Class 1. Introduction

This article about George Vaillant and the Harvard Study is assigned in order to stimulate thoughts and questions about adult development……It’s a huge topic. Why study it? How does one go about studying it? Are there stages of adult development? Please read the article thinking about what questions it raises, and what questions seem important to you…. What questions would you like to address in this course?

Shenk, J (June 2009) What makes us Happy? Atlantic Monthly

Class 2. Erikson

The assignment for the next class (September 24) is to read Chapter 7 of Erikson’s Childhood and Society and the few additional pages that I’ve copied (Three Stages of Adulthood) from Identity and the Life Cycle. There are some differences between the two descriptions of stages. Please be ready to discuss those. But, more important:

1. What thoughts do you have about Erikson’s stages, reading his work now, more than half a century since it was written? (It was written in 1950.) He made a significant contribution, and yet……Think about his stages in the context of the questions raised in our class discussion of Vaillant’s research …..Peyser reports on a panel presented at the American Psychoanalytic Association in 1998 and that may give you some ideas.

2. Please be prepared to speak a bit about Erikson’s life and to speculate about the impact of his life experience on his view of adult development.

Erik Erikson, Eight Ages of Man, Chapter 7 in Childhood in Society


Class 3. **Lines of Development through the Life Cycle**

Perhaps instead of “stages of adult development” we should consider lines of development….Some writers suggest that aging, beyond early adulthood, is all about adjusting to loss of all kinds…Others propose that there is development, psychological growth, such as a lessening of omnipotence and grandiosity, a capacity for concern for others, the acceptance of one’s lived life, a sense of responsibility for one’s life choices, etc….We’ll discuss..


Class 4. **Identity: Emerging Adulthood (and beyond)**

This volume of the Psychoanalytic Study of the Child is devoted to the stage of Emerging Adulthood. Chused's paper vividly describes the treatment of a young man who struggles to find his own voice, his own identity. The developing analyst also struggles to find her own voice. Chused writes that old voices disappear. Do you think that’s true? Creating an identity is an ongoing process in adult development.


Class 5. **Parenthood**

One criticism of Erikson is that he seemed to have the development of men in mind as he proposed the stages of adult development. He does not write about giving birth, and little about parenting. Also he does not write about the physical development of the adult, or the aging body…So we will read Balsam’s paper because of her perspective as a woman, writing about women, and writing about the impact of childbirth…


**Class 6. Parenting continued (sort of)**

Loewald wrote that development - throughout life - entails the mastering of oedipal conflicts. Moreover, in becoming an adult one commits parricide and tolerating guilt for such parricide is the hallmark of adult development.


**Class 7: Midlife…**

We will discuss immigration as a metaphor for adult development….leaving one life behind, mourning it, and embarking on a new and different one. Colarusso emphasizes the need to mourn for what is lost..


**Class 8: Issues in the Treatment of Older Patients**

Is treating an older patient different from treating a younger one? Some different issues arise, but aren’t many the same?….How does the age of the therapist matter? We will focus on countertransference issues that we have experienced in our work with patients older than ourselves.


Class 9. The Aging Analyst

There are many terribly disturbing stories of analysts continuing to work when they are no longer capable of doing so, causing lasting damage to their patients. Nass, for example, writes that we need to prepare for retirement. Orgel and Poland write, with great wisdom and sensitivity, about their work as they age. We will discuss….


Poland WS (2016) Slouching Towards Mortality: Thoughts of Time and Death. JAPA 64(4): 795-812

Class 10: The Very Old

In addition to discussing the assigned reading, for this last class, by way of summary, some candidates (and I) will present clinical material to illustrate ideas that arose from our reading and class discussions.

Roger Angell, This Old Man, The New Yorker, February 2014