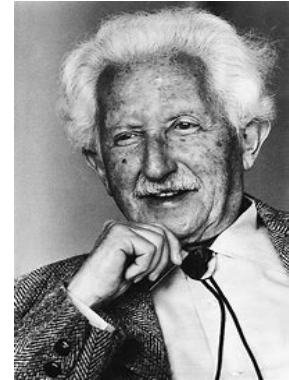


Erik Erikson (1902-1994) is considered a less controversial psychodynamic theorist. He is the father of developmental psychology. Erikson was a student of Freud's and expanded on his theory of psychosexual development by emphasizing the importance of culture in parenting practices and motivations and adding three stages of adult development (Erikson, 1950; 1968).



## Background

As an art school dropout with an uncertain future, young Erik Erikson met Freud's daughter, Anna Freud, while he was tutoring the children of an American couple undergoing psychoanalysis in Vienna. It was Anna Freud who encouraged Erikson to study psychoanalysis. Erikson received his diploma from the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute in 1933, and as Nazism spread across Europe, he fled the country and immigrated to the United States that same year. Erikson later proposed a psychosocial theory of development, suggesting that an individual's personality develops throughout the lifespan—a departure from Freud's view that personality is fixed in early life. In his theory, Erikson emphasized the social relationships that are important at each stage of personality development, in contrast to Freud's emphasis on erogenous zones. Erikson identified eight stages, each of which includes a conflict or developmental task. The development of a healthy personality and a sense of competence depend on the successful completion of each task.

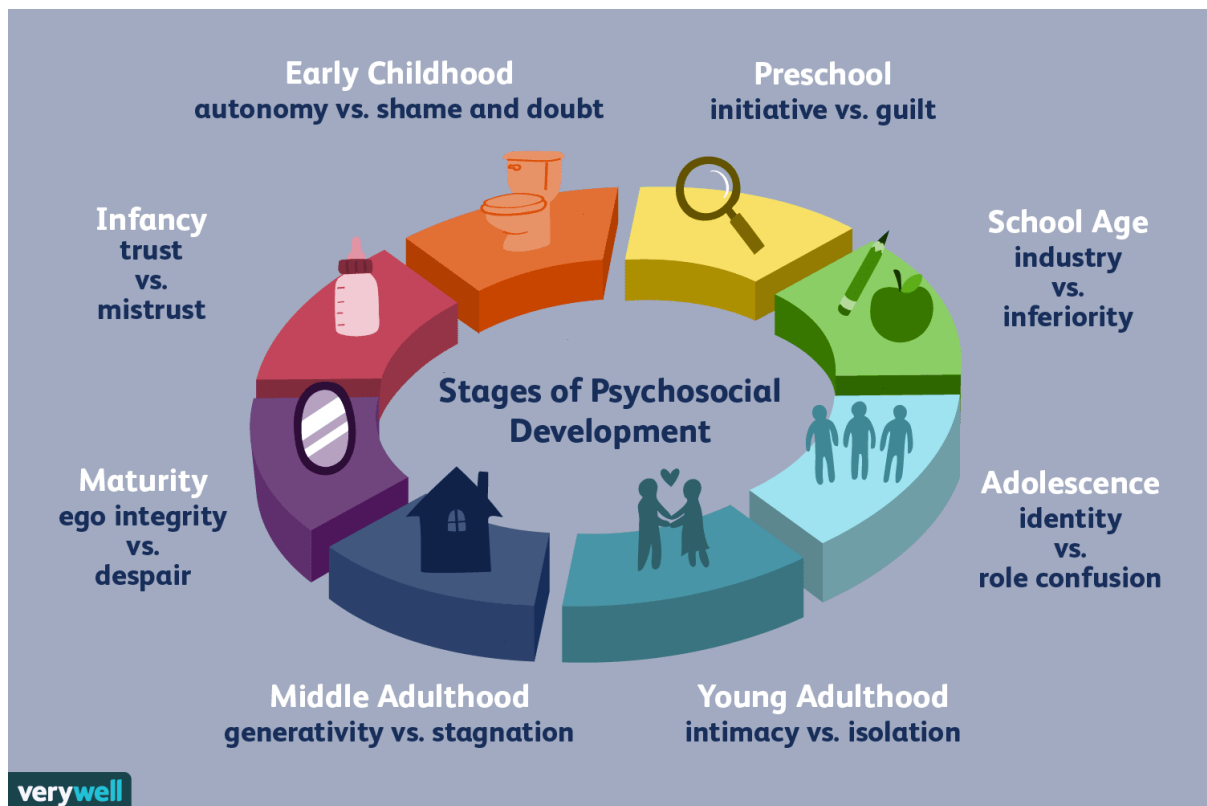
## Psychosocial Stages of Development

Erikson believed that we are aware of what motivates us throughout life and that the ego has greater importance in guiding our actions than does the id. We make conscious choices in life, and these choices focus on meeting certain social and cultural needs rather than purely biological ones. Humans are motivated, for instance, by the need to feel that the world is a trustworthy place, that we are capable individuals, that we can make a contribution to society, and that we have lived a meaningful life. These are all psychosocial problems.

Erikson's theory is based on what he calls the *epigenetic principle*, encompassing the notion that we develop through an unfolding of our personality in predetermined stages, and that our environment and surrounding culture influence how we progress through these stages. This biological unfolding in relation to our socio-cultural settings is done in stages of psychosocial development, where "progress through each stage is in part determined by our success, or lack of success, in all the previous stages."<sup>11</sup>

Erikson described eight stages, each with a major psychosocial task to accomplish or crisis to overcome. Erikson believed that our personality continues to take shape throughout our life span as we face these challenges. We will discuss each of these

stages in greater detail when we discuss each of these life stages throughout the course. Here is an overview of each stage:



1. **Trust vs. Mistrust (Hope)**—From birth to 12 months of age, infants must learn that adults can be trusted. This occurs when adults meet a child’s basic needs for survival. Infants are dependent upon their caregivers, so caregivers who are responsive and sensitive to their infant’s needs help their baby to develop a sense of trust; their baby will see the world as a safe, predictable place. Unresponsive caregivers who do not meet their baby’s needs can engender feelings of anxiety, fear, and mistrust; their baby may see the world as unpredictable. If infants are treated cruelly or their needs are not met appropriately, they will likely grow up with a sense of mistrust for people in the world.
2. **Autonomy vs. Shame (Will)**—As toddlers (ages 1–3 years) begin to explore their world, they learn that they can control their actions and act on their environment to get results. They begin to show clear preferences for certain elements of the environment, such as food, toys, and clothing. A toddler’s main task is to resolve the issue of autonomy vs. shame and doubt by working to establish independence. This is the “me do it” stage. For example, we might observe a budding sense of autonomy in a 2-year-old child who wants to choose her clothes and dress herself. Although her outfits might not be appropriate for the situation, her input in such basic decisions has an effect on her sense of independence. If denied the opportunity to act on her environment, she may

begin to doubt her abilities, which could lead to low self-esteem and feelings of shame.

3. **Initiative vs. Guilt (Purpose)**—Once children reach the preschool stage (ages 3–6 years), they are capable of initiating activities and asserting control over their world through social interactions and play. According to Erikson, preschool children must resolve the task of initiative vs. guilt. By learning to plan and achieve goals while interacting with others, preschool children can master this task. Initiative, a sense of ambition and responsibility, occurs when parents allow a child to explore within limits and then support the child’s choice. These children will develop self-confidence and feel a sense of purpose. Those who are unsuccessful at this stage—with their initiative misfiring or stifled by over-controlling parents—may develop feelings of guilt.
4. **Industry vs. Inferiority (Competence)**—During the elementary school stage (ages 7–12), children face the task of industry vs. inferiority. Children begin to compare themselves with their peers to see how they measure up. They either develop a sense of pride and accomplishment in their schoolwork, sports, social activities, and family life, or they feel inferior and inadequate because they feel that they don’t measure up. If children do not learn to get along with others or have negative experiences at home or with peers, an inferiority complex might develop into adolescence and adulthood.
5. **Identity vs. Role Confusion (Fidelity)**—In adolescence (ages 12–18), children face the task of *identity vs. role confusion*. According to Erikson, an adolescent’s main task is developing a sense of self. Adolescents struggle with questions such as “Who am I?” and “What do I want to do with my life?” Along the way, most adolescents try on many different selves to see which ones fit; they explore various roles and ideas, set goals, and attempt to discover their adult selves. Adolescents who are successful at this stage have a strong sense of identity and are able to remain true to their beliefs and values in the face of problems and other people’s perspectives. When adolescents are apathetic, do not make a conscious search for identity, or are pressured to conform to their parents’ ideas for the future, they may develop a weak sense of self and experience role confusion. They will be unsure of their identity and confused about the future. Teenagers who struggle to adopt a positive role will likely struggle to find themselves as adults.
6. **Intimacy vs. Isolation (Love)**—People in early adulthood (20s through early 40s) are concerned with intimacy vs. isolation. After we have developed a sense of self in adolescence, we are ready to share our life with others. However, if other stages have not been successfully resolved, young adults may have trouble developing and maintaining successful relationships with others. Erikson said that we must have a strong sense of self before we can develop successful intimate relationships. Adults who do not develop a positive self-concept in adolescence may experience feelings of loneliness and emotional isolation.
7. **Generativity vs. Stagnation (Care)**—When people reach their 40s, they enter the time known as middle adulthood, which extends to the mid-60s. The social task of middle adulthood is generativity vs. stagnation. Generativity involves finding your life’s work and contributing to the development of others through

activities such as volunteering, mentoring, and raising children. During this stage, middle-aged adults begin contributing to the next generation, often through caring for others; they also engage in meaningful and productive work which contributes positively to society. Those who do not master this task may experience stagnation and feel as though they are not leaving a mark on the world in a meaningful way; they may have little connection with others and little interest in productivity and self-improvement.

8. **Integrity vs. Despair (Wisdom)**—From the mid-60s to the end of life, we are in the period of development known as late adulthood. Erikson’s task at this stage is called integrity vs. despair. He said that people in late adulthood reflect on their lives and feel either a sense of satisfaction or a sense of failure. People who feel proud of their accomplishments feel a sense of integrity, and they can look back on their lives with few regrets. However, people who are not successful at this stage may feel as if their life has been wasted. They focus on what “would have,” “should have,” and “could have” been. They may face the end of their lives with feelings of bitterness, depression, and despair.

### Erikson’s Stages of Psychosocial Development

Approximate Age	Psychosocial Crisis/Task	Virtue Developed
Infant - 18 months	Trust vs Mistrust	Hope
18 months - 3 years	Autonomy vs Shame/Doubt	Will
3 - 5 years	Initiative vs Guilt	Purpose
5 -13 years	Industry vs Inferiority	Competency
13 -21 years	Identity vs Confusion	Fidelity
21- 39 years	Intimacy vs Isolation	Love
40 - 65 years	Generativity vs Stagnation	Care
65 and older	Integrity vs Despair	Wisdom

<b>Erikson's Stage Theory in its Final Version</b>			
<i>Age</i>	<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Resolution or "Virtue"</i>	<i>Culmination in old age</i>
Infancy (0-1 year)	Basic trust vs. mistrust	Hope	Appreciation of interdependence and relatedness
Early childhood (1-3 years)	Autonomy vs. shame	Will	Acceptance of the cycle of life, from integration to disintegration
Play age (3-6 years)	Initiative vs. guilt	Purpose	Humor; empathy; resilience
School age (6-12 years)	Industry vs. Inferiority	Competence	Humility; acceptance of the course of one's life and unfulfilled hopes
Adolescence (12-19 years)	Identity vs. Confusion	Fidelity	Sense of complexity of life; merging of sensory, logical and aesthetic perception
Early adulthood (20-25 years)	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love	Sense of the complexity of relationships; value of tenderness and loving freely
Adulthood (26-64 years)	Generativity vs. stagnation	Care	Caritas, caring for others, and agape, empathy and concern
Old age (65-death)	Integrity vs. Despair	Wisdom	Existential identity; a sense of integrity strong enough to withstand physical disintegration

## Strengths and weaknesses of Erikson's theory

Erikson's eight stages form a foundation for discussions on emotional and social development during the lifespan. Keep in mind, however, that these stages or crises can occur more than once or at different times of life. For instance, a person may struggle with a lack of trust beyond infancy. Erikson's theory has been criticized for focusing so heavily on stages and assuming that the completion of one stage is prerequisite for the next crisis of development. His theory also focuses on the social expectations that are found in certain cultures, but not in all. For instance, the idea that adolescence is a time of searching for identity might translate well in the middle-class culture of the United States, but not as well in cultures where the transition into adulthood coincides with puberty through rites of passage and where adult roles offer fewer choices.

By and large, Erikson's view that development continues throughout the lifespan is very significant and has received great recognition. However, like Freud's theory, it has been criticized for focusing on more men than women and also for its vagueness, making it difficult to test rigorously.

### **Educational Implications of Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development.**

Within an educational frame, Erikson's work gives us as teachers a framework to base our teaching on. Knowing what questions our students are asking of themselves and the world around them allows us to plan effectively.

Problems arise when our class has children at different stages in it, in this case, we must carefully differentiate our pedagogy to allow supportive learning for all students.

## Identity Status Theory by James E. Marcia



Refining and extending Erik Erikson's work, James Marcia came up with four Identity Statuses of psychological identity development. The main idea is that one's sense of identity is determined largely by the choices and commitments made regarding certain personal and social traits.

Based on Erik Erikson's ground breaking work on identity and psychosocial development in the 1960s, Canadian developmental psychologist James Marcia refined and extended Erikson's model, primarily focusing on adolescent development<sup>[1][2]</sup>. Addressing Erikson's notion of identity crisis, Marcia posited that the adolescent stage consists neither of identity resolution nor identity confusion, but rather the degree to which one has explored and committed to an identity in a variety of life domains from vocation, religion, relational choices, gender roles, and so on. Marcia's theory of identity achievement argues that two distinct parts form an adolescent's identity: crisis (i. e. a time when one's values and choices are being re-evaluated) and commitment. He defined a crisis as a time of upheaval where old values or choices are being re-examined. The end outcome of a crisis leads to a commitment made to a certain role or value.

### Identity Statuses of psychological identity development

Upon developing a semi-structured interview for identity research, Marcia proposed Identity Statuses of psychological identity development:

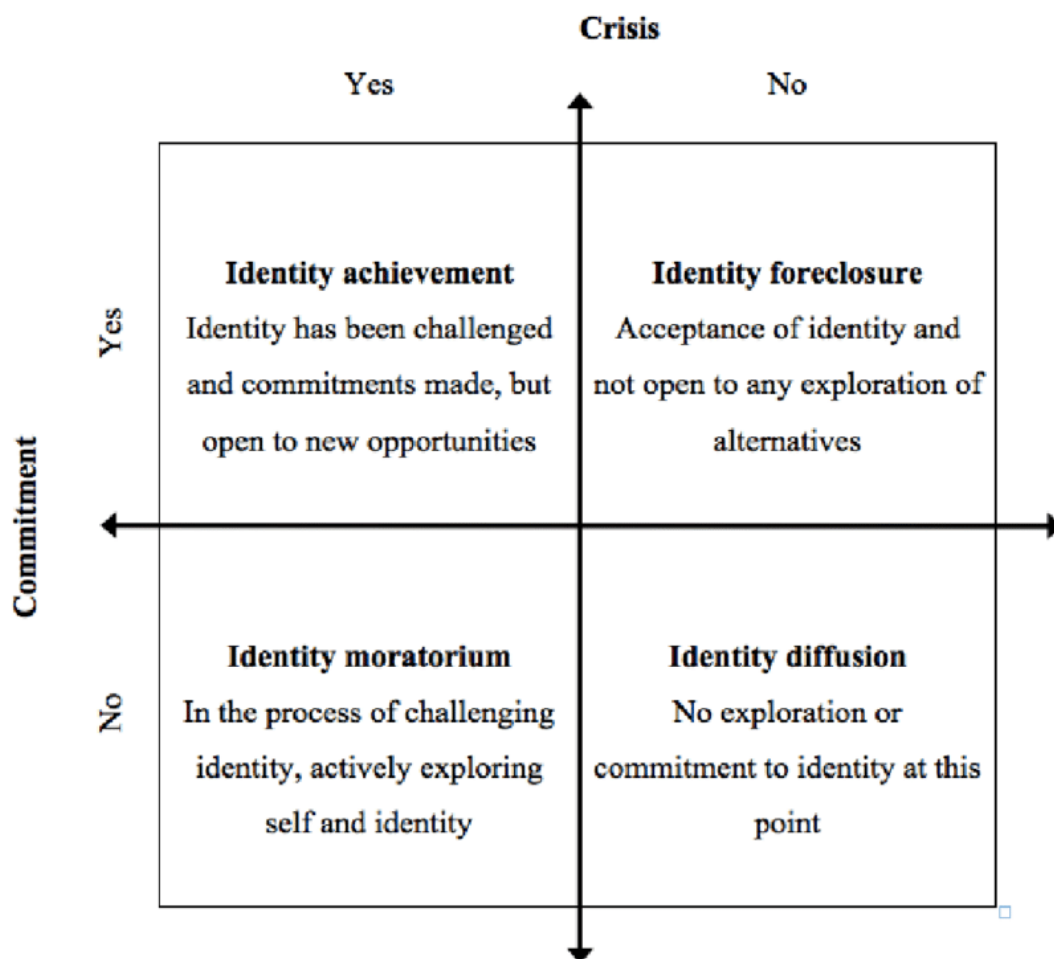
- **Identity Diffusion** – the status in which the adolescent does not have a sense of having choices; he or she has not yet made (nor is attempting/willing to make) a commitment
- **Identity Foreclosure** – the status in which the adolescent seems willing to commit to some relevant roles, values, or goals for the future. Adolescents in this stage have not experienced an identity crisis. They tend to conform to the expectations of others regarding their future (e. g. allowing a parent to determine a career direction) As such, these individuals have not explored a range of options.
- **Identity Moratorium** – the status in which the adolescent is currently in a crisis, exploring various commitments and is ready to make choices, but has not made a commitment to these choices yet.
- **Identity Achievement** – the status in which adolescent has gone through a identity crisis and has made a commitment to a sense of identity (i.e. certain role or value) that he or she has chosen

Note that the above status are not stages and should not viewed as a sequential process.

## Identity Formation Process

The core idea is that one's sense of identity is determined largely by the choices and commitments made regarding certain personal and social traits. The work done in this paradigm considers how much one has made certain choices, and how much he or she displays a commitment to those choices. Identity involves the adoption of 1) a sexual orientation, 2) a set of values and ideals and 3) a vocational direction. A well-developed identity gives on a sense of one's strengths, weaknesses, and individual uniqueness. A person with a less well-developed identity is not able to define his or her personal strengths and weaknesses, and does not have a well-articulated sense of self.

To better understand the identity formation process, Marcia conducted interviews with young people. He asked whether the participants in his study (1) had established a commitment to an occupation and ideology and (2) had experienced, or were presently experiencing, a decision making period (adolescent identity crisis). Marcia developed a framework for thinking about identity in terms of four identity statuses.



## Reference

David L, "Identity Status Theory (Marcia)," in *Learning Theories*, January 23, 2020,