

Hello, class. So in our study of the stages and the theory of psychosocial development, it's important to realize that like any psychological theory, or really any theory in science in general, there's criticism and there's concern that the theory isn't necessarily all-encompassing or doesn't explain everything completely.

In Erikson's case and his theory of psychosocial development, which looks over the eight stages of life and the effects that experiences and social interactions can have on our internal cognitive development, the criticism is that Erikson is focused entirely too much on early development and he doesn't pay enough attention to the later development in life. So he tends to lump everything together into broad categories that span many years. So a lot of theorists since Erikson have tried to fill in the blanks in different ways and try to add additional information and stages to those later parts of life.

One such psychologist is George Vaillant. Vaillant is an American psychologist and a professor at Harvard. And his focus is on aging and the later development of people. His studies focus particularly on men. So it's important to realize that a lot of the generalizations and the ideas that he's propounding aren't necessarily focused on everybody. They're focused more specifically on men.

So let's take a look at some of the additional stages that he's added to the Erikson cycle. So Vaillant's additional stages begin around the young adult stage, between Erikson's stages of intimacy and generativity, so that young adult and later adult stages. And the stage that Vaillant adds is what's called career consolidation.

This is when a young adult is attempting to establish their own competence in their area of work or study. And they're trying to master their profession in particular. And they're also trying to acquire a positive reputation, so they're looking at what others think about them in a professional kind of sense. So this is a little bit different from the ideas of generativity that Erikson says, in that they're not necessarily just focused on the contribution they're making towards others. There's a bit more of an internal focus as well.

So after that, we've got Erikson's stage of generativity versus stagnation, which is mid-adulthood, up to the 40s. And then we've got-- up through the 40s. Excuse me.

And then we have an additional stage again which Vaillant terms the Keepers of Meaning. And this is when men hit their 50s and 60s. And during this stage, they begin to display that concern for the next generation, like in Erikson's idea of integrity versus despair, which comes later.

However the focus of the Keepers of Meaning section is the need to pass on their culture and traditions to the next generation, and to teach others what they've been learning throughout life. So that's the focus of this sort of

Keepers of Meaning section. They realize that they have a lot of information that they want to pass on to the next generation.

After that, in their 70s, during Erikson's integrity versus despair stage that he set out, he also notes, Vaillant also notes that in addition to being very reflective during this stage and looking back on their lives and accepting the things that they've done, men also become very spiritual during this time. So you can see how in addition to the Erikson stages, Vaillant kind of refines those ideas about later life and adds additional detail to fill out those ideas so they're not necessarily one-dimensional in those kinds of ways.

In addition to these added stages that Vaillant added to Erikson's theories, Vaillant also expanded on the idea of maturity. So what maturity is is displaying certain characteristics that are appropriately developed for an adult, for example, displaying forgiveness or gratitude, things that might not necessarily come earlier in life but that a later adult, and especially an elderly adult, should be able to display if they're a well adjusted or adapted person.

And this idea of maturity comes from an additional idea of defense mechanisms. And defense mechanisms are a very Freudian psychoanalytical or psychodynamic idea, which are the different sorts of ways that people deal with stress in some sort of fashion. And what Vaillant said was that these defense mechanisms might differ in degrees in development. There might be very immature ways of dealing with things. And there might also be very mature ways.

So when we age, we should be able to develop or mature these defense mechanisms into healthy or useful types of mechanisms. So earlier in life we might use humor in an immature way. But as we become older, that humor might be a helpful way for us to cope with problems that we're facing.

Or another example is that earlier in life, we'd start to develop a defense mechanism of repression, which is to say we try to suppress or we try to keep away those negative thoughts that we have where we're ignoring them. Later in life, the idea is that we should develop thought suppression, which is a bit different. And it's a way of making it possible to cope with negative feelings in a realistic and appropriate kind of way depending on our setting.

So if we're having negative feelings, we don't just push them down and never deal with them, but rather we wait to deal with them until we're in a setting where it's appropriate. And then we accept that in the right kinds of ways. So in that way, maturity helps us to become adults that can deal with the stresses of the world in appropriate kinds of ways.