

Adulthood



Early work on the lifespan

- 1835 – Adolphe Quetelet
Physical and behavioural characteristics of people at various stages of life
- 1884 – Francis Galton
Measured physical and mental functions -9,000 people - 5 to 80-yrs
- 1922 - G. S. Hall
'Senescence: The second half of life'
- 1933 – Charlotte Buhler
Biological and physical processes throughout life course

Theories of Adulthood

Eriksonian tradition

- Normative Crisis Model
- Daniel Levinson: The Season's of a Man's Life (1978)
- George Vaillant: Adaptation to Life (1977); Aging Well (2002)
- Neugarten (1968a, 1979) The Social Clock

Normative Crisis Model

- A definite sequence of age-related social and emotional changes
- Everyone follows the same built-in basic plan for human development
- Well-known theorist – Erikson
- Early adulthood – Intimacy vs Isolation
- Chief developmental task in early adulthood - to form an intimate relationship with another person
- If the young adult is secure in his identity, he should be 'eager and willing to fuse his identity with that of others'

Daniel Levinson

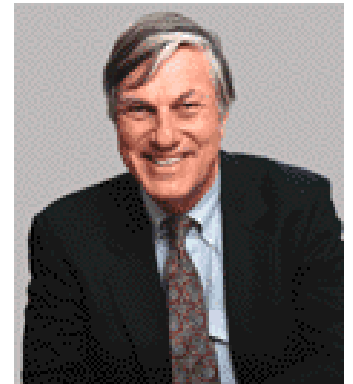
The Season's of a Man's Life (1978)



- **George Vaillant**

Adaptation to Life (1977)

Aging Well (2002)



- Both psychosocial theories in the tradition of Erikson

Levinson's Seasons of Life / Life Structure

- Levinson and colleagues at Yale University
- In-depth biographical interviews with forty 35 to 45-year-old-men. 10 each from four occupational sub-groups:
 - Hourly workers in industry
 - Business executives
 - University biologists
 - Novelists
- Later he interviewed forty-five women (same age group) from three sub-groups:
 - Homemakers
 - Business executives
 - University professors

- Key finding:

A common path of change within which men and women approach developmental tasks in somewhat different ways as they age

- (Levinson, 1996; Roberts and Newton, 1987)

- Development - a sequence of qualitatively different eras (stages or seasons)

- Levinson (1978, 1996)

- Biological and social forces introduce new psychological challenges

- Each stage begins with a transition – lasting about 5 years

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- Between transitions - stable periods (5 – 7 years) – build a life structure aimed at harmonising inner personal and outer social demands to enhance their quality of life

'Life structure'

- 'The underlying pattern or design of a person's life at a given time'
(Levinson, 1986, p.6)
- Includes the people, the places, things, institutions and causes that a person finds most important
- Also the values, dreams and emotions that make them important



- Most people's life structures built around work and family
- But - wide individual differences in the weight of central and peripheral components
- Accounts of men and women reveal that early adulthood is the era of...
`...greatest energy and abundance, contradiction and stress'

Dreams

- Dream – an image of self in the adult world

Guides decision-making

Men

Emphasis on independent achiever



Women

'Split dreams' - both marriage and career prominent

Tend to define self in terms of relationships
(husband, children, colleagues....)



Mentors

- Often senior work colleagues
- More experienced friend,
relative or neighbour



Teachers - improve relevant occupational skills

Guides - acquaint with values, customs and characters

Sponsors - foster the young person's career advancement

Availability of willing people and the young person's capacity to select an appropriate individual

(Crosby, 1998)

Usually experienced co-workers (Allen and Finkenstein, 2003)

Mentors

Women:

- More likely to have discontinuous career paths
 - e.g. maternity leave, child care life breaks, moving home for partner's career
 - re-establish contact with a mentor
 - seek new ones



- Male mentors:
 - viewed more positively?
 - hold more power than female ones?

Age-30 transition

- Young people re-evaluate their life structure around the age of 30 – 33
- Women sometimes reverse the relative priority of career and family, it's been found that men rarely do this
- More women are argued to be demanding some kind of support from their partners in order that they can achieve this part of their 'split-dream'
- For men and women without a satisfying intimate tie or occupational accomplishments, the age-30 transition

Settling down?

- Men try to establish a stable niche in society that is congruent with their personal values
- This might involve:
 - Expanding your knowledge in your occupation
 - Promotion at work
 - Taking a position of authority in church or social club activities or becoming a school governor
 - Becoming a scout or guide leader or coaching a young rugby/football squad



- But – ‘settling down’ - not an accurate description of what happens to women in their 30s
- Many unsettled because of second component of ‘split-dream’
- Might not be until middle-age that some women attain stability
- Not until middle-age that they are able to reach career maturity and take on more authority in community



Vaillant: Adaptation to Life Theory

- Grant Study – 1938
 - select sample of 268 eighteen year old Harvard undergraduates – longitudinal research

In college: participants underwent extensive interviews

Each succeeding decade: answered lengthy questionnaires

Vaillant also interviewed the men at ages 47, 60 and 70

Work

Family

Physical health

Mental health

- People change and develop throughout life
- Lives shaped by quality of sustained relationships with important people
- The mechanisms we use to adapt to circumstances are related to our level of mental health

Vaillant, 1977; Vaillant and Vaillant,



Vaillant's Adaptive Mechanisms

- 4 characteristic ways to adapt:

Mature – humour or helping others

Immature – aches and pains with no physical basis

Psychotic – distorting reality

Neurotic – repressing anxiety, intellectualising or developing irrational fears

- Men - mature adaptive mechanisms:

happier

healthier

more job satisfaction

enjoyed richer friendships

made more money

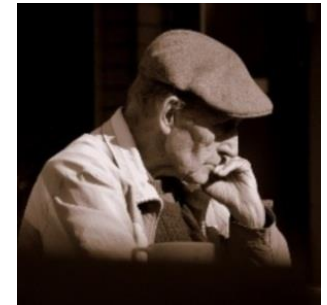
seemed generally better adjusted

'Career consolidation' - additional 'stage'?

- Men - 25 -35 years work to consolidate careers and devote themselves to their families:
 - Followed the rules, strove for promotion, accepted the 'system'
 - Rarely questioned whether they had chosen the right women or career
- Vaillant described them as:
 - 'colorless, hardworking, bland young men in gray flannel suits'
 - 'Men leave the compulsive, unreflective busywork of their occupational apprenticeships, and once more become explorers of the world within'

Vaillant and Koury (1994):

- 40s:
 - less focus upon individual achievement
 - more generative – giving and guiding others (mentoring?)
- 50s and 60s:
 - became keepers of meaning/guardians of their culture
- 70s:
 - more spiritual and reflective



Development of a sample of bright, well-educated women

- found that women undergo a series of similar changes
(e.g. Block, 1971; Vaillant, 2002)

Evaluation of Levinson's and Vaillant's theories

1. **Patterns developed from specific era sample**

Interviews - people born in the first half of the 20th century

The patterns identified did fit the life paths of many people at that time

But:

- What of children born in this century?
- What might their life paths be like?
- Why might they be different?

2. **Male-dominated sample**

Only a few non-college-educated, low income adults

Virtually no low-SES women

Yet SES – serious impact upon life course

e.g.

a) Bright with ambitious aspirations/dreams but never able to achieve them

May never imagine achieving in life because of where/how you live

3. **Memory issues**

Levinson's participants interviewed in middle-age – memory issues regarding early adulthood

If these apply to you, put the age you were at the time next to these items:

- Serious boyfriend/girlfriend
- First child
- First real boyfriend/girlfriend
- Marriage
- Second child
- First job
- Engagement
- Left school
- Began college
- Began university

The Social Clock (Neugarten, 1968a, 1979)



Age-graded expectations for major life events

Such timetables found in all societies

A cultural event shapes the context in which individuals develop

(e.g. economic depression, war, famine, disaster, economic boom, cultural revolution...)

Cultural attitudes affect the 'social clocks' endowed to people

The decline of age consciousness?

- Over the past fifty years - less certain of a 'right time' to do certain things
- 1950s – more agreement on 'best age' for finishing school, marrying and retiring etc. - far more than people thirty years later
- What opinions might have changed?

We accept first-time parents in their 40s

Retirees in their 50s

Workers in their 70s

Pensioners in jeans and tracksuits

Self-made owners of multimillion-pound companies in their 20s

Men staying at home to raise children instead of forging a career

Career women

Timing of events model

- Normative events that come at the expected time - generally no problem
- But events that upset expected sequence and rhythm of cause problems
- College women born in 1930s followed up at the ages of 27 and 43

How closely they followed:

'Feminine' social clock
(marriage and parenthood in the early or mid-20s)

'Masculine' social clock
(career oriented)

- Women who started families 'on-time' - more:

Responsible
Self-controlled
Caring

But

Self-esteem declined
Felt more vulnerable as their lives progressed

- Women who followed an occupational timetable typical for men - more:

Dominant
Sociable
Independent
Intellectually effective

- Same trend found in cohort born a decade later

(Vandewater and Stewart, 1997)

- Women not on social clock (no marriage/career by age 30)

- Self-doubt, feelings of incompetence and loneliness

‘My future is a giant question mark’

(Helson, 1992; Helson, Mitchell and Moane, 1984, p.1090)

- Following a social clock of some kind - fosters confidence during early adulthood - guarantees that young people will

- Engage in the work of society
 - Develop skills
 - Increase understanding of the self and others

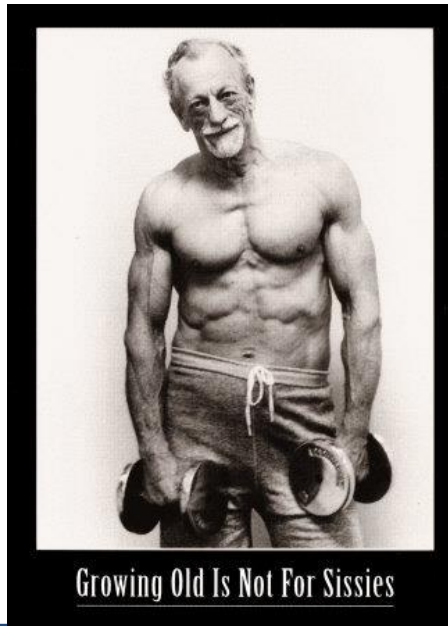
(Helson, 1997; Helson and Malone, 1987)

- Stability of society depends on having people committed to social-clock patterns
(Neugarten, 1979)

BREAK



10 MINUTES!



Ageing and Older Adulthood

Geriatrics and Gerontology

- Geriatrics
 - Medical - diseases and health problems of older adults
- Gerontology
 - Biological, behavioural and social - maturity to old age
- Interdisciplinary

Defining age and older adulthood

- Chronological age
Actual age in time
- Biological age
Organ system functioning and physical appearance
Comparative
- Functional age
Specific task competence
- Psychological age
Adaptation to change
- Social age
Views regarding age-suitable behaviour

Theories/Models of ageing

- Erikson's psychosocial theory of ageing
- Selective Optimization with Compensation (SOC) Model of Ageing (Baltes and Baltes, 1990)
- Ecological Model of Ageing (Lawton and Nahemow, 1973)

- Activity Theory

Disengagement Theory

- Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SEST) (Cartensen, 1991, 1995)
- Convoy Model
- Hierarchical-compensatory model

Erikson's Psychosocial Model

Maturity (65 years of age and over)

Ego Integrity vs. Despair

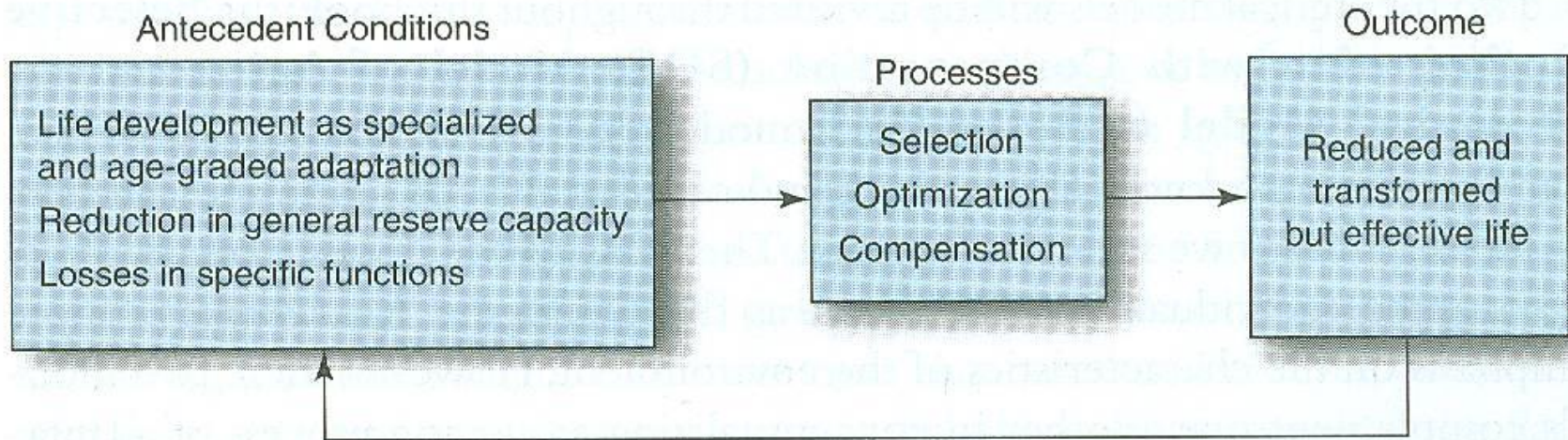
- Life reflection– need to review and feel a sense of fulfillment
- Success at this stage leads to feelings of wisdom
- Failure results in regret, bitterness, and despair



Selective Optimization with Compensation (SOC) Model of Ageing

(Baltes and Baltes, 1990)

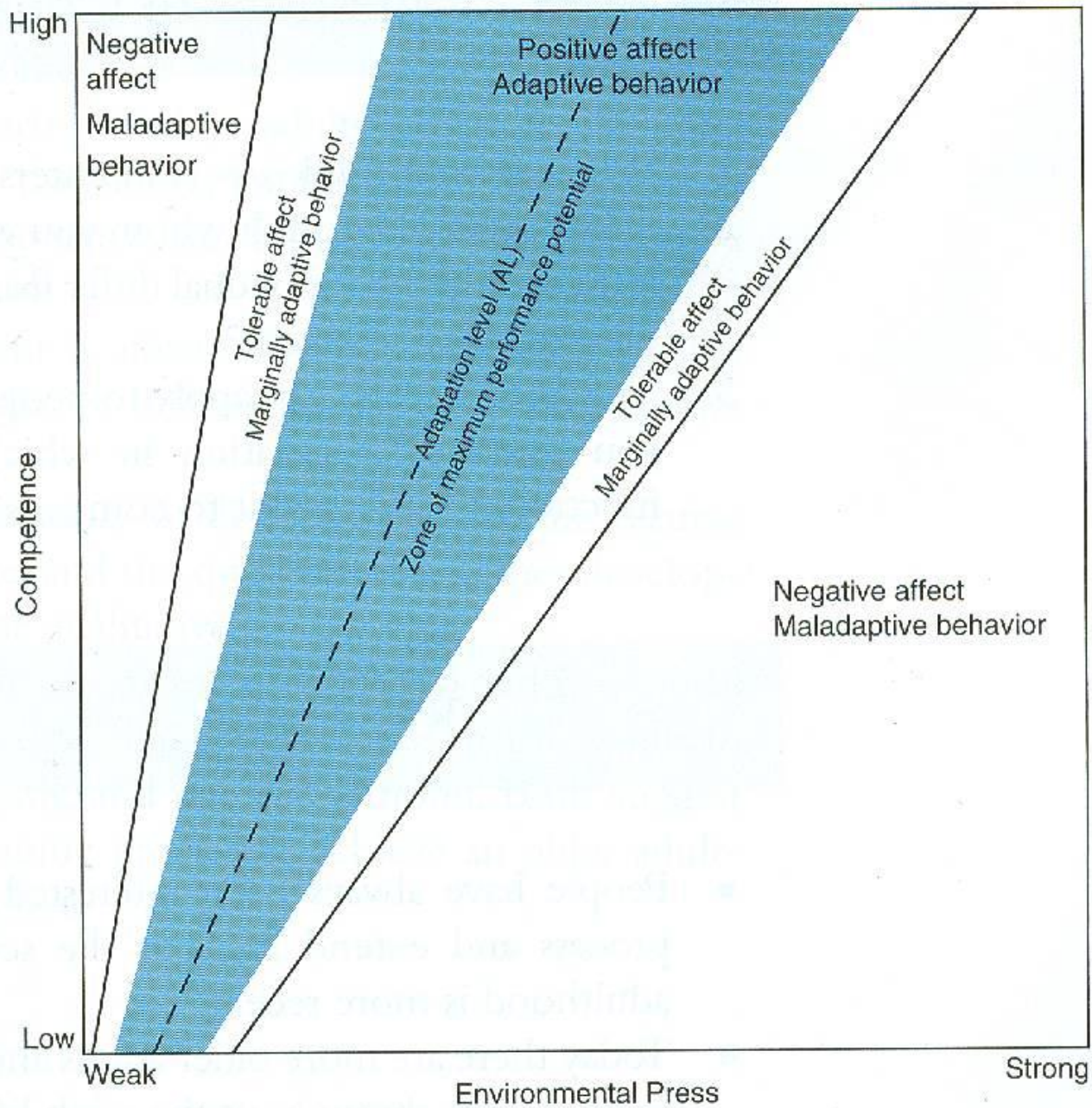
- Reductions in capacity
 - general reserve
 - specific domains
- Selection
- Optimization
- Compensation



The Ongoing Dynamics of Selective Optimization with Compensation
(Baltes and Baltes, 1990)

Ecological Model of Ageing (Lawton and Nahemow, 1973)

- Person-environment interaction —————> adaptation
- Affective well-being and behaviour
- Transactional nature of person-environment interaction
(Lawton, 1989, 1999)



Memory

- SOC Model
 - Well-maintained memory skills can compensate
 - External memory aids
- Ecological Model
 - Memory demands in the environment may need to be reduced

Cognition and problem solving

- The SOC Model
 - Heavier reliance on top-down processing
 - Creative endeavours
- Ecological Model
 - Structured and organized alternatives

Intelligence

- Fluid abilities decline
- Crystallised abilities?
- SOC Model

Pragmatics of intelligence (crystallised abilities) - compensation for decline in the mechanics of intelligence (fluid abilities)?

Older adults – expertise

- Ecological Model

Intellectual press, competence and adaptation

Too many intellectual demands – possibility of confusion, mental stress or physical danger

Ties in Older Adulthood



- Do social interactions differ in older adulthood from other points in adult life?
- How are social interactions related to older adults' levels of well-being?
- What kinds of interaction buffers older adults against feelings of depression?

Level of social interaction declines during older adulthood

What factors might play a part in this?

- Widowhood
- Retirement
- Loss of income
- Loss of a familiar environment (relocation)
- Loss of health
- Fear of leaving the house (crime, bullying etc.)



Disengagement Theory

- Social and psychological withdrawal necessary in successful ageing?
- Voluntarily withdrawal of older adults
- Societal withdrawal from older adults
- Disengagement:

Approval of society



High level of life satisfaction

(Cumming and Henry, 1961; Passuth and Bengston, 1988)

- Mutual withdrawal beneficial to all?

Activity Theory

Successful substitution of roles

—————> High life satisfaction, high morale
and feelings of well-being
(Passuth and Bengston, 1988)

- Many elements of Activity Theory communicated to the elderly via media and health promotion programmes
- Individual differences
 - Levels of disengagement / activity



The image is a promotional poster for a checklist titled "Checklist Queensland Stay On Your Feet®". At the top, it features the Queensland Government and Queensland Health logos. Below the title, there are four photographs arranged in a 2x2 grid. The top-left photo is labeled "strength & balance" and shows an elderly woman being supported by a man. The top-right photo is labeled "health" and shows an elderly woman being examined by a doctor. The bottom-left photo is labeled "safety" and shows an elderly man wearing a hat and holding a cane. The bottom-right photo is labeled "independence" and shows an elderly man fishing. Below the grid, the text asks "Will you stay active and independent?" and provides instructions for completing the checklist.

Queensland Government
Queensland Health

Checklist

Queensland Stay On Your Feet®

strength & balance

health

safety

independence

Will you stay active and independent?

If you are over 60 please take a couple of minutes to complete this checklist and then discuss your answers with a health care professional. Knowing and addressing your risk factors for falling is vital to reduce your risk of injury and loss of your independence.

Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SEST)

(Cartensen, 1991, 1995)

- Reduced social activity in old age - life-long selection process
- Age-related reductions in social interactions – adaptive
- Information seeking
- Emotion regulation

(Cartensen, Gross and Fung, 1997; Cartensen, Isaacowitz and Charles, 1999)

- Individual differences
 - Adaptability

Information seeking

- Acquiring information - a prominent motive for social interactions early in life
- In later life
 - acquisition of new information for future use?
 - partner, employment, identity?

But how might we question this?

Emotion regulation

- Importance of emotional fulfilment
- Familiarity
- Novelty?
- Perception of time - emotional regulation



(Cartenson and Frederickson, 1998)

e.g. Scenarios – ‘anticipated endings’

Fredrickson and Cartenson (1990) USA

Fung, Cartensen and Lutz (1999) Hong Kong

- Individual differences

Positive and Negative Aspects of Social Relationships

- Rook (1984) - healthy, independent widowed older women (aged 60-89)
- Identified positive and negative relationships
- No negative correlation found
- Older women who experience problematic relationships do not lack social skills

- Negative feelings
 - detract from psychological well-being (Sorkin and Rook, 2006)
 - adverse effects on physical health (Krause, 2006)
- Negative social interactions and negative feelings - strong link if multiple stressors exist
(Ingersoll-Dayton, Morgan and Antonucci, 1997)
- Strive for harmony and goodwill in relationships - fewer, and less intense, stressful interactions
(Sorkin and Rook, 2006)

Individual differences:

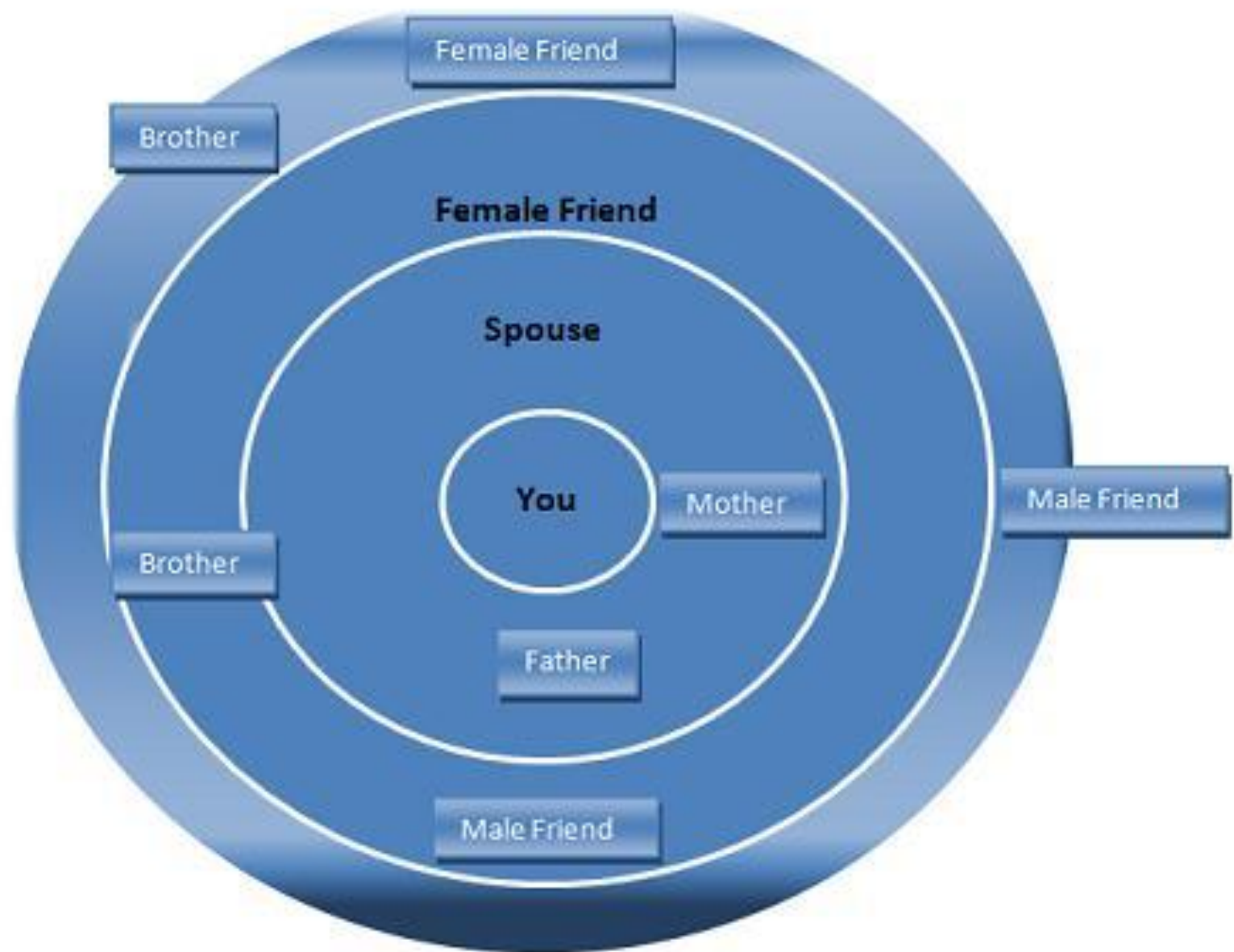
- Stressors / stressful interactions

Convoy Model

- Antonucci, Sherman and Akiyama (1996)
- Dynamic relationships influence wellbeing of individuals



- 'Social network' - structural characteristics of an individual's social ties
 - e.g. number, age, sex, relationships and frequency of contact



- Social circle - differing social support (Levitt, Weber and Guacci, 1993)

e.g.

Illness,

Confidence, sense of control or self-worth (Krause and Borowski-Clark, 1994)

Company (Antonucci and Akiyama, 1987)

- Can buffer against negative effects of stress (Antonucci et al, 1996)
- The more reciprocal the relationship, the more rewarding it will be

Size of older adult's social network

- Lang and Cartensen (1994): 70 – 104 yrs
 - size of social networks negatively correlated to chronological age
- Lang, Staudinger and Cartensen (1998):
 - Personality
 - Extroverts - larger social networks than introverts
- Individual differences:
 - Size of social network
 - Personality



Hierarchical-compensatory model

- Cantor (1979) – relationship hierarchy
- e.g. sibling support is stronger among older adults who are single or widowed, and childless, than among older adults who have adult children

(Cicirelli, Coward and Dwyer, 1992)

- Individual differences
 - Relationship hierarchy
 - Availability of relationships



Considered in this lecture....

- Erikson's Psychosocial Model
- Selective Optimization with Compensation (SOC) Model of Ageing
- Ecological Model of Ageing

- Memory and Cognition
- Intelligence

- Activity Theory
- Disengagement Theory
- Socio-emotional Selectivity Theory
- Convoy Model
- Hierarchical-compensatory model

Useful Reading

Erikson, E. H. (1980). *Identity and the Life Cycle*. New York: Norton and Company Inc.

Levinson, D. J. (1978). *Season's of a Man's Life*. New York: Ballantine Books/Random House.

Levinson, D. J. (1997). *Season's of a Woman's Life*. New York: Ballantine Books Inc.

Vaillant, G. E. (1995). *Adaptation to Life*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1977. Paperback edition: Harvard University Press.

Plus **Developmental Psychology textbooks** and **journal articles**

Useful Sources

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Stuart-Hamilton, I. (2006). *The Psychology of Ageing*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Vink, D., Aartsen, M. J. & Schoevers, R. A. (2008). Risk factors for anxiety and depression in the elderly: A review. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 106, 29–44.