# Psychosocial Development and Identity Statuses

Erikson is the first developmental theorist to consider development in adulthood. Erik Erikson's psychosocial model of human development is often used in the fields of psychology, counseling, and education. Some specific applications include:

* Developing interventions and strategies to support healthy development
* Understanding the emotional and social development of children and adolescents
* Identifying and addressing developmental challenges at different stages of life
* Guiding individuals through difficult stages of development, such as identity crises
* Helping individuals to understand the impact of past experiences on their current behavior and relationships

Erik Erikson's psychosocial model of human development has been widely studied and discussed by experts in the field, and as such, it has received both praise and criticism. Some of the ways that the theory has been praised include:

* Conceptualizing development as a lifelong process: Erikson's theory focuses on development across the entire lifespan, which is a more comprehensive approach than theories that focus on development in childhood only.
* Emphasizing the importance of social and emotional development: Erikson's theory highlights the role of social and emotional development in human development, which is an important aspect of development that is often overlooked by other theories.
* Providing a framework for understanding different aspects of development: Erikson's theory provides a framework for understanding how different aspects of development, such as cognitive, physical, and emotional development, are interconnected.
* Offering a holistic view of human development: The theory takes into account the interplay of different factors such as biology, culture, and historical context, in shaping human development.
* Generating further research: Erikson's theory has generated a significant amount of research in the field of developmental psychology, which has led to a deeper understanding of human development.

Some of the criticisms that have been raised against Erikson's model include:

* Lack of empirical support: Some researchers have argued that there is a lack of empirical evidence to support Erikson's theory. They point out that many of Erikson's proposed stages and the corresponding conflicts are not well-defined, and that there is a lack of research to support the idea that people go through these stages in a fixed order. Culture-bound: Critics have noted that Erikson's theory is heavily influenced by Western culture and may not be applicable to other cultures. They argue that the theory is not culturally sensitive and may not be appropriate for individuals from other backgrounds.
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* Gender bias: Some critics have pointed out that Erikson's theory is gender-biased and does not take into account the impact of gender roles and expectations on development.
* Simplistic: Some experts point out that Erikson's theory is too simplistic and doesn't take into account the complex interactions between different factors that influence human development.

It is important to note that these criticisms are not necessarily conclusive, and that Erikson's theory continues to be widely studied and discussed by experts in the field.

His theory has a development lens that considers the evolving nature of life and consciousness across the lifespan by focusing on the development of the ego as it mediates the pressures of the social world.



## General Notes

### Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development:

* is epigenetic, assuming that there are ground plans in which parts arise in the “time of special ascendancy” (see p. 53) “anything that grows has a ground plan, and that out of this ground plan the parts arise, each part having its time of special ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functioning whole.
* is psychosocial in that there are conflicts between the inner (psycho) and outer (social) worlds that emerge and re-emerge throughout life…
* involves widening social spheres of influence throughout the lifespan beginning with mother alone and ending with all of mankind
* involves crises which suggests that each period of life is perhaps the most challenging, urgent or ripe for the resolution psycho-social conflict that the individual has met up to that point
* proposes balances, more like ratios, with proper balancing more towards the positive dimension (systonic) than the negative dimension (dystonic) of each stage/crisis. Improper balancing is like having “baggage” or “hang-ups” Fortunately, each balance can be revisited in each subsequent stage. For example, when you are falling in love, the baggage related to trust/mistrust may re-emerge.
* is psychodynamic (see p. 52) in that “neurotic conflict” and problems relate to “conflicts which every child must live through in his childhood” and “every adult carries these conflicts with him in the recesses of his personality”
* defines healthy growth and development as:
	+ inner unity of personality
	+ increased good judgment
	+ increased capacity to do well
	+ (He is drawing from Jahoda (1950)’s healthy personality as actively mastering the environment, showing a certain unity of personality, and perceiving the world and oneself correctly.)

Each stage fosters a virtue/basic strength that emerges at the end of the stage

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Stage | Virtue/Basic Strength… Emerges If Successfully Balanced |
| Basic Trust v Basic Mistrust (nonconscious sense) | Hope & Drive (faith, inner calm, grounding, basic feeling that everything will be okay - enabling exposure to risk, a trust in life and self and others, inner resolve and strength in the face of uncertainty and risk) |
| Autonomy v Shame & Doubt | Willpower & Self-Control (self-determination, self-belief, self-reliance, in confidence in self to decide things, having a voice, being one's own person, persistence, self-discipline, independence of thought, responsibility, judgment) |
| Initiative v Guilt | Purpose & Direction (sense of purpose, decision-making, working with and leading others, initiating projects and ideas, courage to instigate, ability to define personal direction and aims and goals, able to take initiative and appropriate risks) |
| Industry v Inferiority | Competence & Method (making things, producing results, applying skills and processes productively, feeling valued and capable of contributing, ability to apply method and process in pursuit of ideas or objectives, confidence to seek and respond to challenge and learning, active busy productive outlook) |
| Identity v Role Confusion | Fidelity & Devotion (self-confidence and self-esteem necessary to freely associate with people and ideas based on merit, loyalty, social and interpersonal integrity, discretion, personal standards and dignity, pride and personal identity, seeing useful personal role(s) and purpose(s) in life) |
| Intimacy v Isolation | Love & Affiliation (capacity to give and receive love - emotionally and physically, connectivity with others, socially and inter-personally comfortable, ability to form honest reciprocating relationships and friendships, capacity to bond and commit with others for mutual satisfaction - for work and personal life, reciprocity - give and take - towards good) |
| Generativity v Stagnation | Care & Production (giving unconditionally in support of children and/or for others, community, society and the wider world where possible and applicable, altruism, contributing for the greater good, making a positive difference, building a good legacy, helping others through their own crisis stages |
| Integrity v Despair | Wisdom & Renunciation (calmness, tolerance, appropriate emotional detachment - non-projection, no regrets, peace of mind, non-judgemental, spiritual or universal reconciliation, acceptance of inevitably departing) |

See [Erikson's psychosocial development theory](https://cystinosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/stages_of_development.pdf).

## Joan Erikson's 9th stage

[Joan M. Erikson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joan_Erikson), who married and collaborated with Erik Erikson, added a ninth stage in The Life Cycle Completed: Extended Version.[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erikson%27s_stages_of_psychosocial_development#cite_note-43) She was ninety-three years old when she wrote about the ninth stage.[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erikson%27s_stages_of_psychosocial_development#cite_note-44) Joan Erikson showed that all the eight stages "are relevant and recurring in the ninth stage".[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erikson%27s_stages_of_psychosocial_development#cite_note-45) In the ninth stage, the psychosocial crises of the eight stages are faced again, but with the quotient order reversed.

Adapted from Joan Erikson Wikipedia page 5/6/2022:

This ninth stage is experienced in the eighties and nineties and is accompanied by a loss of physical health, friends, family members, and independence, in addition to isolation from society. During the ninth stage, the crisis points of the previous stages are confronted again.[18] For example, elderly adults confronting increasing physical and mental declines may lose trust in their own ability to care for themselves. They are facing a crisis similar to the trust vs. mistrust experienced in stage one.

Joan Erikson believed that during the ninth stage, older adults can shift towards a more transcendent perspective, which increases life satisfaction. She describes transcendence as regaining skills such as play, activity, and song. Most importantly, it means moving beyond fear of death.[19]

Often during this time, individuals are put into retirement communities and assisted living facilities, which Joan believed was isolating them from society and from youth.[20] She believed that "aging is a process of becoming free"[14] and should not be treated as the opposite.[20] As a result of these changes, individuals experience a loss of autonomy, self-esteem, and trust. Death is near and seen as an inevitable reality. Joan contributed to the writings on the first eight stages in the book, The Life Cycle Completed, and later added the final part on the ninth stage.[20]

Research has been done that supports Erikson’s stages.[21][22][23][24] In particular, the work of James E. Marcia on adolescence and identity supports Erikson’s crisis of adolescence.[21] Criticism of their psychosocial development theory includes that it focuses on the development of American men and excludes other groups.[25]

## Maladaptations and Malignancies

Too much of either the positive or negative side of the stage results in maladaptation and malignancies respectively. Too much of the negative is generally worse than too much of the positive:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Examples | Maladaption | Crisis | Malignancy | Examples |
| unrealistic, spoilt, deluded | Sensory Distortion | Trust vs. Mistrust | Withdrawal | neurotic, depressive, afraid |
| reckless, inconsiderate, thoughtless | Impulsivity | Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt | Compulsion | anal, constrained, self-limiting |
| exploitative, uncaring, dispassionate | Ruthlessness | Initiative vs. Guilt | Inhibition | risk-averse, unadventurous |
| workaholic, obsessive specialist | Narrow Virtuosity | Industry vs. Inferiority | Inertia | lazy, apathetic, purposeless |
| self-important, extremist | Fanaticism | Identity vs. Role Confusion | Repudiation | socially disconnected, cut-off |
| sexually needy, vulnerable | Promiscuity | Intimacy vs. Isolation | Exclusivity | loner, cold, self-contained |
| do-gooder, busy-body, meddling | Overextension | Generativity vs. Stagnation | Rejectivity | disinterested, cynical |
| conceited, pompous, arrogant | Presumption | Integrity vs. Despair | Disdain | miserable, unfulfilled, blaming |

Perhaps the culminating stage of adulthood is stage seven, as stage eight is more about coming to terms with one’s life and being at peace amid disintegration. Generativity captures how generations are connected. Generations affect one another, and our church community emphasizes the chaining and linking of generations in important ways.

However, the crux and of Erikson’s theory involves identity. This stage seems to be the most central and important. Erikson’s own personal experience with identity is quite fascinating and relates to important insights about the central role of identity in development. Concerning identity, Erikson writes:

What is unique about the stage of Identity, is that it is a special sort of synthesis of earlier stages and a special sort of anticipation of later ones. Youth has a certain unique quality in a person's life; it is a bridge between childhood and adulthood. Youth is a time of radical change—the great body changes accompanying puberty, the ability of the mind to search one's own intentions and the intentions of others, the suddenly sharpened awareness of the roles society has offered for later life.[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erikson%27s_stages_of_psychosocial_development#cite_note-Gross-24)

### Three Layers of Personality Development

Dan McAdams is a personality psychologist with a development lens who incorporates Erikson’s emphasis on identity, especially how we narrate our identities. McAdams believes that personality is composed of:

1. Dispositions- Big Five Traits that are largely genetic
2. Characteristics adaptation- coping skills
3. Narrative identity

His work has focused on how adaptive narrative identity relates to generativity. As one example, he highlights the difference between life stories that are wrought with contamination sequences (e.g., Things were alright until my father would come home) versus redemption sequences (e.g., My father was a drug addict, but I am a stronger person because of it).

Think about the great “redemption sequence” that is through Christ. He redeems everything and can make everything right. He is the light of the world that enables the possibility of growth from pain; He is hope itself. He is what enables a narrative in which you are a generating figure and connected to generations; Christ enables the heights of what Erikson says is the hallmark of adult development.

## Active Learning Activities

### Pondering

1. Every theory is a lens, a view, that both magnifies and overlooks. Let’s evaluate Erikson’s theory; does it provide an understanding that is helpful and useful for interacting with the world and others? Does it provide some level of prediction that is helpful?
2. In what ways have you been able to grow from adversity? Write down a short story about how this happened. Here there are redemption sequences and the extent that those redemption sequences emerge relate to the generativity you are likely to exhibit during the culmination stage of adult development.
3. Look at the 4 stages of Erikson’s theory that relate to adulthood beginning with adolescence and try to understand what each says about adulthood at that period of life. What are the virtues (strengths) associated with each? Do you feel like those are representative of what each stage of development?

### Hidden Answer Question

[Which stage would Erikson suggest is the most central and important?](https://books.byui.edu/Adult_development/)

Identity v. Role Confusion

Although I emphasized the first stage of Erikson’s theory as foundational, Erikson believed that adolescence was a central bridge between earlier and later stages.

### Application

For Erikson’s theory, what happens when there is a stage that is improperly balanced? How is that going to affect a person in subsequent stages? If so, what can we do about that?

## James Marcia Identity Statuses

Understand and apply James Marcia’s Identity Statuses

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Exploration** |
| Low | High |
| **Commitment** | High | **Forclosure:**"I've made a choice without thinking." | **Identity Acheivement:**"I thought about it and I now know what I should do with my life." |
| Low | **Identity Diffusion:**"I don't know and I don't care what I'm supposed to do with my life." | **Moratorium:**"I'm thinking about what I should do." |

Let’s use the term “stages” for Erikson and the term “status” for Marcia. Stage implies a sequential process, whereas status implies a framework for analyzing elements of crisis/exploration and commitment whenever there are questions related to identity throughout life.

## Active Learning Activities

### Pondering

1. Every theory is a lens, a view, that both magnifies and overlooks. Let’s evaluate Marcia’s theory; does it provide an understanding that is helpful and useful for interacting with the world and others? Does it provide some level of prediction that is helpful?
2. Consider your vocational identity. What statuses can you relate to in recent years and months?
3. Consider other areas of your life and identity like religion and politics. What statuses can you relate to in recent years and months?

### Multiple Choice

1. Jing Yun has always wanted to please his parents, so when he got older his parents said, “No. You don’t do a job that makes you happy. Instead, you get a job that you don’t like so that you get money so you can do what makes you happy.” Even though he wanted to explore other careers, he never did and went into finance because his parents wanted him to. Which identity status best describes Jing Yun’s vocational identity?
	1. Identity Achievement
	2. Moratorium
	3. Foreclosure
	4. Identity Diffusion
2. Which of the following statements best describes the difference between the Moratorium and Foreclosure statuses of Marcia's Identity Theory?
	1. Those at the Foreclosure stage commit to an identity without considering other options, those at the Moratorium stage explore many possible identities without committing
	2. Those at the Moratorium stage have found their identity, those at the Foreclosure stage have not
	3. Those at the Moratorium stage may one day find their true identity, those in the Foreclosure stage never will
	4. Young people are more commonly in the Moratorium stage than the Foreclosure stage

### Case Study Application

1. Rudy has changed his college major many times. Since his parents have pointedly objected to paying the expenses for tuition and room and board, Rudy has cheerfully taken on a variety of jobs, ranging from bartender to shoe salesman. He loves college, and his friends are very much the same way. Rudy's grades are generally high, though his record has some incompletes. Rudy's identity status would probably be described as
2. Melissa’s parents are both physicians. In college she majored in French, spending a semester in France studying art and culture. Upon graduation she surprised her parents by announcing that she had applied to medical school. She has had some recent experiences with a hospice nurse and a summer job in healthcare that helped her decide on medical school. Melissa's identity status would probably be described as
3. Lynn's mother is a professor of women's studies who is deeply involved in feminist issues. Lynn very much admires her mother, a strong woman who, as a single parent, struggled to provide for her daughter. Lynn believes that she, too, will be a strong and independent woman. She avoids people, especially men, who either don't see her in that light or try to bring out her feminine nature. She steers clear of her paternal grandmother who, although pleasant, is a very disorganized and artsy person. Lynn's college grades are very high, and her course selections reflect an unwavering commitment to politics and women's studies. Lynn's identity status would probably be described as
4. Daniel is a first-year student at a college an hour away from home. He comes home nearly every weekend but does not really enjoy himself once he's there. He avoids talking to his parents or old high school friends, preferring to play on his phone in his room. He gets angry if his parents ask him questions about school and angrier if they patronize him. Daniel is enrolled in courses he has been told are easy, and he does not have strong feelings about his studies or his grades. Daniel's identity status would probably be described as

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