

# Erikson and meet the parents



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Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development details eight different stages describing a healthy human's development from infancy to late adulthood. Each stage presents a new conflict between a biological and sociocultural force. Successful negotiation of these forces results in the individual moving the next stage with the favored attribute. Mastery of each stage's challenges isn't necessary to advance to the next stage but unconquered challenges are likely to reappear in the future. Almost every movie out exemplifies some form of family dynamics and Erikson's stages of development.

However, the movie I chose to demonstrate two characters in two different psychosocial development stages is Meet the Parents. Meet the Parents depicts Greg Focker's struggle to gain his girlfriend Pam's dad's approval for her hand in marriage. For many men asking the love of your life's dad for approval to marry her can be a very nerve-racking and scary experience. For Greg, a Jewish male nurse, Murphy's Law takes over and the situation becomes more embarrassing than expected. It doesn't help that Pam's father is a strict, overbearing, ex CIA agent with a lie detector in the basement.

The two characters I will be relating to different stages of Erikson's developmental theory are Greg Focker and his soon to be father-in-law Jack Byrnes. Greg Focker is definitely in the Intimacy vs. Isolation stage of development that typically occurs between ages 20-24. His existential question is " Can Love? " Greg has established his career and identity and is open to the ideas of love and marriage. He is ready to make a long-term commitment and has done so with Pam, his live in girlfriend.

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Their intimate, reciprocal relationship has made Greg willing to make sacrifices and compromises required to make her happy and their relationship function. This concept is exemplified throughout the movie as Greg goes to great lengths to gain the approval of his loved one's father, Jack. Since Greg has been able to form an intimate relationship with Pam, intimacy has prevailed over isolation. Jack Byrnes is in middle adulthood; his internal conflict is generativity vs. stagnation. The main question faced by individuals between the ages of 25-64 is " Can I Make My Life Count? Generativity is the concern of guiding the next generation. Jack already possesses a sense of generativity since he has been married, raised a family and contributed to society through his career in the CIA. He is now concerned about the next generation of his family, his daughter's family and offspring. Although his daughter is grown he is still trying to help her grow into a responsible adult and having trouble accepting her soon to be spouse. However, in the end he does learn to accept Greg and master generativity; as a result he is on his way to the last stage of life which focuses on the virtue of wisdom.