

Personal reflection using erik erikson's life stages



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From the moment we are born leading all the way to our death, we are always in a state of development. Erik Erikson, an American-German psychologist, developed his theory of the eight stages where humans endure age related challenges in each stage. As we age, the problems that arise become more complex. I had the opportunity to track my development across these stages through the eyes of my parents. I was able to discover everything I underwent, as well as receiving their thoughts about my development in my current stage.

Erikson labels the first stage as trust versus mistrust. This stage lasts for about a year and starts immediately after birth. During this stage it all revolves around whether or not the child is receiving care from their parents or guardians. The trust and mistrust will become a factor whether the caregiver is providing sufficient attention or not. For me, I grew up in a household with very loving parents. As a baby, like any, I was very dependent on them. I relied on them to provide the best care possible and to allow me to have confidence they will provide for me. My parents made it clear to me that I was a rather vocal baby. I would whine whenever I wanted something or if I did not like something I was presented. They were always there to calm me down and help make the situation better. Their constant care and attention allows me to still have the same trust in them today that I have always had. Now, if a baby at this was left untreated they can become very skeptical of adults later in life and struggle with believing they can help them. Luckily I had parents respond to my every need allowing to always have confidence they will be there for me.

As we transition into the second stage, autonomy versus shame and doubt, we highlight the expiration phase of children and wanting to become more independent. In Dr. Alex Lickerman's article "The Desire For Autonomy", he defines autonomy as the ability to make our own choices according to what we want. As a toddler in this stage, who is approximately one to three years old, desires the ability to choose what they want to wear, eat, or even the activities they take part in. A toddler in this stage wants to make their own decisions and become their own person. My parents highlighted the point in my life where I wanted to always dress myself, even when my choices were not the best. My mother pointed this out because she likes to mention how confident I was, but stubborn at the same time. She laughs about the mismatched choices for clothing I would make. My parents would always convince me to wear, disguising that they were fully against my choices. They would never tell me what I was doing was wrong because they did not want to discourage me from making any future decisions. They understood it was important for me to make my own decisions so I do not become discouraged and fear being wrong. I would say that they helped instill the confidence that I still have today. I believe that stemmed from this stage because they let me go out and make my own decisions and learn from those experiences.

The previous two stages are the stepping stones for the third stage, initiative versus guilt. In this stage. During this stage a child is also exploring and making their own decisions. It is more complex than the previous stage because the child is between the ages of three and six years old. By this age there are things such as social life, school, and a wider range of activities a

child can take part in. It is important a child is allowed to explore into those certain things, within reason, because if they are not allowed to then that can lead to them developing feelings of guilt. They feel guilty because they are embarrassed they have to be corrected by their parents and feel as if they did something very wrong and upset their parents. During this stage I was corrected on a few things, for my best interest, but overall my parents let me have the confidence in making my own choices for myself. My parents were able to recall me wanting to start playing hockey when I was going on five years old. They know I watched my older brothers play and encouraged my desire to participate and helped me achieve that. By allowing me to participate in sports at this age, it helped me gain the confidence in myself to make future decisions.

Having the ability to choose a friend group plays a crucial role in this next stage. In industry versus inferiority there is a strong focus on a child's peers. In this stage children are between the ages of six and twelve. Children in this stage will be overly concerned with how they match up against their peers. According to John Santrock in his textbook, *A Topical Approach To Life-Span Development*, he says, "Children now need to direct their energy to mastering knowledge and intellectual skills." This is crucial at this stage. Children will observe their peers at this stage and see how their interests skills place them amongst them. My parents pointed out that during this stage I really had no interest in being like everyone else. I enjoyed my friends, school, and the sports I played. I made my own choices and paid no attention to what everyone else was doing. I think this helped me out in the long run. I was able to make my own decisions and be

comfortable with myself. Children who are insecure and afraid of what others might think of themselves will lack confidence. That is where the inferior aspect of this stage becomes a factor. A child who feels inferior to his peers will not be motivated to complete tasks and any other activity. It is important that they remain confident in themselves to remain on a strong path through education and life.

The next stage in Erikson's theory is identity versus role confusion. During this stage children are between the ages of ten and eighteen years old. This stage has to deal with the children and even younger adults finding out who they want to identify as for the remainder of their life. Although no decision at this time is permanent, a child and you adult choosing what they want to do with their lives helps instill a sense of self pride. It was during this stage that I decided where I wanted to go to college along with choosing my major. I knew I wanted to be a nurse since I was sixteen years old. It took me a lot of thinking and weighing out my options during this stage. There is never just a clear decision from the start. I had other aspirations before I chose nursing as the best option for me. I believe I went through a fair amount of maturing before I came to my final choice. The problem that arises in this stage is when parents discourage their children from freely making their choices with what they want to do in life. There will be circumstances that need correcting, but, for the most part a child should be allowed to follow the path they desire. If they are are not, then they can develop an uncertainty about themselves and what they can accomplish. I feel as if my parents successfully guided me through this stage. They supported me with my choice of becoming a nurse at Saint Xavier but also

helped guide me and steer me away from decisions that, in hindsight, may not have been the best for me. They helped me form my self image and how I want to carry myself throughout the rest of my life.

The last stage of Erikson's theory I have experienced, but am still in, is the intimacy versus isolation stage. Now, I am just entering this stage and am still growing into it. This stage is about personal development through intimate relationships. While I am still experiencing this stage, I believe that my parents have helped me gain a strong self image along with plenty of confidence in myself. They provided with the groundwork for this stage. In order to develop strong and personal relationships, having a strong mental yourself is crucial. I believe I was properly prepared for that.

There are two of Erikson's stages I have not experienced yet that come later in life. Those stages are generativity versus stagnation and integrity versus despair. These two stages deal with the joy and stress of later adult life.

Whether it is giving back to the community or starting a family that will fall under the stage of generativity versus despair. As you age further, you will begin to reflect on life and consider all the things you have accomplished and participated in, in your lifetime. That is integrity versus despair.

Through these stages an older adult is often more wise because of their age. They are able to apply any given circumstance to their lives since they have experienced so much.

I believe that there are many things that I was able to draw from Erikson's theory of development and apply it to my own development. For each stage in my development I was able to find similarities between his theory and

what I experienced. I think the specific details that he provides in this explanations of each stage are easy to relate to myself. I find that his thorough explaining of challenges and common experiences we face across our development. Along with that, each stage has age appropriate conflicts associated with it. For example, intimate relationships would not be in a stage that deals with toddlers. That is an extreme example, but, the point is that he separates the problems into the proper age related groups. A weakness I see with this theory is that cultural and religious differences can make it difficult for certain people to relate to his theory. An example of this could be gender roles in different cultures. Certain cultures will have strict rules in regards to what women can and cannot do. According to an article by Planned Parenthood, "What are gender roles and stereotypes?", women in certain cultures are expected to have a thin body figures and an overall graceful appearance. That is conflicting with a few of Erikson's stages because it is eliminating the self exploration aspect. I find that to be an example of how there are holes in his theory of development. In the end, I was able to draw comparisons to my life from his theories but I understand why there would be some discrepancies. I think Erikson's theory of development is very useful for developmental psychology. In the article, "Erikson's 8 Stages of Psychosocial Development", it highlights how, "there is a psychological conflict that must be successfully overcome in order for a child to develop into a healthy, well-adjusted adult." I believe this to be true because we all have to overcome challenges in our lifetime that influence our development. Although, like I highlight above, there are situations where children will not face every exact problem Erikson mentions, this will serve as a beneficial guideline for children to compare their lives to. I saw <https://assignbuster.com/personal-reflection-using-erik-eriksons-life-stages/>

quality results from my interview with my parents to go with his theory and believe it to be very useful for developmental psychology.

References

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