ERIK ERIKSON'S THEORY OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Erik H. Erikson's (1902–1994) theory reflects in part his psychoanalytic training, but it embraces society's influence and the social aspects of development to a much larger extent than did Freud's. With little more than a German high school education, Erikson attended art schools and traveled in Italy, apparently in search of his own identity. Erikson's later writing popularized the concept of "identity," and he applied it especially to the period of adolescence. After Erikson returned to Germany, where he studied art and prepared to teach art, he was offered a teaching position in a private school in Vienna that served the children of patients of Sigmund and Anna Freud. Peter Blos, a friend of Erikson from the time they attended the Gymnasium together, also worked as a teacher in the same school and it was Blos's idea to offer Erikson the position. During his tenure as a teacher, Erikson was invited to undergo psychoanalysis with Anna Freud, and during this process his interest expanded from art and teaching to also include the study of psychoanalysis. While in Vienna, he also studied Montessori education, which later influenced his psychoanalytic studies, such as the organization of objects in space. Erikson graduated from the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute in 1933 as a lay analyst since he held no medical or academic degrees. Later that year, he immigrated to the United States and became associated with the Harvard Psychological Clinic.

Erikson has published extensively, his best known and most widely read book being *Childhood and Society,* published in 1950 and revised in 1963. Of particular significance to an understanding of adolescence is his *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (1968). Erikson's more recent book, *The Life Cycle Completed* (1982), encompasses an integration of much of his earlier work, but with the explicit purpose of exploring development by beginning with old age and to make sense of the "completed life cycle." He also explained that the new organization reflects his view that, because all stages grow out of previous stages, tracing the antecedents backward would highlight these relationships. The idea of identity formation has remained the focus of much of his work and appears in other book titles, such as *Identity*

and the Life Cycle (1959). In addition, he has examined the identity issue of historical figures, such as Martin Luther (1962), Mahatma Gandhi (1969), and Thomas Jefferson. In these psycho-historical studies he is concerned with the identity crisis of each of these men as well as with the respective national identity issues at the time of their most notable contributions. Revealing his basic philosophy, he maintains that one cannot separate "the identity crisis in individual life and contemporary crisis in historical development because the two help to define each other and are truly relative to each other" (Erikson, 1968: 23). The word *crisis*, as Erikson uses it, is not just an emotional turmoil or emergency; it also has (as it does in Chinese), the meaning of "opportunity," an idea that is essential to an understanding of the word *crisis* as Erikson sees it. Erikson has also written about his own identity crisis as well as the philosophical and psychoanalytic foundation of the concept in "Autobiographic Notes on the Identity Crisis" (1970).

In his famous chapter, "Eight Stages of Man," Erikson (1950) modifies and expands the Freudian stages of psychosexual development by placing much greater emphasis on the social context of development. Erikson also is the first person who proposes a life-span theory of development that encompasses the entire life cycle. His modifications were inspired by anthropological findings and a concern with the social origins of these stages, which contribute to a shift from the sexual nature of man to a theory of psychosocial development. The core concept in this theory is the acquisition of an ego-identity, and the exploration of identity issues becomes the outstanding characteristic of adolescence. Although the specific quality of a person's identity differs from culture to culture, the accomplishment of this developmental task has common elements in all cultures. The establishment of a true sense of a personal identity is the psychological connection between childhood and adulthood. In order to acquire a strong and healthy ego-identity, the child must receive consistent and meaningful recognition for his or her achievements and accomplishments.

Humans develop according to the *epigenetic principle of development,* borrowed from embryology, which states "that 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 risen to form a functional whole" (Erikson, 1968: 92). Epigenesis, for Erikson (1982: 28) involves much more than a sequence of stages: "It also determines certain laws in the fundamental relations of the growing parts to each other. . . ." Every element must arise at the appropriate time; the failure to do so will jeopardize the development of "a succession of potentials for significant interaction" with significant others and the "mores that govern them." Unless normal development takes place, the individual cannot grow into a psychologically healthy person. Obviously, the significant others and the individual interact, so the ongoing process is mutual and reciprocal. In other words, the epigenic plan which arises from within the human organism is supported (or interfered with) by social demands. It basically identifies the developmental interaction between maturational advances and the social expectations made upon the child. For example, at about age 2–3 the social demand placed upon children to control elimination (an issue in the autonomy stage) dovetails with the child's maturational ability to exercise the necessary sphincter control. Furthermore, every stage is related developmentally to every other stage, "whether in the form of an earlier condition or of a later consequence" (Erikson, 1982: 61).

In the epigenic model (Figure 3.1), the basic ground plan of increasing psychosocial differentiation is depicted. The diagonal axis, beginning with "Trust vs. Mistrust," shows

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the developmental sequence of the well-known eight stages of man. Movement upward along the diagonal axis represents normal development and shows the successive differentiation of the original undifferentiated structure, and thus represents increasingly more mature levels of functioning. This diagram demonstrates that:

1. Each item of the vital personality is systematically related to all others; they all depend on the proper development in the proper sequence of each item.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
VIII								INTEGRITY vs. DESPAIR
VII							GENERATIVITY vs. STAGNATION	
VI					INTIMACY vs. ISOLATION			
V	Temporal Perspective vs. Time Confusion	Self-Certainty vs. Self-Consciousness	Role Experimentation vs. Role Fixation	Apprenticeship vs. Work Paralysis	IDENTITY vs. IDENTITY CONFUSION	Sexual Polarization vs. Bisexual Confusion	Leader- and Followership vs. Authority Confusion	Ideological Commitment vs. Confusion of Values
IV				INDUSTRY vs. INFERIORITY	Task Identification vs. Sense of Futility			
III			INITIATIVE vs. GUILT		Anticipation of Roles vs. Role Inhibition			
II		AUTONOMY vs. SHAME, DOUBT			Will to Be Oneself vs. Self-Doubt			
I	TRUST vs. MISTRUST				Mutual Recognition vs. Autistic Isolation			

FIGURE 3.1 Erikson's epigenetic diagram (from *Identity: Youth and Crisis,* by Erik H. Erikson, with the permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Copyright © 1968 by W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.).

2. "Each item exists in some form before 'its' decisive and critical time normally arrives" (Erikson, 1968: 93, 95). Thus, the horizontal and the vertical axes entries in Figure 3.1 identify how earlier development contributes to identity in adolescence.

Each of the eight developmental stages is characterized by a conflict, and each conflict contains the possibility of bipolar outcomes. Erikson suggests that the individual must actually experience both sides of the conflict and must learn to subsume them into higher synthesis. This bipolar nature of the social crisis gives each stage its name, rather than the body zone that gives pleasure as in Freudian theory. If the conflict is worked out in a constructive, satisfactory manner, the syntonic or positive quality becomes the more dominant part of the ego and enhances further healthy development through the subsequent stages. For Erikson, the growth of a positive self-concept is directly linked to the psychosocial stage resolution that constitutes the core of his theory. However, if the conflict persists past its time, or is resolved unsatisfactorily, the dystonic or negative quality is incorporated into the personality structure. In that case, the dystonic or negative attribute will interfere with further development and may manifest itself in impaired self-concept, adjustment problems, and possibly, psychopathology.

Erikson (1982) substitutes the terms *syntonic* and *dystonic* for initially used terms *positive* and *negative,* but they will be used interchangeably. The reader should bear in mind that Erikson emphasizes the necessity and healthiness of an individual actually having both syntonic and dystonic reactions depending on the situation. For example, a person walking the streets in the dark of any major U.S. city will more likely avoid becoming the victim of an assault if he or she has a healthy sense of mistrust and behaves accordingly. Thus, as Erikson states (1982: 80), "both syntonic and dystonic and both sympathic and antipathic potentials are necessary for human adaptation. . . ."

Each crisis or conflict is never completely solved but appears to be most pronounced at the age at which it emerges. However, as in psychoanalytic theory, these stages occur in a sequential order, as implied in Erikson's use of the principle of epigenetic development. Ego "identity is never 'established' as an 'achievement,'" as something static or unchangeable, but is a "forever to-be-revised sense of reality of the Self within social reality" (Erikson, 1968: 24, 211). Although the identity crisis is most pronounced during adolescence, and gives that age its stage name, identity issues remain a lifelong concern. A redefinition of one's ego-identity emerges quite commonly when major role changes occur, such as when college freshmen leave home and have to make their own decisions, often for the first time. Other issues that tend to renew identity concerns are: one's first job, marriage, parenthood, the death of one's parents, divorce, unemployment, serious illness, widowhood, and retirement. The ability to cope with these later identity issues that result from major changes in one's role in life may well depend on the degree of success with which one has mastered the adolescent identity crisis.

The vertical sequence in Figure 3.1, beginning with "Mutual Recognition vs. Autistic Isolation" and ascending until it coincides with "Identity vs. Identity Confusion" in the diagonal sequence, demonstrates how each of the four preceding stages contributes significantly to the development of ego-identity or identity diffusion during adolescence. Thus, "Mutual Recognition," "Will to Be Oneself," "Anticipation of Roles," and "Task

Identification" are secondary outcomes of the earlier stages of psychosocial development that are essential contributing factors to the achievement of a syntonic identity in adolescence. On the other hand, failure in the earlier stages resulting in "Autistic Isolation," "Self-Doubt," "Role Inhibition," and a "Sense of Futility" may contribute to a personal estrangement or identity confusion in adolescence.

The horizontal sequence in Figure 3.1 beginning with "Temporal Perspective vs. Time Confusion" depicts the derivatives or earlier relative achievements that now become part and parcel of the struggle for identity. Erikson notes, "It is necessary to emphasize . . . [that] . . . the early achievements must be . . . renamed in terms of the later stages. Basic Trust, for example, is a good and a most fundamental thing to have, but its psychosocial quality becomes more differentiated as the ego comes into the possession of a more extensive apparatus, even as society challenges and guides such extension" (Erikson, 1959: 141).

The symptoms of confusion that make up the dystonic alternative on the horizontal sequence represent the earlier failures to progress normally and to resolve conflicts; they become, therefore, part of the identity confusion issue. The experience of time confusion (or simple obliviousness to time) during adolescence, for example, can arise out of the undifferentiated mistrust that may have occurred much earlier. Time confusion may develop in an attitude of not trusting time or of interpreting unnecessary delay, lateness, or forgetting time for a scheduled meeting as deceit.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF ERIKSON'S "STAGES OF MAN" TO ADOLESCENT IDENTITY

■ Trust versus Mistrust

During infancy—Erikson's first stage in the human life cycle—the major developmental crisis (that is, opportunity) is between becoming a trusting or a mistrusting person. The development of trust includes becoming trustful of others and developing a sense of one's own trustworthiness. The necessary healthy experience for the development of trust is maternal love and care. Initially, the infant "lives through, and loves with his mouth" (Erikson, 1968: 97). Being fed regularly does contribute to trust. However, the infant is receptive to maternal love in many ways besides orally. Children learn to trust because mother does come and take care of them regularly. They ideally experience living in a predictable, secure world in which their basic needs are consistently satisfied. This emerging sense of trust facilitates all subsequent development. Later, as motor skills develop and children are given freedom to explore their environment, they also learn to trust themselves and their own bodies, especially as they begin to control body movements such as grasping, holding, reaching, and later, crawling, standing, and walking.

The mistrust of time and *time confusion* that Erikson sees as "more or less typical for all adolescents at one stage or another" (Erikson, 1968: 182) grows out of unhealthy experiences at this early stage and tends to be related to the regularity of the cycle in which the infant's basic needs are satisfied. Repeated delay or irregularity in essential body satisfac-

tions results in mistrust of time. In addition, Erikson maintains that adolescents may challenge the sense of time that was established during the earlier stages.

The conviction that emerges from this receptive state is, "I am what I am given," and it is an incorporative stage. The healthy syntonic outcome is the ability to trust others and to trust oneself, and thus, to have hope. Fowler's theory of faith development (see Chapter 13) draws on these earlier forms of trust and hope as the early, essential components of faith. Late in the life cycle, the capacity to experience faith, "the last possible form of hope" (Erikson, 1982: 62), is based on positive experience in this early stage. This clearly demonstrates Erikson's perception that all stages are related and that early experiences have definite consequences later in life. The trusting infant has developed the first requisite for later developing confidence, optimism, and finally, a feeling of security. The trusting infant comes to recognize the self in the mother's reaction to it, her smile, her face, her eyes, her acknowledgement of the child, and her ministrations. *Mutual recognition* and *mutual trustworthiness* are the earliest and most undifferentiated experiences of what will later become a sense of identity. No one can get an identity all by oneself. Even in adolescents, identity is never an individual achievement, but an outgrowth of mutual recognition; and just as for the infant, identity grows by being acknowledged and appreciated by others. This notion of "psychosocial reciprocity" as implied in the words *mutual recognition* and *mutual trustworthiness* pervades Erikson's thinking and highlights the importance of social relationships in development.

The dystonic outcome is mistrust of others and/or mistrust of oneself. Lack of trust in infancy may find expression in statements of self-debasement and may contribute to identity confusion in adolescence. Absence of experiences leading to the development of trust in early childhood may impair the "capacity to feel identical" with others during adolescence (Erikson 1968: 105). *Autistic isolation* in infancy is the earliest contribution to identity diffusion in adolescence (Figure 3.1).

■ Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt

The issue at the second stage in the human life cycle is between becoming an *autonomous, creative* individual or a dependent, inhibited, and *shameful individual* filled with *self-doubt.* The stage falls approximately between the ages of 18 months and $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. During this stage, children, although still dependent on others in many ways, begin to experience an autonomy of free choice. They now develop motor ability and the intellectual capacity to experience themselves as entities in their own right. They realize that they are different from father and mother. This newly gained sense of autonomy is often used in an exaggerated fashion, which can lead to social conflicts. The battle for autonomy may show in stubborn refusal, temper tantrums, and the "yes-no" syndrome. An important task is to begin the mastery of self-control; particularly important in this process is the control of body waste products. Toilet training means "holding on and letting go" when the child wishes, representing highly autonomous activities over which nobody else has control. The child can—and at times does—retain body waste even though the caretaker may want him or her to let go. On the other hand, the child can release them even though the parents wish him or her to hold back. However, with proper training, the child can develop a feeling of mastery for a job well done and a sense of autonomy of choice in regard to toilet training, but also in a much more general sense of making his or her own decisions.

The conviction that emerges during this stage is "I am what I will be," reflecting the child's new sense of autonomy. The syntonic attributes that are commonly gained during this stage are pride, control, self-assurance, autonomy, *self-certainty,* and *the will to be oneself.* The development of a rudimentary form of *the will to be oneself* during the autonomy stage later becomes an essential prerequisite for the development of a mature ego-identity during adolescence: "There are clinical reasons to believe that the adolescent turning away from the whole childhood milieu in many ways repeats this first emancipation" (Erikson, 1968: 114). The autonomous attributes gained during this period contribute to the formation of an identity during adolescence, leading to the conviction: "I am an independent person who can choose freely and who can guide my own development and my own future." Obviously, such a conviction enhances further development.

The dystonic outcome at this stage is *shame, self-doubt,* dependency, *self-consciousness,* and a meek compliance resulting from too many restrictions, unfair punishment, and the parents' inability to cope with the budding—and at times frustrating—*autonomy* of their young child. The identity crisis of adolescence revives and grows out of these earlier unresolved autonomy issues. Since autonomy is one of the essential ingredients for the development of identity, the battle for autonomy becomes more and more an important issue in the adolescent's struggle for independence from the family; it functions also as a recapitulation of earlier attempts at self-determination. This involves two problems. Adolescents may become so self-conscious and lacking in autonomy that they are afraid of being seen in an exposed and vulnerable situation. They may question their self-worth and the reliability of the whole experience of their childhood, and therefore, be unable to form an appropriate identity. On the other hand, entering adolescence with too much of their immature autonomy still unresolved may contribute to brash and shameless defiance of parents, teachers, and other authorities.

■ Initiative versus Guilt

The psychosocial conflict in the third stage of life is the development of a sense of *initiative versus a sense of guilt.* A conflict arises now between an aggressive intrusion into the world by way of activity, curiosity, and exploration or an immobilization by fear and guilt. The child from about 3½ to 6 years of age normally shows a great deal of exuberance, a feeling of power, curiosity, a high level of activity and surplus energy. In play activities, the child moves around much more freely and more aggressively and develops an increasingly larger radius of operations. In the process of developing initiative, goal setting emerges and activities become increasingly guided by a purpose. This is also the stage during which language develops rapidly. Early in this stage, the child asks an endless number of "what" questions. These questions are basically learning tools since new words, concepts, and a basic understanding is acquired in this fashion. In addition, one can observe aggressive manipulation of objects, especially toys. The child takes things apart to see what is inside, not necessarily because of destructive tendencies, but out of curiosity. However, if this curiosity is interpreted as destructiveness, if the child is punished and made to feel guilty, initiative may wane. Children will also explore and manipulate their own bodies as well as those of friends, and this exploratory behavior does involve curiosity about sex organs. Social criticism and punishment may foster the development of guilt feelings in regard to sexual exploration. The aggressive behavior, including exploration of the bodies of other people, is

accompanied by a rudimentary form of cooperation with others in play activities and games. During this stage of development, gender differences originate because of the role that anatomy plays in oedipal and Electra conflicts. Like Freud before him, Erikson focused more on male development and does not sufficiently differentiate between the genders; this paragraph and the one that follows reveal this bias.

The conviction that emerges from this intrusive mode is, "I am what I can imagine I will be." The intrusive (male-biased) mode is characterized by a variety of thoughts, fantasies, and behaviors: "(1) the intrusion into space by vigorous locomotion; (2) the intrusion into the unknown by consuming curiosity; (3) the intrusion into other people's ears and minds by the aggressive voice; (4) the intrusion upon or into other bodies by physical attacks, and (5) and often most frighteningly, the thought of the phallus intruding into the female body" (Erikson, 1968: 116).

If the crisis of this stage is mastered successfully, a sense of purpose and initiative emerges that will, later in adolescence, become the basis for curiosity, ambition, and *experimentation with different roles,* just as the child's play activities often reflect an *anticipation of different roles.* The sexual self-image and the differentiation between what Erikson refers to as masculine-making and feminine-catching initiative become important prerequisites for the sexual identity crisis or exploration during adolescence. The ability to take the initiative contributes to the development of an identity in adolescence since it fosters the anticipation of what one might become and one's future role in life by "freeing the child's initiative and sense of purpose for adult tasks which promise a fulfillment of one's range of capacities" (Erikson, 1968: 122). The issue of the "intrusive" and "inclusive" mode is implied in the protruding male structures and the enclosed female structures graphically represented in preadolescents' play constructions which Erikson researched. (See Figures 4.2 and 4.3 in Chapter 4.)

A dystonic outcome is likely if parents restrain, resist, and punish the newly developing initiative too much, for example, by making the child feel guilty for taking toys apart or exploring his own or someone else's body. If the child's exploration and initiative encounter severe reprimand and punishment, the result may be a more permanent immobilization by guilt, inhibition by fear, *role inhibition, role fixation,* and over-dependence on adults. Since these attributes interfere with identity formation during adolescence, a negative outcome at this stage would contribute to the emergence of identity diffusion in adolescence (Figure 3.1).

■ Industry versus Inferiority

The task at the fourth stage is the development of a *sense of industry versus the emergence of feelings of inferiority.* Erikson partly adopted Freud's idea of the Oedipus complex followed by a period of sexual latency. Unable to marry his mother, the boy must learn to become a potential provider so that he eventually will become a husband who has his own sexual partner. Therefore, this period between school entry and puberty becomes a period of learning and mastering the more basic skills needed in society. Children now acquire much fundamental knowledge and even more important, they learn to take pride in their work and acquire an attitude to do well in their work. This period is therefore described as *the apprenticeship of life.* In all known cultural groups, children receive instruction during this time,

although not necessarily the kind of formal schooling provided in Western societies. The child must learn to win approval, recognition, and a feeling of success by producing things and doing the job well. An important component of becoming industrious is the "positive identification with those who know things and know how to do things" (Erikson, 1968: 125). The free play of the earlier period now becomes subordinated to rules and regulations and more structured activities. The child must learn to follow and respect rules and to become committed to the ideas of cooperation in team effort and fair play. Through team activities, games, and cooperative play, the child learns to anticipate the behavior, roles, and feelings of others. The developmental significance of role-taking receives further emphasis in the theories of Selman (Chapter 11) and Bronfenbrenner (Chapter 15).

The conviction that emerges during this apprenticeship is: "I am what I will learn" or even more production-oriented: "I am what I can learn to make work." If the *sense of industry* is established successfully, the child will need and want accomplishments and strive for completion of tasks and for recognition of work well done. The child will develop a sense of duty, a feeling for workmanship and work participation, and an attitude of wanting to do well that is based on industriousness and a desire for success. The contribution that this stage makes to identity formation is "the capacity to *learn* how to be, with skill, what one is in the process of becoming" (Erikson, 1968: 180), that is, an *identification of the task* ahead and a willingness to learn and master it (Figure 3.1), a feeling of competence.

If the child fails in the task to acquire a feeling of success and a desire for recognition for work well done, there will be a lack of industriousness and a feeling of usefulness. Such children may not develop the feeling of enjoyment and of pride for good work. On the contrary, they may be plagued by feelings of inadequacy and inferiority and may become convinced that they will never amount to much. As a result, there is *work paralysis* and a *sense of futility* that will most likely contribute to ego diffusion in the next stage.

■ Identity versus Identity Confusion

Adolescence has been characterized by Erikson (1950) as the period in the human life cycle during which the individual must establish a *sense of personal identity* and avoid the dangers of *role diffusion* and *identity confusion.* Identity achievement implies that the individual assesses strengths and weaknesses and determines how he or she wants to deal with them. The adolescent must find an answer to the identity questions: "Where did I come from?" "Who am I?" "What do I want to become?" Identity, or a sense of sameness and continuity, must be searched for. Identity is not readily given to the individual by society, nor does it appear as a maturational phenomenon when the time comes, as do secondary sex characteristics. Identity must be acquired through sustained individual effort. Unwillingness to work actively on one's identity formation carries with it the danger of role diffusion, which may result in alienation and a sense of isolation and confusion.

The search for an identity involves the establishment of a meaningful self-concept in which past, present, and future are brought together to form a unified whole. Consequently, the task is more difficult in a historical period in which the anchorage of family and community tradition has been lost and the future is unpredictable. In a period of rapid social change, the older generation is no longer able to provide adequate role models for the younger generation. Mead (1970) describes in detail the changing relation-

ship of adolescents to parents as societies move from post- to co- and prefigurative cultures (see Chapter 6). Keniston (1965) has even suggested that in a rapidly changing society, the search for an identity is replacing the socialization process, since the latter implies that there actually exist stable, uniform, socially defined roles and values into which the adolescent can be guided.

The older generation no longer provides effective role models to the younger generation in the process of searching for a personal identity. If the elders do provide them, adolescents may either reject them as personally inappropriate, or follow them—in what will later be discussed as a "foreclosed fashion"—that is, seeking to fulfill their parents' aspirations for them, without appreciating the search for an identity as a personal opportunity. Thus, the importance of the peer group in helping the individual to answer the identity question, "Who am I?" cannot be emphasized enough. The answer to this question depends on social feedback from others who provide the adolescent with their perception and their evaluation of him or her. Identity is based on psychosocial reciprocity. Therefore, adolescents "are sometimes morbidly, often curiously, preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are and with the question of how to connect to earlier cultivated roles and skills with the ideal prototype of the day" (Erikson, 1959: 89). Adolescents' preoccupation with the thinking of others is the basis of Elkind's (1967) theory of egocentrism.

Since an identity can be found only in interaction with significant others, a process Erikson refers to as psychosocial reciprocity, the adolescent often goes through a period of a great need for peer group recognition and almost compulsive peer group involvement. Conforming to the expectations of peers helps adolescents find out how certain roles fit them, but peer group conformity can also create a new kind of dependency, so that the individual accepts the values of others too easily without really addressing the identity issue of how well they do fit him or her. The peer group, the clique, and the gang, even the lover, aid the individual in the search for a personal identity since they provide both a role model and very personal social feedback. The seemingly endless telephone conversations during adolescence and later, the bull session in college, can serve genuine psychological purposes by providing this kind of personal information. As long as the adolescent depends on role models and feedback, the in-group feeling that the peer group provides will remain quite strong. Also, behaviors of conformity to the expectations of the peer group reflect the learned skill of not making oneself an easy target of "catty remarks" or to avoid being "mocked out." The ensuing clannishness and intolerance of "differences"—including petty aspects of language, gesture, hair style, and dress—are explained by Erikson as the "necessary defenses" against the dangers of self-diffusion that remain prevalent as long as the identity has not yet been achieved. Particularly during the time when the body image changes so rapidly, when genital maturation stimulates sexual fantasies, and when intimacy with the opposite sex appears as a possibility with simultaneously positive and negative valences, the adolescent relies on peers for advice, comfort, companionship, and uses peers as a personal sounding board. Eventually, adolescents must free themselves from this new dependency on peers—which has just replaced their dependency on parents—in order to find themselves, that is, to attain a mature identity. Such an identity, once found, gives the young adult "a sense of 'knowing where one is going' and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count" (Erikson, 1959: 118).

Pubescence, according to Erikson, is characterized by the rapidity of body growth, genital maturity, and sexual awareness. Because these changes are qualitatively quite different from those experienced during childhood, an element of discontinuity from previous development may emerge during early adolescence. Youth is not only confronted with an internal "physiological revolution" that interferes with the easy establishment of a new body image, but also confronted with a "psychological crisis" that revolves around issues of identity and self-definition. Erikson maintains today that the study of identity has become more important than was the study of sexuality in Freud's time. For the searching adolescent, identity—the establishment and reestablishment of sameness with previous experiences and a conscious attempt to make the future a part of one's personal life plan—seems to be subordinated to sexuality. Adolescents must establish ego-identity and learn to accept body changes as well as new libidinal feelings. Identity exploration depends at least in part on these psychophysiological factors. If ego-identity is not satisfactorily established during adolescence, there is the danger that role diffusion will inhibit further healthy ego development: "Where this is based on a strong doubt as to one's sexual identity, delinquent and outright psychotic incidents are not uncommon" (Erikson, 1950: 228). Erikson believes that those youth who are attracted to delinquent behavior have a poorly formed sense of personal identity and low self-esteem; they doubt their occupational skills and are unable to resolve core psychological tasks or to carry deficits from the previous psychosocial stages. Many of the social and behavioral problems adolescents encounter (substance abuse, acting out behavior, suicide or suicide attempts, eating disorders, teenage pregnancy, dropping out of school, etc.) can be viewed as reflecting earlier difficulties with mistrust, shame and doubt, guilt, and/or inferiority feelings. The successful way of coping with the challenges of adolescence (academic mastery, dating, individuation, renegotiating relationships with parents, wholesome health habits, etc.) all seem to build on earlier experiences of trust, autonomy, initiative, and industriousness.

Falling in love, a common occurrence at this age, is seen by Erikson not so much as a means of satisfying sexual needs, as it might be at a later age, but as an attempt to project and test one's own diffused and still undifferentiated ego through the eyes of a beloved. The various love affairs through which an adolescent passes may thus contribute to the development of an identity. The personal feedback that is mutually shared in a love relationship aids the individual in defining and revising his or her own self-definition and encourages him or her to clarify and to reflect on a personal definition of the ego. Thus, the numerous crushes and infatuations, not at all uncommon at the high school and even the college level, serve a genuine developmental purpose: "That is why many a youth would rather converse, and settle matters of mutual identification, than embrace" (Erikson, 1950: 228).

Of great concern for many adolescents is the issue of developing a vocational identity, and during the initial attempts some unrealistic choices based on role diffusion are not uncommon. The problem, identified through empirical investigations, is that early and even middle adolescents hold highly glamorized, idealized, and often unrealistic conceptions of the vocational roles they dream about. Furthermore, goal aspirations are often much higher than warranted by the individual's perseverance, skill level, and ability. Frequently, the adolescent is attracted to vocational goals that are attainable by only a very few: models, actors, actresses, rock musicians, athletic champions, car racers, astronauts, and other socially glamorized "heroes." In the process, the adolescents overidentify with and idolize their

models and heroes to the extent that they forsake their own identity to imitate the heroes. At this point, youth rarely identify with their parents; on the contrary, they often rebel against parental control, value systems, and intrusions into their private life. This is a necessary part of growing up, since youths must separate their own identity from that of their family and develop autonomy in order to attaint maturity. Erikson (1982) notes that the particular strength of early adolescents is *fidelity,* which connects back to infantile trust and reaches forward to mature faith. Erikson sees fidelity as a virtue that can become a dimension of adolescent ego strength, the search for something and somebody to be true to. Fidelity can only emerge through the interplay of social experiences in the individual's development. Fidelity is the capacity to sustain freely given loyalties even when confronted with inevitable contradictions between one's own and other people's value system. Fidelity defines what we are faithful to, what we identify with, and what, in turn, we are identified by. Fidelity raises and answers important questions: "What is so important in my life that I am willing to commit to it?" What matters so much, that I pledge my faithfulness to it?" "What project is so crucial that I identify with it, and pledge my fidelity to live it, to seek it with integrity?" "What (and whom) shall I be faithful to?" (Lapsley, personal communication). According to Erikson (1965), fidelity must find its ascendancy during the period of identity formation and is a "strength inherent in the age of youth"; it is part of the human equipment that evolved through man's social and evolutionary history. Fidelity is essential for autonomous behavior.

The adolescent's search for a personal identity also includes the formation of a personal ideology or a philosophy of life that will give the individual a frame of reference for evaluating events. Such a perspective aids in making choices and guiding behavior, and in this sense a personal identity based on a philosophy of life may greatly influence the value orientation of the individual. In a society such as ours, where many different ideologies compete for followers and new ideologies emerge constantly, the formation of a personal ideology that has both consistency and conviction is made increasingly difficult. While it is easy to adopt a ready-made existing ideology, such a philosophy is often less flexible and less effective than a personally developed one. The adopted ideology rarely becomes fully integrated into the personality and can, therefore, lead to foreclosure in identity development.

A syntonic or positive outcome of the identity crisis depends on the young person's willingness to accept his or her own past and establish continuity with previous experiences. To complete the search for an identity, the adolescent must find an answer to the question "Who am I?" and must also establish some orientation toward the future and come to terms with the questions, "Where am I going?" and "Who am I to become?" The adolescent must develop a commitment to a system of values—religious beliefs, vocational goals, a philosophy of life—and accept his or her sexuality. Only through the development of these essential components of an ego-identity can intimacy of sexual and affectionate love, deep friendship, and personal self-abandon without fear of losing ego-identity emerge and thus make possible the developmental advance to the next stage in the human life cycle: *intimacy versus isolation.* The intimacy stage has been explored in considerable detail by Orlofsky (1975) and Orlofsky, Marcia, and Lesser (1973).

The adolescent who fails in the search for an identity will experience self-doubt, role diffusion, and role confusion; such an individual may indulge in a self-destructive one-sided preoccupation or activity. He or she will continue to be morbidly preoccupied with the

opinion of others or may turn to the other extreme of no longer caring what others think and withdraw or turn to drugs or alcohol in order to relieve the anxiety that role diffusion creates. Ego diffusion and personal confusion, when they become permanent, can be observed in the chronic delinquent and in pathological personality disorganization. In its most severe form, the clinical picture of identity diffusion may lead to suicide or suicide attempts: "Many a late adolescent, if faced with continuing diffusion, would rather be nobody or somebody bad, or indeed, dead . . . than be not-quite-somebody" (Erikson, 1959: 132). The increase of suicide attempts among adolescents in the last decades is well documented and appears to parallel the widely reported increase in identity diffusion.

■ Intimacy versus Isolation

Once a personal identity has been achieved, the need for personal intimacy moves into the foreground of the psychosocial development of the young adult. The conflict at this higher level of development is between finding *intimacy or isolation* in interpersonal relationships. At this stage, peer group conformity has lost much of its earlier importance. The peer group may aid the young person in finding an identity and may even be helpful in making contacts with the opposite sex. However, intimacy is a personal matter and involves the establishment of emotional closeness to other people as a basis for enduring relationships. Physical closeness and sexual and affectional intimacy are only part of the issue. A basic theoretical insight emerges from the sequential order of Erikson's stages: the prerequisite for genuine and lasting intimacy is the achievement of an ego-identity, since intimacy implies the fusion of the identities of two people. At least in the typical male pattern, an ego-identity must be established before the possibility of marriage can be realistically considered. Erikson (1959: 95) holds that "only after a reasonable sense of identity has been established that real *intimacy* with the other sex (or for that matter, with any other person . . .) is possible." Subsequent research has shown that at least some females work on identity and intimacy issues simultaneously. (Theory and research related to this issue will be discussed in Chapter 4.) Generally speaking, one must first find an answer to the question, "Who am I?" before one can find a partner to become complementary to this "I." As long as the "I" remains undefined or is still forming, the selection of a permanent partner appears futile: "The giving of oneself to another, which is the mark of true intimacy, cannot occur until one has a self to give" (Constantinople, 1969: 359). If marriage is begun before one or both partners have established an identity, the chances for a happy, lasting marriage are low.

The conviction that emerges during the intimacy stage is: "We are what we love." The use of the plural pronoun "we" rather than the singular "I" is a significant reflection of the mutuality of the relationship. The syntonic outcome of this stage is intimacy, including sexual intimacy, genuine friendship, stable love, and lasting marriage. The dystonic outcome is isolation and loneliness, and, if intimacy is not based on a permanent identity, divorce and separation may result. Young adults who still have uncertainties in their identity will shy away from interpersonal relationships or may seek promiscuity without intimacy, sex without love, or relationships without emotional stability. As a counterpoint to intimacy, detachment and distancing in interpersonal relationships may emerge, that is, "the readiness to repudiate, isolate, and, if necessary, destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one's own" (Erikson, 1968: 136).

■ Generativity versus Stagnation

The developmental polarity of adulthood is the achievement of *generativity;* the dystonic possibility is *stagnation.* This stage encompasses the productive years of the human life cycle, and generativity is the driving force in human behavior. Generativity is a productive creativity in terms of vocational and professional contributions to society. Marriage, giving birth to children and guiding their growth are such creative, productive activities. The successful resolution of the conflict implies that the mature person wants to be useful and productive, wants to be needed. In this stage, a new virtue, that of "care," emerges from the dialectical relationship of generativity versus stagnation. Erikson (1982: 67) sees this as "a widening commitment to take care of the persons, the products, and the ideas one has learned to care for." The generative caring may find healthy expression with "a more universal care concerned with a qualitative improvement in the lives of all children" (p. 68), for example, of those in developing countries. In addition, it finds expression through one's contributions to family, work, and community. The conviction that emerges is: "I am what I create," or "I am what I can produce." The giving of oneself to another person, an ideal, or one's work leads to an expansion of ego interests. If failure should occur at this stage, there would be no further development. Stagnation would be the outcome. Stagnation implies a routine repetition in vocational activities and stereotypical repetition in social relationships. The individual becomes egotistical, self-absorbed, and self-indulgent and, in turn, expects to be indulged. Stagnation means that "individuals, then, often begin to indulge themselves as if they were their own . . . one and only child" (Erikson, 1968: 138).

■ Integrity versus Despair

The last stage of the human life cycle encompasses old age and retirement from the productive years of life. The developmental task of this stage is between the achievement of *ego integrity* and its antithesis, *disgust and despair.* The conflict here is between combining, integrating, and appreciating all previous life experiences or becoming bitter, resentful, and negative. The successful resolution of the seven preceding stages culminates in integrity. The conviction that emerges is: "I am what survives of me." The syntonic outcome at this last stage of life is an acceptance of one's self and one's life without bitterness and regret and coming to terms with the approaching finality of life. Ideally, there is independence, autonomy, and maturity rather than a regression to childlike dependency. Erikson (1982: 62) defines wisdom as the "informed and detached concern with life itself in the face of death itself." Ego integrity is based on self-discipline and results in the wisdom that can give old age its positive or syntonic quality.

The negative or dystonic outcome, on the other hand, is confusion, helplessness, and a feeling that one's life was wasted, of being finished. What results is a basic discontentment with one's life, one's self, and others. There is fear of death and a regression to childhood dependency that characterizes the disintegration of old age, resulting in disgust and despair.

The question inevitably arises, does an individual have to acquire all of the syntonic or positive qualities of the preceding stages in order to move successfully to the next higher stage and eventually achieve the integrity that is the final and crowning experience of the

human life cycle? If this were so, most people would be doomed to "despair." Not only can Erikson-type therapy help in reconstructing missed opportunities and aid the individual to acquire syntonic outcomes later, but psychosocial experiences may serve the same corrective function. Most people experience both syntonic and dystonic challenges and work on both, quite commonly past the time where they constitute the pivotal developmental issues that gives each of the eight stages its name. As was pointed out in the early part of this chapter, most important to consider is that both syntonic and dystonic opportunities are essential for development. Autonomy, the will to be oneself and to control oneself coincide with the physical readiness for bowel and bladder control and hence, most social groups emphasize toilet training during the second stage. Entering school and being required to produce work, the issue of industry cannot be avoided. Approaching sexual maturity, the issue of intimacy becomes paramount. Entering adulthood; the social expectation of becoming self-supporting brings to the foreground the issue of productivity and generativity. Thus, there appears to be a good fit between epigenetic potential and social demands that make Erikson's stages plausible. However, new social demands may create a crisis and a developmental opportunity, and Kroger (1993) hypothesizes—and provides case-study-type evidence—that personal crisis (which has to be resolved) facilitates the transition from one stage to the next higher stage. The adolescent identity crisis emerges when the individual is confronted with fundamental role changes, most globally the change from childhood to adulthood; also from dependence on parents to emotional independence, there are the social expectations to define one's future, one's gender role, and one's sexuality. According to Erikson (1965: 23), during adolescence the life history of the individual youth and the cognitive awareness of personal past and future plans interact and intersect with social history. Therefore, "individuals are confirmed in their identities, societies regenerated in their life style."

Another issue is, when and and why do individuals move from one stage to the next higher one? (And why does the identity crisis emerge during adolescence?) Erikson devotes considerable space to a description of the stages, but is much less specific in identifying the nature of these structural transitions. The epigenic ground plan suggests that maturational, biological forces propel the organism toward the development of more mature physical, cognitive, social, and emotional potential. Social expectation, child-rearing practices, and education generally speaking match these latent potentials.

Erikson has continued to expand and modify his theory, responding to criticism and clarifying issues where he seems to have been misunderstood. In addition, his theories have generated both considerable theoretical expansion and remarkable support from empirical research. However, Erikson himself never fully endorsed the research efforts, operationalizing and measurement attempts that claim to have been stimulated by his theory. He felt that the existing research methodologies were unable to really capture the full complexity of his constructs. These attempts to submit Erikson's theory to empirical tests began with James Marcia's (1966) efforts to refine the identity issue by postulating four distinct identity statuses. Also, Orlofsky's (1975) work, which broadened, subdivided, and refined the late adolescent/early adult intimacy issues (intimate, pre-intimate, stereotyped relationship, pseudo-intimate, isolate), has offered a new perspective of different levels of intimacy. Some of these expansions of Erikson's theory on contemporary thinking will become the focus in the following chapter.