

Erikson's theory stages three and four essay sample

[Psychology](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Erik Erikson is a Freudian ego-psychologist. Development, he says, functions by the epigenetic principle. This principle says that we develop through a predetermined unfolding of our personalities in stages. Erikson's greatest innovation was to postulate eight psychosocial stages.

The first stage, infancy or the oral-sensory stage, is approximately the first year or year and a half of life. The task is to develop trust without completely eliminating the capacity for mistrust. Psychosocial virtues are hope and faith. Sensory distortion or withdrawal developed as a maladaptation.

The second stage is the anal-muscular stage of early childhood, from about eighteen months to three or four years old. The task is to achieve a degree of autonomy while minimizing shame and doubt. If parents permit the child, now a toddler, to explore and manipulate his or her environment, the child will develop a sense of autonomy or independence. Psychosocial virtue is will determination. Maladaptation tendencies develop as an impulsivity-compulsion.

Stage three is the genital-locomotor stage or play age. From three or four to five or six, the task confronting every child is to learn initiative without too much guilt. Initiative means a positive response to the world's challenges, taking on responsibilities, learning new skills, and feeling purposeful. Parents can encourage initiative by encouraging children to try out their ideas. We should accept and encourage fantasy and curiosity and imagination. This is a time for play, not for formal education. The child is now capable, as never before, of imagining a future situation, one that isn't a reality right now.

Initiative is the attempt to make that non-reality a reality. Too much initiative and too little guilt means a maladaptive tendency, which Erikson calls ruthlessness. A good balance leads to the psychosocial strength of purpose. A sense of purpose is something many people crave in their lives, yet many do not realize that they themselves make their purposes, through imagination and initiative. Psychological virtues are courage and purpose. Imaginative play is the basic activity of this stage. The preschooler explores and re-enacts the different roles and activities of people, both real (home life) and fictional (often based on television).

Most young children enjoy pretend play, and many love to imitate and emulate fiction hero like- He-Man, a heroic character in the toys series Master of Universe. But many teachers, parents say the influence of children's TV shows which feature exciting fighting scenes - like Mighty Morphin Power Rangers or Batman - can create havoc when little fans get together. The challenge for parents is to control play enough to minimize the amount of aggression involved, while still recognizing that fantasy play meets a developmental need. If supervised and directed properly the use of superheroes in children's play can create a fertile atmosphere for imaginative creative drama.

Stage four is the latency stage, or the school-age child from about six to twelve. The task is to develop a capacity for industry while avoiding an excessive sense of inferiority. Children must "tame the imagination" and dedicate themselves to education and to learning the social skills their society requires of them. If the child is allowed too little success, because of

harsh teachers or rejecting peers, for example, then he or she will develop instead a sense of inferiority or incompetence.

Too much industry leads to the maladaptive tendency called narrow virtuosity. Much more common is the malignancy called inertia. This includes all of us who suffer from the "inferiority complexes". A happier thing is to develop the right balance of industry and inferiority. Then we have the virtue called competency.

To elaborate further Erikson's stage of psychosocial development, *Bridge to Terabithia* is an excellent novel for boys and girls ages nine to twelve because it deals with real life situations and problems that many children in the nine to twelve age groups find difficult to cope with.

Bridge to Terabithia revolves around three group characters: the Aarons, the Burkes, and the students and faculty in the elementary school. Jess Aaron, who is one of the central characters. Paterson, a writer weaves various conflicts that the characters must address and overcome. It again finds Jess and Leslie going through one stage (industry versus inferiority) to another stage (identity versus role confusion). Jess and Leslie were made to feel inferior mostly by their parents, which as individuals caused both to feel inadequate.

Jess really wanted to paint but his father's constant criticism caused him to feel inadequate about himself. Leslie wanted love and attention but when she did not receive it she began to feel inferior. Together they were able to overcome the dilemmas and move to the next stage. They were attempting

to define their own identity and do things on their own. This is evidenced by Jess taking over the races at school and Leslie taking on Janice Avery. It is further evidence by their insistence to continue crossing the creek in spite of the dangers.

Stage five is adolescence, beginning with puberty and ending around 18 or 20 years old. The task during adolescence is to achieve ego identity and avoid role confusion. When an adolescent is confronted by role confusion, Erikson says he or she is suffering from an identity crisis. There is such a thing as too much "ego identity," where a person is so involved in a particular role in a particular society or subculture that there is no room left for tolerance. Erikson calls this maladaptive tendency fanaticism. The lack of identity is perhaps more difficult still, and Erikson refers to the malignant tendency here as repudiation. If you successfully negotiate this stage, you will have the virtue Erikson called fidelity.

Stage six is the period of young adulthood, which lasts from about 18 to about 30. The task is to achieve some degree of intimacy, as opposed to remaining in isolation. Erikson calls the maladaptive form promiscuity, referring particularly to the tendency to become intimate too freely, too easily, and without any depth to your intimacy. The malignancy he calls exclusion, which refers to the tendency to isolate oneself from love, friendship, and community. If you successfully negotiate this stage, you will instead carry with you for the rest of your life the virtue or psychosocial strength Erikson calls love.

The seventh stage is that of middle adulthood. It is between the middle twenties and the late fifties. The task here is to cultivate the proper balance of generativity and stagnation. It is a concern for the next generation and all future generations. The maladaptive tendency Erikson calls overextension. The person who is overextended no longer contributes well. More obvious, of course, is the malignant tendency of reactivity. This is the stage of the "midlife crisis. But if people are successful at this stage, they will have a capacity for caring that will serve you through the rest of your life.

The last stage, referred to delicately as old age, begins sometime around retirement, say somewhere around 60. The task is to develop ego integrity with a minimal amount of despair. The maladaptive tendency in stage eight is called presumption. The malignant tendency is called disdain, by which Erikson means contempt of life, one's own or anyone's. Someone who approaches death without fear has the strength Erikson calls wisdom.

It is, in fact, hard to defend Erikson's eight stages if we accept the demands of his understanding of what stages are. In different cultures, even within cultures, the timing can be quite different.

References:

- 1) Dr. C. George Boeree; Personality Theories.
- 2) Morgan Clifford T, King Richard A., Robinson Nancy M., Introduction to Psychology; Sixth Edition; Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited; 1981.