12-17; crisis relates to developing mature identity)
Intimacy vs isolation (early adulthood; crisis relates to losing self in committed relationship)
Generativity vs stagnation (middle adulthood; investing beyond the immediate family)
Integrity vs dispair (late adulthood; facing death with integrity)

Piaget—stages of cognitive development
Sensorimotor—(0-2 years) precursors and first rudimentary stage of intelligence
pre-operational—(2-7 years) can use signs and symbols to think about things not present
concrete operational—(7-14) can complete specific operations (seriation, classification)
formal operational—(14-adult) capable of abstract thinking

Note: These concepts are based primarily on sources from Schriver (2001)

Submitted by Denny Falk, October 13, 2003
“Alternative” perspectives to understanding individual human behavior

Social systems or ecological perspective
   All individual behavior exists in the **context of a larger environment**
   Need to recognize the **influence of larger systems** (families, peers, groups, organizations, communities, society, and culture) on individual behavior

**identity development** remains a key consideration in alternative perspectives
   external societal factors interact with internal cognitive factors to affect identity

Gardner—**multiple intelligences**
   Linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences are all important

Gibbs and Huang—interactive model of identity formation
   **Interactive model** incorporates and expands developmental, ecological, human development and cross-cultural perspectives as interacting dimensions of children’s developmental life experiences.
   **Ethnicity**—membership in a group of people who share unique social and cultural heritage that is passed on from generation to generation… members believe themselves to be distinctive

Cross—model of African American identity development
   Occurs in **stages**—pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, **Internalization**

Stages of biracial, bicultural identity formation
   **Initial awareness** of differentness and dissonance (initially 3-10 years of age)
   **Struggle for acceptance** from other (initially 8 through late adolescence)
   **Acceptance of themselves** as people with a biracial and bicultural identity (late adolescence throughout adulthood)

White identity—whites go through patterns of identity formation in relation to people of color

Gilligan—a **different voice**
   The voice is not necessary exclusively male or female but reflects two different **modes of thought**. One mode focuses on **individuation and rights**, the other on **connectedness and responsibility**

Chodorow—**attachment** continues to be more important for female identity development and separation and individuation remains more important for the development of masculinity in boys

Several models of homosexual identity formation also exist—some parallel the Cross model and others (e.g., Cass, Lewis) define different stages