

# Historical and Theoretical Perspectives of Intimate Relationships

## Historical Perspective

The history of intimate relationships, as a part of the broader field of interpersonal relationships, goes back to the ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle. The oldest known historical discourse on intimate relationships was written by Plato approximately 2,300 years ago. But the views expressed by Plato in his discourse were more mythical than real (Fletcher et al., 2013). Aristotle started contemplating about interpersonal relationships around the same time. He believed that humans are social beings and gregarious by nature. From infancy through old age they spend most of their time with other humans. Aristotle suggested that people are attracted to three kinds of relationships that provide (1) utility, (2) sense of belongingness, and (3) feeling of pleasure. However, he thought that relationships between partners based on utility and pleasure are short-lived, if benefits provided by one partner are not reciprocated by the other partner. Aristotle also suggested that intimate relationships last long if the partners are attracted by the virtuous characteristics of one another. Although Aristotle's views about interpersonal relationships dominated the analysis of intimate relationships until the late 1880s, his thoughts and ideas did not go far enough to develop systematic knowledge, theory, and research on this topic (Perlman, 2007).

With the emergence of modern psychology and sociology in late 19th century, theorists including Sigmund Freud, William James, Emile Durkheim, and others began to focus on intimate relationships as a part of their own theories. Freud explained in his theory how childhood relationships with parents influence an individual's adult intimate relationships and psychosexual development. Freud also suggested that an individual prefers to select a marital partner who has close similarity with his/her opposite-sex parent (Vangelisti & Perlman, 2006). William James thought that a person's self-concept is influenced by his/her relationships with other persons (Perlman, 2007). Durkheim explained how social alienation and isolation negatively affect interpersonal relationships (Vangelisti & Perlman, 2006). Consent and engagement of both partners are necessary to form and maintain dyadic relationships, although the relationship can be terminated by only one partner (Miller & Perlman, 2008). Note that although the theorists just mentioned made significant contributions to build up the conceptual foundation of intimate relationships during 1880s to early 1990s, they could provide little empirical support for their views (Miller & Perlman, 2008).

A significant shift in the study of intimate relationships from theoretical explanations to empirical evidence began during the 1890s. A study by Monroe (1898) on 2,336 children to identify their traits and habits to select a friend is considered one of the first empirical studies on intimate relationships (Vangelisti & Perlman, 2006). Two other landmark events that helped the growth and development of the relationship science are the publication of the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* in 1984 and the formation of the International Association for Relationship Research (IARR) in 2004 (Miller & Perlman, 2008).

Currently, much research on intimate relationships is being conducted globally from different perspectives or approaches. The major approaches are:

1. ***The lifespan approach.*** This approach is concerned with the development of emotional bond or attachment relationships with parents or other caregivers, and transformation of them into adult romantic and nonromantic intimate relationships throughout the lifespan.
2. ***Evolutionary approach.*** This approach focuses on the evolutionary origins (remote or distant causes) of human mating, courting, sexual relationships, and parent-child attachment relationships.
3. ***Social psychological approach.*** This approach focuses on influences of individuals' interpersonal relations and personal factors including personality, and behavior on intimate relationships.
4. ***Anthropological and sociological approaches.*** These approaches focus on social and cultural factors such as social institutions, values, norms, and cross-cultural and ethnic variables that influence intimate relationships.

However, note that these approaches—although different but not completely independent of one another—are interrelated to one another. For example, research based on interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory and attachment theory focuses on all of the above perspectives as they are interrelated, although each theory has its own viewpoints.

## Theoretical Perspective

As noted earlier, psychologists and sociologists have formulated many theories about family relations and human development. Some of these theories that have made important contributions to the development of conceptual foundations of intimate relationships include Freudian psychoanalytic theory, Erickson's psychosocial theory, Maslow's humanistic theory, and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory. These theories are briefly discussed in the following section. In addition, predictions, postulates, research tools, and literature of Rohner's interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory and Bowlby's attachment theory have made significant contributions to the development of intimate relationships as an empirical science. These two theories are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

### Psychoanalytic Theory

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) is the originator of psychoanalytic theory of human psychosexual development. According to Freud, many aspects of an individual's personality development occur in response to childhood sexual instincts and parent-child interactions. He proposed five stages of human development based on sources of psychosexual pleasure (Freud, 1949). These stages are:

1. **Oral stage.** This stage extends from birth to 1 year of age. In this stage a child's main source of pleasure is oral activity—for example, sucking mother's breasts. The mouth is the center of psychosexual pleasure in the oral stage.
2. **Anal stage.** This stage extends from 2 to 3 years of age. In this stage children seek pleasure through anal activity and elimination of waste. The anal region is the center of psychosexual pleasure in this stage.
3. **Phallic stage.** This stage extends from 4 to 6 years of age. In this stage children develop interest in their own bodies and start exploring their sex organs. The genital area becomes the chief source of pleasure. The opposite-sex parent becomes the center of attraction.
4. **Latency stage.** This stage extends from 6 to 12 years of age. In this stage sexual interest remains hidden, children's sources of pleasure are shifted from self to others, and they seek friendship with peers, especially, those of the same sex.

5. **Genital stage.** This stage extends from 13 years to adulthood. According to Freud, at this stage individuals attain puberty and maturation of sex organs. They seek gratification of psychosexual pleasure through actual sexual activities. They try to find right person(s) for sexual activity, usually members of the opposite sex. According to Freud, puberty is the culmination of a series of changes giving sexual life its final and normal form. He described adolescence as a period of sexual excitement, anxiety, and sometimes personality disturbance. Freud believed that sexual urges and pleasures are the primary determinants of behavior.

## Development of Personality Complex

Freud suggested that during the process of psychosexual development (starting from the phallic stage), boys develop an Oedipus complex (sexual attraction for the mother and envy against the father), and girls develop an Electra complex (sexual attraction for the father and envy against the mother). These complexes are resolved through the identification with fathers (by boys) and mothers (by girls) and thus absorbing their beliefs, values, and behaviors in socially desirable ways.

Freud believed that every individual is inherently bisexual. That is why each person is attracted to members of the same sex as well to members of the opposite sex. He thought that each person has a constitutional basis for homosexuality, although the homosexual impulses remain dormant for most people.

Freud suggested that the basic structure of personality is pretty well formed during childhood (by the end of the fifth year), and the later development is just the extension of the basic structure. He considered that “the child is the father of the man.” He placed a great deal of importance on children’s basic needs fulfilment, especially on the ability of parents to effectively gratify those needs. He considered the mother as the primary caregiver to children’s healthy and continuous development.

## Structures of Personality

According to Freud, there are three structures of personality. They are:

1. **Id.** According to Freud the id is the irrational component of personality. It is completely unconscious. The id seeks satisfaction of instinctual urges and is ruled by the pleasure principle.
2. **Ego.** The ego is the rational component of personality. It regulates an individual’s thoughts and behavior realistically. The ego maintains a balance between the id and the superego. The ego is ruled by the reality principle.

3. **Superego.** The superego is the moral component of personality. It is formed by internalizing parental and social values. The superego is ruled by moral principles. An individual's mental health depends on keeping a balance among these three components of personality.

### Ego Defense Mechanism

If a realistic solution of the conflicting demands of the id and the superego is not possible, an individual experiences anxiety and tension. The ego may try to reduce anxiety and tension by distorting thoughts and perceptions. Freud called this process an ego defense mechanism. These mechanisms include repression, displacement, sublimation, rationalization, projection, reaction formation, and denial.

### Criticisms of the Psychoanalytic Theory

Few psychologists endorse Freud's pansexual views that sexual urges and pleasures are the primary determinants of all kinds of human behavior. His theory is limited in scope with an overemphasis on sexual motives as the basis of behavior, and the resolution of psychosexual conflict as the key to healthy behavior. He exaggerated the importance of early childhood psychosexual development. Psychologists find it difficult to accept his proposition that any kind of pleasure is related to sex. Another strong criticism against his theory is that it was based more on imagination and less on empirical evidence. Most of the postulates and predictions of Freudian theory have never been scientifically tested. A number of authors have argued that Freudian psychoanalysis is imperfect as a science, but it has stood the test of time as an influential source of psychotherapy (e.g., Michels, 1983; Tryon & Tryon, 2011). Several critics of psychoanalysis believed that the theory was based too little on quantitative and experimental research, and too much on the clinical case study (e.g., Horvath, 2001; Webster, 1996). Despite these criticisms, Freudian psychoanalysis, without a doubt, was a groundbreaking theory that profoundly influenced later theories of human development.

### Psychosocial Theory

Erik Erikson (1902–1994) is the originator of the psychosocial theory of human development. Erikson is often regarded as the first lifespan-developmental psychologist. As a follower of the Freudian psychoanalytic school, he started focusing on the ego as the central component in the

individual's developmental process. However, over the years, Erikson has widened the concept of human development from the Freudian view of psychosexual development centering on the early life to a broader concept of psychosocial development covering the entire lifespan. Thus, unlike Freud, Erikson has gone beyond early life and expanded the concept of development to the entire lifespan of the individual. He emphasized the psychosocial perspective of human development and formulated his own theory. Erikson's theory of human development is often considered as the reflection of his own life. So for a better understanding of his theory, it seems necessary to discuss briefly his life and the contextual factors that influenced the development of the theory.

### **Background of the Theory**

Erikson experienced many conflicts, confusions, and crises during his lifetime that had a distinct influence on the development of his theoretical concept (Hall & Lindzey, 1978/1997). His life and work have been the subject of two full-length books, one written by Robert Coles (1970) and the other by Paul Roazen (1997).

Erikson was born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1902. The identity of Erikson's real father was not known, because his parents were separated before his birth. His mother later remarried. Erikson was formerly known as Erick Homburger after the name of his stepfather. However, later in 1939, when he became an American citizen, he added Erikson with his earlier name and came to be known as Erick Homburger Erikson. He did not know at that time the identity of his real father, because neither his mother nor his stepfather informed him about his biological father. As Erikson grew up from childhood to adolescence, he started feeling increasingly alienated from his family (Roazen, 1997). After graduation, he was undecided what to do. His stepfather urged him to become a pediatrician like him. But Erikson deliberately rejected his advice. He spent a year wandering through Europe in search for a direction of life. Finally, he decided to get enrolled in an art school.

In 1927, at the age of 25, Erikson joined as a teacher in a small progressive school in Vienna, where the Montessori method was followed. Erikson became so interested that he attended a training program in the Montessori method. This experience had a profound influence on him. Some of the children in this school were in a therapeutic treatment program under the psychoanalyst Anna Freud (Freud's daughter). Anna Freud invited Erikson to become a child psychoanalyst and he agreed. Thus Erikson underwent a training program in psychoanalysis with Anna Freud at the

Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute from where he graduated in 1933. Erikson's acquaintance with Anna Freud became a turning point in his life. In 1933, Erikson came to the United States and started a psychoanalytic practice in Boston. He was the first child psychoanalyst in that city. Then he joined the faculty of Harvard Medical School. At that time he became associated with Henry Murray at the Harvard Psychological Clinic. While in Harvard, Erikson studied the way the ego or consciousness operates to develop a well-ordered individual. In 1936, he left Harvard and joined the Institute of Human Relations at Yale University. In 1938, he began to study cultural influences on the psychological development of native Indian children. He conducted further studies on them with anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, and findings of these studies eventually contributed to the formulation of his theory of psychosocial development. During the 1940s he wrote a number of essays explaining his views about human psychosocial development that were collected and published in his first and the most important book *Childhood and Society* (Erikson, 1950/1963). The book had a far-reaching impact on Erikson's professional growth and eminence. Though he has written seven other books, *Childhood and Society* is generally considered the most outstanding book as it lays down the basic foundation of his theory of human development. In this book, Erikson extended the Freudian concept of childhood by emphasizing the interactions of biological, psychological, and social factors in lifespan development. He studied young people and developed his theoretical formulation about identity formation and identity crisis.

### Basic Postulates of Erikson's Theory

Erikson proposed that an individual passes through the following eight stages of lifespan development from infancy through old age (Erikson, 1950/1963, 1980/1982):

1. **Infants.** Age range is from birth to 2 years, and the critical issue at this stage is the development of basic trusts versus mistrust.
2. **Toddlers.** Age range is from 2 to 4 years, and the critical issue at this stage is autonomy versus shame.
3. **Preschoolers.** Age range is from 4 to 6 years, and the critical issue at this stage is initiative versus guilt.
4. **Grade schoolers.** Age range is from 6 to 11 years, and the critical issue at this stage is industry versus inferiority.
5. **Adolescents.** Age range is from 11 to 20 years, and the critical issue at this stage is identity versus diffusion.

6. **Young adults.** Age range is from 20 to 40 years, and the critical issue at this stage is intimacy versus isolation.
7. **Middle-aged adults.** Age range is from 40 to 65 years, and the critical issue at this stage is generativity versus stagnation.
8. **Aging adults.** Age is 65+ years, and the critical issue at this stage is ego integrity versus despair.

At each stage of life an individual faces a unique developmental task and a major crisis or a critical issue that must be resolved. These crises are not catastrophes but turning points in an individual's life with increased vulnerability or enhanced potential. The more successfully an individual can resolve the crises, the healthier is his/her developmental trajectory. According to Erikson, the success in resolution of a crisis at any stage of life depends on how effectively an individual can face the challenges of that stage (Erikson, 1968). However, some people can resolve the major psychosocial crisis at every stage satisfactorily and go ahead to face new challenges, while others cannot completely resolve these conflicts and have to continue to deal with them at later stages of development (Miller, 2011). For instance, many adults have yet to resolve the identity crisis of their adolescent stage (Slavin, 2012).

Erikson emphasized the adolescent stage for its significance on adult development because it is the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood. For example, identity formulation, identity confusion, and identity crisis in adolescence are the most significant factors for adult development. Note that Erikson did not propose any fixed chronological timetable for the eight consecutive stages of human development. He thought that every child has his/her own timetable, and it would be misleading to prescribe specific duration for each developmental stage. Moreover, each stage is not left behind when passed through; rather, it has a carryover effect to the next stage, and to the entire lifespan development (Erikson, 1968).

The confrontation with the primary task at each stage produces conflict with two possible outcomes:

1. If the conflict is resolved successfully, the outcome is positive personality development.
2. If the conflict persists, the outcome is negative personality development.

According to Erikson, during adolescence the critical issue is identity versus role confusion. The question "Who am I?" becomes important to them. To find an answer, adolescents turn from parents to peers. He suggested that adolescence is a time of significant physical, psychological, and



social changes. During this period adolescents have to make decisions about education, career, and life partners. Teenagers often experiment with various roles including sexual, occupational, and educational roles as they try to find out who they are and who they can be. According to Erikson, those who are successful in choosing a right course of life can develop and establish a clear sense of identity and set a healthy trend of personality and psychosocial development.

### **Criticisms of the Theory**

Erikson's theory has been criticized for not explaining how and why individuals progress from one stage to other. Erikson is also criticized for his overly optimistic view about human beings, as Freud is criticized for his overly pessimistic view. Psychoanalysts often criticize Erikson's theory for its deviation from Freudian theory for concentrating on the strengths of the ego, the rational, and the conscious instead of the id, the irrational, and the unconscious. However, this criticism is not justified because Erikson's theory should be evaluated in terms of its own merits and demerits, and not in terms of its agreement or disagreement with any other theory (Hall & Lindzey, 1978/1997).

### **Erikson's Contribution**

Many professionals and practitioners consider Erikson's theory of psychosocial development as a useful framework for dealing with the developmental and academic problems of children, adolescents, and adults (Hall & Lindzey, 1978/1997; Salkind, 2004). Erikson's concept of identity formation, identity crisis, trust, autonomy, intimacy, and isolation are still being widely used by researchers and practitioners to explain developmental problems, including problems in parent-child relations and adult intimate relationships. Erikson's theory seems to have universal appeal, especially because his concept of development is equated with the democratic principles of freedom of choice and right to privacy.

Erikson's major contributions to developmental theory have been the extension of the developmental concept throughout the lifespan and the emphasis on the social context of development. Erickson is one of the few psychologists who believed that a child's degree of trust about parents, other people, and the world at large depends, to a considerable extent, on the quality of care she/he receives during the first year of life (Erikson, 1950/1963). The basic assumption of his theory that human development, including interpersonal relationships, depends on the

interplay of biological, psychological, social, and historical forces is now widely accepted and supported by research evidence (Hall & Lindzey, 1978/1997). Appreciating Erikson's theory, Hall and Lindzey (1978/1997) viewed that Erikson made significant original contributions with his concepts of individuals' psychosocial development throughout the lifespan in general, and identity and identity crisis in particular.

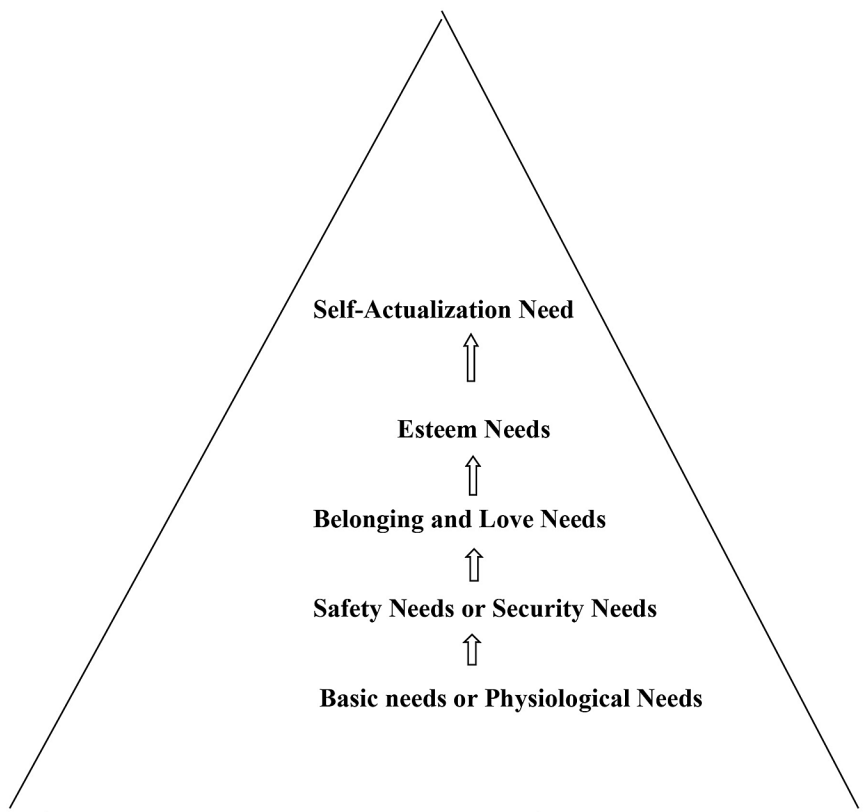
## **Humanistic Theory**

The most famous humanistic theory of development is the hierarchy of needs theory formulated by Abraham Maslow (1908–1970). According to Maslow, the primary goal of his humanistic theory is to explain human emotions, experiences, behavior, and the ways people seek and attain meaning in their lives. Maslow's humanistic theory emphasizes the idea that human beings innately strive for the development of positive self-concept and the realization of personal potentials. He focused on the concept of creative self. He believed that what a person would become mainly was dependent on his/her personal choice.

### **Basic Postulates of Maslow's Theory**

Maslow (1967) proposed that people are innately motivated to satisfy a progression of needs that can be arranged in a hierarchical order. Physiological needs are at the bottom of the hierarchical order, which are followed successively by safety needs, belonging and love needs, esteem needs, and finally at the top of the hierarchy the need for self-actualization. Maslow's model of need hierarchy is presented in Figure 4.1.

Once the needs of the lowest level are satisfied, the individual is motivated to satisfy the needs at the next higher level, steadily progressing upward. The ultimate goal is self-actualization, the realization of a personal potential. For example, when one's physiological needs (e.g., hunger, thirst, and sex) are fulfilled, one looks for the fulfillment of safety needs (e.g., protection from hunger, disease, and danger); when the safety needs are satisfactorily fulfilled, one tries to satisfy belonging and love needs (e.g., need to love and to be loved, need to share one life with attachment figures and significant others); when belonging and love needs are adequately fulfilled, one looks for satisfaction of esteem needs (e.g., status, recognition, and respect); and when the esteem needs are reasonably fulfilled, one strives to satisfy the self-actualization need (e.g., need to fulfill individual's potentialities) and tries to become what one is capable of becoming.



**Figure 4.1** Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Adapted from Hergenhahn, 2000)

According to Maslow, the lower needs in the hierarchy are more basic and more similar to the needs of animals, and the higher needs are more distinctly related to humans. Maslow also believed that until the lower needs are adequately satisfied, the higher needs are not strongly felt. Once the lower needs are reasonably fulfilled, feelings about the higher needs and efforts to realize them increase in intensity.

**Criticisms of the Theory**

Major criticisms against Maslow's theory are (1) the majority of people don't achieve self-actualization and don't have the same urgency to achieve it, (2) motivation does not necessarily progress in a hierarchical order, and (3) people generally don't keep the satisfaction of their higher needs pending until their lower needs are fulfilled (Verhaegen, 1979). Empirical

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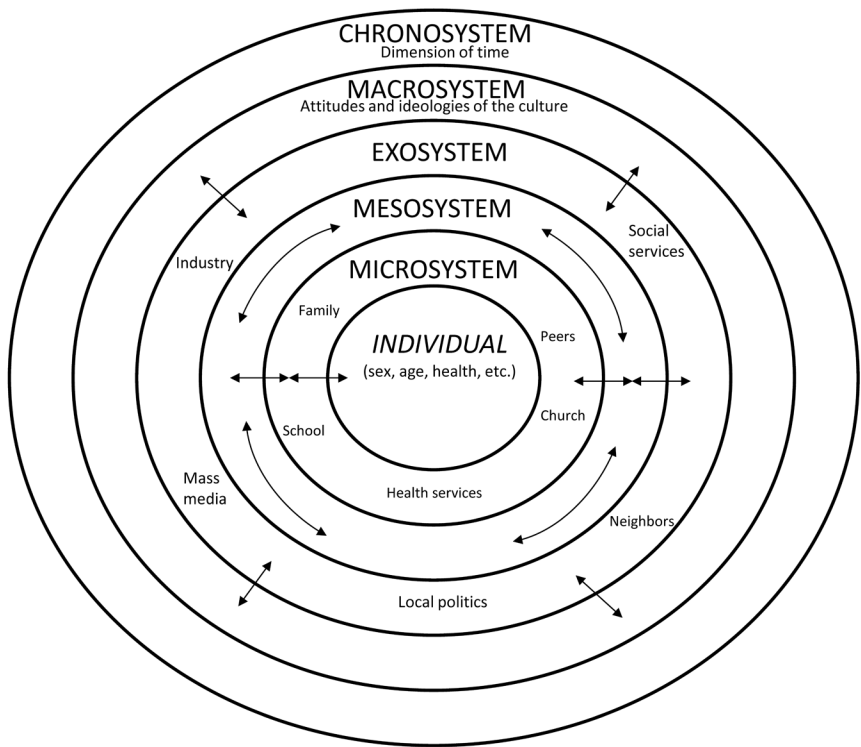
research does not support Maslow's hierarchical views that people are not motivated to fulfill the higher needs until the lower needs are adequately satisfied (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999; Hall & Nougaim, 1968). Some researchers argued that the theory makes some unrealistic assumptions about people in general such as (1) all people are alike, (2) all situations are alike, and (3) there is only one best way to meet every individual's needs (Basset-Jones & Lloyd, 2004; Kaur, 2013). Despite this criticism, the basic postulates and predictions of Maslow's theory have been found to be relevant to explain different aspects of human life, especially his concepts of belonging and love needs, and esteem needs are considered as important components of intimate relationships.

## **Bioecological Systems Theory**

The bioecological systems theory was developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917–2005) to explain how an individual's development is affected by the multiple contexts of the surrounding environment. He believed that a person's development is influenced by everything in the surrounding environment. Bronfenbrenner suggested that an individual's development is influenced by his/her relationships with a variety of people including parents, grandparents, siblings, teachers, peers, partners, and colleagues; and also by the norms, rules, and values of the surrounding institutions and organizations including families, communities, religious institutions, and socioeconomic and political institutions.

### **Basic Tenets of Bioecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner thought that there are five different levels or systems of environment that influence an individual's lifespan development. These systems are microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979). Note that Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory was under continual development until he died in 2005. Bronfenbrenner (1999) argued that the 1977 and 1979 versions of the theory had been altered because it focused more on the context of development and less on the processes of human development. Later on he started focusing on the process of development—person and context interrelatedness (Bronfenbrenner, 1988). Finally, he viewed the process-person-context-time interrelationships as the essence of his theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Different environmental systems that influence an individual's lifespan development are depicted in Figure 4.2.



**Figure 4.2** Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems (Adapted from Berk & Roberts, 2009)

### Microsystem

The microsystem is the closest system to the individual. It exerts direct and immediate influence on the individual. A microsystem typically includes family, friends, neighborhood, school, religious institution, and various social groups to which the individual belongs. The microsystem is the most influential level among the ecological systems. The influences of a microsystem can be bidirectional—positive or negative. A good microsystem offers positive support for an individual's healthy development.

### Mesosystem

The next level of ecological systems is the mesosystem. The microsystem does not function independently. The mesosystem involves reciprocal relations and interactions among different parts of a person's microsystem—for example, interconnections between home, neighborhood, school, and

work. Problems in one microsystem can affect activities in other microsystems. For example, a problem in a family can affect a child's performance in school, or a problem in a marital relationship can affect the work performance of an employee.

### ***Exosystem***

The exosystem refers to those settings in which an individual does not play an active part but still affect him or her. For example, a child has no control over the marital discord of parents or parents' job-related problems, but she/he still can be affected by such problems.

### ***Macrosystem***

The macrosystem refers to the ideologies, values, beliefs, customs, and norms of a particular culture in which an individual is born and grows up. Different cultural values are likely to have differential effects on individuals' life. The macrosystem also includes different political and economic systems. For example, consider the effects of economic hardship on the development of a child growing up in a third-world country versus the effects of economic affluence on the development of a child growing up in a Western industrialized country.

### ***Chronosystem***

The chronosystem refers to the dimension of time as it impacts human development. For example, changes in family structures, place of residence, war and peace, and economic cycles over time can have tremendous influences on individuals' lifespan development.

## **Implications of the Bioecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory has a great potential to provide a deep insight and understanding of the processes of human development (Tudge et al., 2009). The theory is one of the most widely accepted and applied theories for explaining and understanding the contexts, processes, and dynamics of interpersonal relationships and human development (Rice & Dolgin, 2008).

## **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Chapter 4 focuses on the historical development of the concept of intimate relationship and the background of the development of intimate

relationship as a part of a relational science. This chapter also discusses some of the major relevant theories, including psychoanalytic theory, psychosocial theory, humanistic theory, and bioecological theory.

**Historical development of the concept of intimate relationship.** History of the concept of intimate relationship goes back to the ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle. The oldest known historical discourse on intimate relationships was written by Plato. Aristotle thought that people are attracted to relationships that provide utility, sense of belongingness, and feeling of pleasure. He also suggested that intimate relationships last long if partners are attracted by the virtuous characteristics of one another.

**Later development.** With the emergence of modern psychology in the late 19th century, theorists including Freud, Erikson, Maslow, Bronfenbrenner, and others began to focus on intimate relationships as a part of their own theories.

**Freudian psychoanalytic theory.** According to Freud, sexual urges and pleasures are the primary determinants of all kinds of human relations and behavior including attachment relationships from childhood through adulthood. Although few psychologists endorse Freud's pansexual views, psychoanalysis was a groundbreaking theory that profoundly influenced the later theories of human development.

**Erikson's psychosocial theory.** Erikson widened the concept of human development from the Freudian view of psychosexual development centering on early life to a broader concept of psychosocial development covering the entire lifespan. Erikson's concept of identity formation, identity crisis, trust, autonomy, intimacy, and isolation are still being widely used by researchers and practitioners to explain developmental problems, including problems in parent-child relations and adult intimate relationships.

**Maslow's humanistic theory.** Maslow proposed that people are innately motivated to satisfy a progression of needs starting with physiological needs at the bottom of the hierarchical order, which are followed successively by safety needs, belonging and love needs, esteem needs, and at the top of the hierarchy the need for self-actualization. The basic postulates and predictions of Maslow's theory, especially his concepts of belonging and love needs and esteem needs are considered important components of intimate relationships.

**Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory.** Bronfenbrenner thought that five different levels or systems of environment influence an individual lifespan development. These systems are microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Bioecological systems theory is one of the most widely accepted and applied theories for explaining and understanding the contexts, processes, and dynamics of interpersonal relationships and human development.

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS**

1. Discuss the early historical perspectives and current approaches of intimate relationships as a part of the broader field of interpersonal relationships.
2. Do you agree that Freud exaggerated the importance of early childhood psychosexual development as a basis of later development and psychological adjustment throughout an individual's lifespan? If yes, why? If not, why not?
3. Explain how Erikson has widened the concept of human development from the Freudian view of psychosexual development centering on early life to a broader concept of psychosocial development covering the entire lifespan?
4. Discuss the basic postulates of Maslow's theory. Explain why belonging or love needs and esteem needs are considered important components of intimate relationships.
5. Why is bioecological systems theory considered one of the most widely accepted and applied theories for explaining and understanding the contexts, processes, and dynamics of interpersonal relationships and human development?