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PSY441- Theories of Personality

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Unit 3- Erik Erikson Question 2

Erik Erikson believed that personalities developed over eight stages. In each stage the individual is confronted with a crisis which must be resolved either positively or negatively. Confronting a crisis with a positive resolution enables one to develop the virtue associated with that stage, and that virtue can be strengthened when confronted by subsequent crises. Two of the eight stages Erikson described are Adolescence and Young adulthood.

Adolescence is the fifth stage of personality development covering the periods between 13 and 19 years of age. This is the period when individuals are confronted with an identity crisis and will either positively resolve this stage by achieving a growing sense of self-identity for themselves or will come to a negative resolution resulting in role confusion. Those emerging from Adolescence with a sense of self-identity (positive resolution) demonstrate a confidence in their ability to problem solve and make responsible choices, are conscious sense of their own uniqueness and direction, and have a sense of what they do want and do not want to do, be or become. They learn the virtue of Fidelity, that is committing to others and honoring their commitments to goals. Those emerging from this stage with a negative resolution demonstrate just the opposite and experience what Erikson calls role confusion. These individuals have a difficult time deciding on an occupational identity and are fearful of trusting themselves in the decision-making process of their lives. They often end up overidentifying with “heroes” and

thoughtlessly assume the opinions and intolerances of the leader of the pack. Without adequately resolving this conflict these youth will never fully be comfortable in their own skin, and become at risk of developing a negative identity.

From Adolescence individuals will move on to the sixth stage of personality development, Young adulthood. It is in this stage that individuals between the ages of 20 to 24 are confronted with the crises of intimacy versus isolation. Those having a positive self-identity during adolescence are able to enter into intimate relationships with others because they have clearly established identities and loyalties and are therefore able to commit themselves to partnerships, even those requiring compromise or sacrifice. Love, is the virtue that emerges from a positive resolution in this stage.

For young adults emerging from adolescence with a negative self-identity, true intimacy can be difficult to establish. These individuals may be untrusting of others to truly know them as they are; unconfident, directionless, confused about their goals or perhaps sexual identity. Individuals with a negative self-identity, often choose isolation as a resolution of the Young Adulthood crisis.