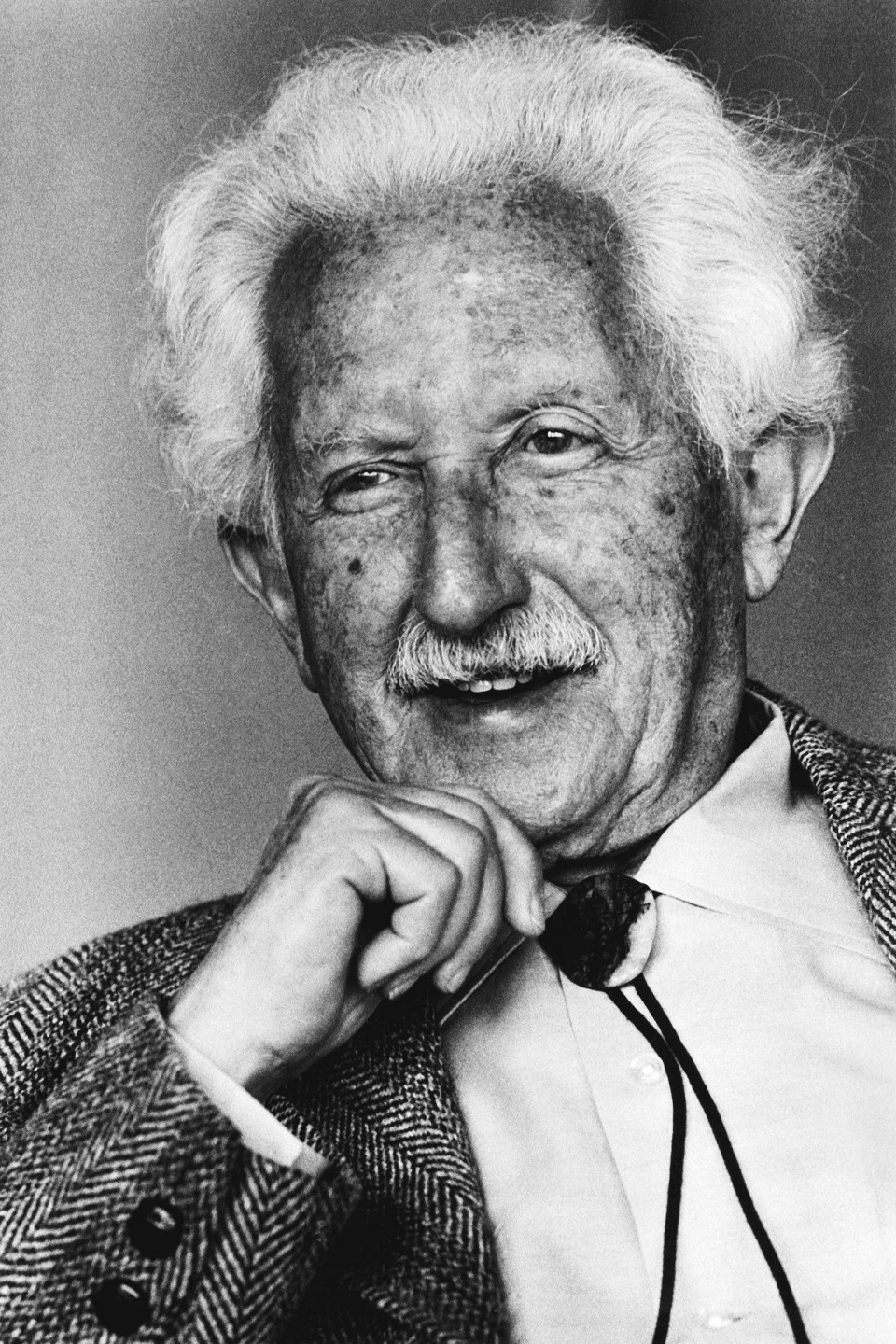


Erik Erikson & Identity Theory

SIUE PSYC 340

The background of the slide features a dark grey surface with a repeating pattern of colorful, semi-transparent circles. These circles, in shades of red, yellow, and blue, are arranged in a grid-like fashion, creating a textured, perforated appearance. The circles vary in size and are slightly offset from each other, giving a three-dimensional effect.

Erik Erikson



Life of Erikson

- Erik Erikson (1902–1994) was a German-American psychoanalyst and developmental psychologist.
- He elaborated on Freud's stages of development, suggesting personality continues to develop over the entire life span and placing a greater emphasis on the ego than on the id.

Life of Erikson

- Born in Germany to Danish parents (surname Salomonsen)
- Suffered from identity crises in childhood
 - Abandoned by his biological father
 - Raised by his Jewish stepfather, Dr. Homburger (whom he thought was his biological father)
 - Kept the surname Homburger until age 37 when he became a U.S. citizen and changed it to Erikson

Life of Erikson

- Rejected by his peers
 - German classmates rejected him because his mother and stepfather were Jewish
 - Jewish classmates rejected him because he was tall and blond
- Dropped out of conventional society and traveled extensively in Europe
 - Described himself as morbidly sensitive and neurotic (even close to psychotic)

Life of Erikson

- Early career experiences in his 20s and 30s increased his awareness of the social influence on personality
 - Began tutoring the children of Anna Freud's patients at the Burlingham-Rosenfeld School in 1927
 - Completed his training to be a Freudian psychoanalyst at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute in 1933

Life of Erikson

- Immigrated to Denmark and then the USA in 1933 to escape the Nazi regime
 - Worked with children and emotionally disturbed delinquents
 - Worked at Yale University, University of California at Berkeley, and Harvard University before retiring in 1970
- Published his major works in the 1950s and 60s
 - Influenced generations of psychologists, psychiatrists, teachers, and counselors who found value in his description of personality development over the life span

Life of Erikson

- Studied the Sioux tribe in South Dakota in 1938 and the Yurok tribe in northern California in the 1940s
 - Noted that certain psychological symptoms appeared to be related to a sense of alienation from cultural traditions and resulted in the lack of a clear self-image
 - Observed similar symptoms of what he called identity confusion among emotionally disturbed veterans after World War II

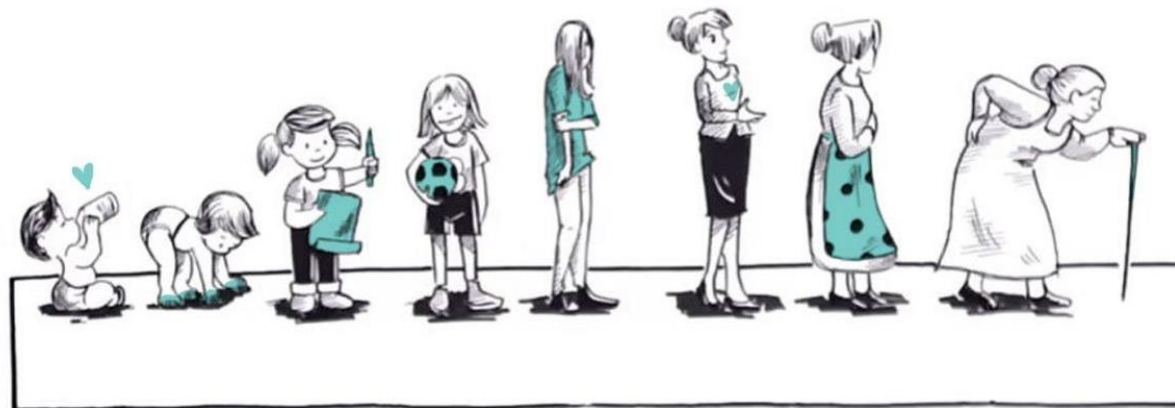
Erikson's Theory

- Suggested personality development is impacted by biological and social factors
 - Believed the process is governed by the **epigenetic principle of maturation** as it occurs through a sequence of genetically predetermined stages
 - Added that social and environmental forces then determine how these stages are realized



Psychosocial Stages of Personality Development

- Proposed eight (8) psychosocial stages of personality development
 - 1st four stages – Determined partially by parents, teachers, peer groups, and various opportunities that are largely beyond one's control
 - 2nd four stages – Determined more by one's free will



Psychosocial Stages of Personality Development

STAGE	AGES	ADAPTIVE VS. MALADAPTIVE WAYS OF COPING	BASIC STRENGTH
Oral-sensory	Birth–1	Trust vs. mistrust	Hope
Muscular-anal	1–3	Autonomy vs. doubt, shame	Will
Locomotor-genital	3–5	Initiative vs. guilt	Purpose
Latency	6–11	Industriousness vs. inferiority	Competence
Adolescence	12–18	Identity cohesion vs. role confusion	Fidelity
Young adulthood	18–35	Intimacy vs. isolation	Love
Adulthood	35–55	Generativity vs. stagnation	Care
Maturity—old age	55+ years	Ego integrity vs. despair	Wisdom

Erikson's Theory

- At each stage, we must overcome a **crisis**, which Erikson defined as a confrontation with one's environment.
 - Involves a shift in perspective, requiring a refocus of one's instinctual energy in accordance with the needs of each stage of the life cycle
 - Potential for these crises exists at birth
 - Ego must use both adaptive (positive) and maladaptive (negative) ways of coping

Erikson's Theory

- Once a crisis has been resolved, **basic strengths** or virtues, emerge.
 - Each stage is associated with a different basic strength (e.g., hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care, and wisdom).
 - These strengths are interdependent in that one cannot develop until the previous stage's strengths has been developed.
- If a crisis is not resolved, people develop **basic weaknesses** and are less able to adapt to problems in a later stage.

Erikson's Theory

- When the ego consists of a single way of coping with conflict, development is unbalanced (what Erikson called **maldevelopment**).
 - **Maladaptions** emerge when only the *positive* tendency is present.
 - Can lead to neuroses
 - **Malignancies** emerge when only the *negative* tendency is present.
 - Can lead to psychoses

Erikson's Theory

- He reasoned that both conditions could be corrected through psychotherapy.
 - Maladaptions can also be treated through readaptation, environmental changes, supportive relationships, or successful adaptation at a later stage.

STAGE	WAY OF COPING	MALDEVELOPMENT
Oral-sensory	Trust	Sensory maladjustment
	Mistrust	Withdrawal
Muscular-anal	Autonomy	Shameless willfulness
	Doubt, shame	Compulsion
Locomotor-genital	Initiative	Ruthlessness
	Guilt	Inhibition
Latency	Industriousness	Narrow virtuosity
	Inferiority	Inertia
Adolescence	Identity cohesion	Fanaticism
	Role confusion	Repudiation
Young adulthood	Intimacy	Promiscuity
	Isolation	Exclusivity
Adulthood	Generativity	Overextension
	Stagnation	Rejectivity
Maturity and old age	Ego integrity	Presumption
	Despair	Disdain

Stage 1: Oral-Sensory

- Occurs from birth to age 1 when infants are dependent on their primary caregivers for survival, security, and affection
 - If the mother is affectionate and loving, trust develops.
 - The infant learns to expect consistency and continuity from others.
 - If the mother is rejecting or inattentive, mistrust develops.
 - The infant learns to be suspicious and fearful of others.

Stage 2: Muscular-Anal

- Occurs from age 2-3 when children rapidly develop a variety of physical and mental abilities and begin to gain independence



- If the child is allowed to express themselves, autonomy develops.
- If the child is prevented from expressing themselves, doubt and shame forms.

Stage 3: Locomotor-Genital

- Occurs from age 3-5 when children express a strong desire to take initiative
 - May develop fantasies, manifested in the desire to possess the parent of the opposite sex and establish a rivalry with the parent of the same sex
 - If the child is punished, they will develop persistent guilt feelings that will affect self-directed activities throughout their life.
 - If the parents respond with love, the child will gain an awareness of what is permissible behavior and what is not (Freud's superego).
 - Their initiative can then be channeled toward realistic and socially accepted goals.

Stage 4: Latency

- Occurs from age 6-11 when children begin school and gain social experience
 - Their growing deductive reasoning and rule-following abilities lead to the deliberate refinement of the skills displayed in building things
- Attitudes and behaviors of parents and teachers largely determine how well children perceive themselves to be developing and using their skills
 - Praise and reinforcement lead to feelings of industriousness and competence
 - Criticism leads to feelings of inadequacy

Stage 5: Adolescence

- Occurs from ages 12-18 when adolescents must resolve the crisis of their basic **ego identity**
 - Must integrate ideas about the self with what others think of them to form the **self-image**
 - Considered to be a hiatus between childhood and adulthood, a necessary psychological moratorium to give us time and energy to play different roles and live with different self-images

Stage 5: Adolescence

- The crisis is resolved when a consistent and congruent self-image develops.
 - Develop fidelity, which includes sincerity, genuineness, and a sense of duty in one's relationships with other people
- Those who fail to achieve a cohesive identity—who experience an **identity crisis**—will exhibit a confusion of roles.
 - Don't know who or what they are, where they belong, or where they want to go

Stage 6: Young Adulthood

- Occurs from the end of adolescence to about age 35 when young adults begin to function as mature, responsible, and independent people
 - Establishing intimate relationships results in feelings of care and commitment
 - Failure to establish intimacy leads to feelings of isolation, which can lead to avoidance, aggression, and rejection toward people



Stage 7: Adulthood

- Occurs from age 35–55 when adults are involved in the teaching and guiding of the next generation
 - When they mentor others (generativity), they develop the basic strength of care.
 - When they cannot find an outlet for generativity, they may experience stagnation, boredom, pseudo-intimacy, and childlike behaviors.

Stage 8: Maturity

- Occurs from age 55 and on when older adults begin to evaluate their lives
 - If they look back with a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction, they are said to possess ego integrity.
 - If they look back with a sense of disappointment and failure, they are said to possess despair.
 - Erikson recommended that older adults remain active participants in life and continue to seek challenge and stimulation from their environment.

Erikson's Methods

- Preferred case histories, arguing they yield many insights into personality development and can help resolve a patient's problems
- Believed assessment techniques should be customized to fit the unique requirements of the individual patient
- Relied on data from play therapy sessions, anthropological studies, and psychohistorical analysis

Erikson's Methods

Play Therapy

Involves observing how children interact with toys

Used while working with emotionally disturbed children

Form and intensity of play reveals aspects of personality that might not be manifested verbally because of a child's limited powers of verbal expression

Psychohistorical Analysis

Application of Erikson's lifespan theory and psychoanalytic principles

Involves studying historical figures, significant political, religious, and literary figures (e.g., Gandhi, Martin Luther, and George Bernard Shaw)

Erikson's Methods

- Did not use psychological tests but inspired the creation of many
 - Ego-Identity Scale - Measures ego identity during adolescence
 - Ego Identity Process Questionnaire
 - [Loyola Generativity Scale](#) - A self-report inventory to measure the level of generativity or stagnation in adulthood

Research on Erickson's Theory

- There is strong support for his notion that developing an early sense of trusting childhood results in positive outcomes later in life.

Children with a well-developed *sense of trust* tend to be:

- Well-developed socially and emotionally
- Popular
- High in curiosity
- Sensitive to the needs and feelings of other people

Research on Erickson's Theory

- Compared to the development of real-world identities, research suggests that establishing a virtual identity online:
 - Allows us to try on of different identities.
 - Can be as satisfying as establishing an identity in the real world.
 - Can play both a positive and a negative role in identify formation.
 - May be used more by people who are lonely and social anxious.

Research on Erickson's Theory

- He suggested the identity crisis began around 12 and was resolved by age 18.
 - However, the identity crisis may not occur until later for some people.
 - In one study, up to 30 percent of the people studied were still searching for an identity as late as age 24, or perhaps, over the entire lifespan.
 - College may delay the resolution of the identity crisis and prolong the period during which young adults experiment with different roles and ideologies.



Research on Erickson's Theory

- Older adults are not the only age group that reflects on their lives and past choices.
 - One study found no significant differences between younger adults (ages 25–35) and older adults (ages 60–65) in reported frequency of life reflections.
 - Younger people reflected to gain self-insight and find solutions to current problems.
 - Older people reflected to evaluate their lives and achieve a sense of ego integrity.

Strengths of Erikson's Theory

- He popularized the idea that:
 - Personality continues to develop throughout the lifespan.
 - Some adolescents experience an identity crisis.
 - Biological, cultural, social, and historical factors influence personality development.
- His work inspired the development of life-span development psychology.

Criticisms of Erikson's Theory

- Some of his terms and concepts were overly ambiguous.
- His descriptions of the developmental stage of maturity and of the sex differences in play constructions were incomplete.
- His stages may not be applicable for women, Black, Latino, and Asian individuals, and people in reduced economic circumstances.