Erik Erikson

Industry Vs. Inferiority and Psychosocial Developmental Theory

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Erik Erikson was born on June 15th 1902 in Germany. As a child Erikson was often teased for being different than the other students in his classroom. He had grown up being the child of an extramarital union and never knew who his real father was. The father that he had always known was not his true father and after this realization Erikson began questioning his identity. This questioning began to lead into his theoretical stages of psychosocial development. In 1933 Erikson moved to the United States and began teaching at Harvard Medical School, as he began to discover how culture will effect a person's ability to form influences within development (Erik H. Erikson, 2012, pg. 1). 

Erikson defines psychosocial development as, “a lifespan process passing through eight fixed-ordered stages, each accompanied by a central conflict that generates crisis...resolution of a crisis at one stage prepares for the next crisis, while at the same time relies on the previous resolution’s of the crisis passed” (Wang, W.; Viney, L. L., 1997, pg. 140). The stages are broken down into eight parts basic trust vs. mistrust (birth-2 years, reliability), autonomy vs. shame (2-3 years, control), initiative vs. guilt (3-5 years, creativity), industry vs. inferiority (5-11 years, approval), identity vs. role confusion( 12-18 years, social acceptance), intimacy and solidarity vs. isolation(19- 40 years, relationships), generativity vs. self absorption or stagnation(40- 65 years, nurture), and integrity vs. despair( 65-, fulfillment).

Erikson was influenced to create his theory by the understanding of his home life and school life. He was a confused child who grew up trying to understand the concepts of self-worth and identity. Erikson studied the theory by observation and case studies amongst the Sioux and Yurok Indians. He had also done many case studies with children
and their social adaptation. The basis for creating this theory was to understand a person's self-awareness and personality. Erikson's theory has had a lot of research in the field of understanding social aspects and emotions of development. He used many strategies to determine what was needed in his studies and he adapted his knowledge toward the discovery of finding himself.

Current research amongst psychosocial development has been done over the past couple decades and new research had been given in to its identification. 1976 exploration was aided into discovering if the use as animals in relation to children’s adaptations had a result on the child's psychosocial development. This research opened the idea of having children decide which animal they would like to be and why as well as the inference to what animals they did not like. The results showed that, “the scoring system yields valuable developmental information; however, it is too cumbersome for everyday use” (Farrell, M. F.,; Gumley, D, 1976, pg. 5).

Research in 1986 investigated the self-concept of students who are learning disabled. This was a study done amongst the formation of industry vs. inferiority. Hypothesis toward this theory analyzed whether or not students who are learning disable would be able to address concerns with success in their resolution of crisis rates. The study was done using “The LDAs (learning disabled student) included 30 males and 9 females in the 10th and 11th grades, NDAs (non learning disabled student) included 31 males and 16 females... Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale was used to administer the assessment and the conclusion found that LDAs showed less resolution of Erikson’s 4th stage of industry vs inferiority than did the NDAs” (Pickar, D. B.,; Tori, C. D, 1986, pg. 429).
In 1992, research was illustrated to help better understand and control childhood memories of injury. This research analyzed how, “Erikson’s theory may be of value in understanding and controlling the prevalence of childhood injuries” (Ginsburg H.J, 1992, pg. 96). Erikson’s use of the Epigenetic model helped to assess the maturation during the prenatal stages of development. This concluded that, “Months before birth are critical to insure proper later development. Erikson’s theory of different crisis emerging at the different stages of psychosocial development was adapted from embryologists critical period concept” (Ginsburg H.J, 1992, pg. 96) that focused on the preventable injuries within each individual stage. “During the stage of industry vs. inferiority a technological ethos is developed as the child begins to take an interest in the utensils, tools and the weapons used by big people. Youth become increasingly involved in organized sports activities and the number of sports related injuries has increased dramatically” (Ginsburg H.J, 1992, pg. 98).

The final research concluded that, “psychosocial personality development may be a dimension of human growth that has considerable implications for the study of childhood injuries...Erikson’s theory understands the qualitative shifts in injury reports as children mature” (Ginsburg H.J, 1992, pg. 99).

In 1996 research was added into the practice of how a cultural impact will change a child’s social developmental identity. This concept brought light to the central idea that, “the social environment, like the physical environment also affects psychosocial development because it determines the type, quality and quantity of interactions between the child and the caregivers. A seminal study of children’s social behavior in six cultures illustrates that...in most egalitarian relations between husbands and wives, children tend to spend equal time in the presence of both parents whereas in cultures where gender is
stressed in adulthood children spend less time with the opposite sex parent” (Pachter, L.M.; Harwood, R. L. 1996, pg. 192). 1997 brought about the issue of the development in the multicultural comparison of trust vs. mistrust within Chinese and Australian children ages 6-18. Current research on this subject debated the psychosocial development in school-aged children in the People’s Republic of China testing the feasibility of Erikson’s model with 360 students from 6 primary... Psychosocial Maturity was applied to the transcribed verbalizations from an open-ended interview and the scale scores were analyzed with the factors school grade and sex” (Wang, W.; Viney, L. L., 1997, pg. 139). The use of Content Analysis Scales of Psychosocial Maturity (CASPM) was the assessment of this research used to determine, “scales corresponding to Erikson’s eight stages...each stage having two scales representing positive and negative poles. Each scale is scored based on whether the verbalization qualifies the scale-specific dimensions” (Wang, W.; Viney, L. L., 1997, pg. 140) through the use of optimism and pessimism. Final research concluded that, “A high level of trust existed for all school grades, but Grade 1 consistently scored higher than other grades for all aspects of psychosocial maturity. No significant sex differences were found for any stage experience” (Wang, W.; Viney, L. L., 1997, pg. 139). Lastly in 1997 research was shown to address a new assessment theory of psychosocial development. This assessment was called (PIES) and used the concept of eight ego strengths. Erikson theory developed the idea that with, “assessments of identity achievement, self-esteem, purpose in life...there would be a correlation to ego strengths...researched concluded that discriminant validity was observed in negative correlations between the ego strengths and hopelessness, identity diffusion, identity moratorium, and personal distress” (Markstrom, C. A.; Sabino, V. M.; Turner, B. J.; Berman, R. C., 1997, pg. 705).
Learning about the choices to make in life and understanding the abilities we have to create our own individualism and life planning skills should be taught during the stage of industry vs. inferiority. Research was done in this hypothesis in 2000; to investigate the need teachers have for creating this modeling early on. “As children make short-term decisions about tangibles, they are unknowingly making long-term decisions about intangibles, such as, beliefs in themselves and their abilities...children’s decisions about themselves and what they can and cannot do have potential for becoming lasting influences on their lives” (Magnuson, C. S.; Starr, M. F., 2000, pg. 90).

In 2010, new research suggested that teachers have a role in helping students to achieve their psychosocial developmental success. This study used, “52 teachers being interviewed about their 4-6 year old students, in small group sessions...their discussions included the importance of play. Teachers described play as an integral part of psychosocial development of children in which the conditions for play, the unique development of the child and the role of the teacher are included” (Berkhout L.; Dolk, M.; Goorhuis-Brouwer, S., 2010, pg 103). Teachers of young students help to promote the identity of personality and how each student relates to the social aspect of the classroom. Research suggested that in conclusion of the study that play helps give “children a way to express themselves in their own way, contributing to communication skills and social cognition which then contributes to the growing discussion in early childhood education and care about the significance of play” (Berkhout L.; Dolk, M.; Goorhuis-Brouwer, S., 2010, pg. 113). Also in 2010, inquiry into the psychosocial development amongst gifted students in identity formation. This study investigated how the environment has a huge impact on social identification and “children in school face the crisis of becoming
industrious or becoming inferior...crisis in this regard is a necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another, marshaling resources of growth, recovery, and further differentiation...Erikson defines his theory through the use of internal influences to identity formation” (Cross, T. L.; Frazier, A. D., 2010, pg. 34). Lastly in 2010, the theory of interbeing was initiated into psychosocial development as students began to assess relationships among peers. This opens up the idea that, “All relationships are patterns of Interaction. So they are, by definition, dynamic; they are patterns of change. There are no individual things, but only ongoing processes” (Robins, S. P., 2010, pg. 39). Industry comes into play when we are addressing achievement and inferiority addresses the concerns for behavior. In relations to Erikson’s theory, “the initiative, the next desire is to achieve. When there is no sense of accomplishment from play or work, the child and/or adult is filled with an inferiority complex. This can only be overcome when a set goal is attained” (Robins, S. P., 2010, pg. 39). The conclusion adapted to the idea of being aware of ourselves and how to accept interconnectedness within society as a whole.

When interviewing my mentor teacher we discussed the importance of the social aspect of the classroom. I asked my teacher seven questions they are as follows:

“How do students display a willingness to do homework and group work?”
“Most of the students in my classroom follow directions and display the concepts of doing what they are told. The students will choose the correct behavior for the given situation. There are a few students in my classroom who need more pushing when it comes time for homework. The students are always excited and willing to participate in group work especially during group reading activities and centers.”

“Do students display needs for appreciation?”
“Yes students do display needs for appreciation. Whenever certain students finish an activity or writing assignment, they always want my opinions. I love seeing how the students show the caring aspect of the assignment and need to feel apart of the class. The students also display characteristics of my appreciation when there is need or discipline.”

“How well do students share group work?”
“The students share well in the classroom! There are certain students however; that will take control in the group. They feel as if they have the power to lead the group and that they are the only one that can manage the materials. I sometimes have to intervene to assist in making sure all students are sharing equally.”

“How well do students hold themselves accountable for homework?”
“Students hold themselves accountable for homework by understanding that if they don’t do their homework they won’t have success club on Friday (Extra recess). This is an opportunity for the students who did their homework a chance for an extra recess and those who didn’t do their homework a chance to complete it. Most students want the extra recess therefore; they do their homework.”

“How well do students interact with one another?”
“Students interact well with one another at the beginning of the year, it is more of getting the students to know one another and becoming more comfortable in the environment. As time goes on, students become more confident in their surroundings and more interactive with other students.”

“How confident are students in social aspects of the classroom...are there any students left alone often?”
“Students are confident in socializing the class. They’re not confident in their feelings however; if a student in the class has hurt feelings or said something that wasn’t nice students always come and tell me first before confronting the student. The students that are isolated sometimes choose to be isolated. I never like seeing a child by themselves, so I always make an effort to have them sit with other members of the class especially during snack time.”

“How often do students receive praise from work?”
“Students receive praise from their work each and everyday. I love to have my students pat their brains whenever they do a great job on an activity or if I see a student who really went above and beyond the activity. It is important that they have a chance to share their work with class as well in order to promote their hard work and effort to their classmates.”

These questions helped me to identify the key concepts in industry vs. inferiority. There are issues regarding appreciation, confidence, group work and independence, leadership roles, accountability, social interaction, and extra guidance.

In my field experience classroom I am definitely able to see the stage of industry vs. inferiority being played out. I am in a third grade class and have loved every minute of it. My mentor teacher is always giving the students praise for the activities that they are doing and they always want to share their work with her and myself. I had a student once ask me if they were doing their work right and of course they were. The student knew that they were doing it correctly, but they still had to need to express how hard they were trying and the willingness to express that they need to be appreciated for their work. I also had a
student come up and ask me about their test. I was grading tests that day and if the
students receive a one hundred percent they are allowed to grab a toy from the toy bin. Of
course, I was not going to tell her what her score was, but the fact that she was so eager to
have a toy that she would work really hard to achieve a good grade showed her need to feel
appreciated with a reward.

I have seen many students express their desire to achieve their specific goals in the
classroom. Sometimes the students are doing it for attention and other times the students
expresses the needs to contemplate their decision making skills with regards to what they
are supposed to be doing and when. There are a select few of students who misbehave in
order to achieve their specific crisis because they are not receiving the home life adaption
that some children have. When my mentor teacher asks the students to stop a specific
behavior some students desire the need to be inferior the consequences therefore; they do
the same behavior. This creates the crisis of discovering the conclusion that the child is not
inferior to the belief of consequences and their crisis will not be resolved until they
understand and possess the qualities of the desired behavior.

I love how when I interview my mentor teacher she addressed many techniques of
student learning through the use of success club. Whenever students display an inferiority
to homework this allows them a chance to see that they do not receive the same admiration
that other students do. Understanding that students need set goals and ideas for learning
helps to establish a connection to their development. My mentor teacher always tells
students what they will learn in the following week to get them excited about learning. This
process will also allow students to become away of planning skills with events going on
during the day. There is always a schedule posted and my mentor always insists that
students display these. There is also a sunshine award each week where students will have a chance to write something nice about a student in the classroom. At the end of the week, my mentor calls out the students name and reads them what the other student said. This helps students to address the need for appreciation and the need to feel that they have achieved something important that week or day even.

This theory definitely made me begin to understand why children display certain characteristics at different ages. I am now aware of the social conflicts that are going on at each stage and I can personally relate to each one. I had no idea that these stages had such an impact on our human and overall psychological development as we age. The current research being done on this topic addressed many concerns that I was not even familiar with. I definitely believe that planning at a young age relates directly to industry vs. inferiority with regards to understanding the need to make choices and decisions at a young age. This development will allow children a chance to become more responsible and develop a positive social interaction within the dynamic of learning new skills.

The relationship between social identity and the environment that we grow up in changes the mindset into how each person is individualized. Nobody is the same and with realization the acceptance of others should be easier to recognize. Children will begin to understand their differences and look past them to discover the importance of their social determination. I also never would have been able to relate childhood injury to the psychosocial developmental stages. As we become more active in sports as we mature and develop the higher increase there is in injury. This helped me to understand the importance of explaining careful procedures to insure safety of all students in my classroom.
There are many assessment related to this theory that analyzed the importance of scales within psychosocial developmental stages through the use of the developmental theory perspective. The one that found to be the most used was the assessment through the use of Epigenetic Model, which follows through in all the stages of the development. This model illustrates the importance of maturation in the womb leading forth into the development throughout the rest of the child’s life.

I didn't like how this theory used strict guidelines. There is no explanation as to why there cannot be a mix of stages. There are many points that stood out to be especially with the understanding of the self-identity. I feel as if we are always developing ourselves as we grow and that there is no specific stage to which it fully develops. I believe that there is no true logical way that we can assess our true self. It is a lifelong process that may or may not have a “crisis” introversion.

My personal theory agrees with the scientific assessment of the theory especially with the understanding of maturation. We are always maturing in many ways as we grow older and experience new aspects of social changes. We can also address the behavior that changes and it is through the Epigenetic Model that helps us to address the specific needs as we grow older. Everything starts from the moment we are in the womb as the developmental process begins to occur however; I do not understand why Erikson chose not to include the process in his developmental stages. This stage would have a huge impact of the other stages that will continuously follow. This is definitely a good theory! It could use more work in the areas of self-identity and the concept of understanding personality. We change as we grow older and I think this research should include the
changes that are made when we grow older instead of retreating back to the previous stages of development.

Erik Erikson definitely knew what he was doing when he created this theory and he helped to lead insight into new current investigations. Erikson was a very talented psychoanalyst and he is still one of the most interesting theorists I have ever researched. He came along way and established new ideas that most people wouldn’t even dream of. Erik Erikson died May 12th, 1994 and left with him the theory of psychosocial development that will always be researched. I wonder what research will be done on it next!
References


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