Identity: Can you see the real me?


The Real Me

Erik Erikson & Identity Development

- Identity represents the fifth stage in Erikson's 8 stages of the life cycle

- From Erikson's *Identity: Youth and crisis:*

"The evidence in young lives of the search for *something and somebody to be true to* can be seen in a variety of pursuits more or less sanctioned by society. It is often hidden in a bewildering combination of shifting devotion and sudden perversity, sometimes more devotedly perverse, sometimes more perversely devoted. Yet in all youth's seeming shiftiness, a seeking after some durability in change can be detected…"
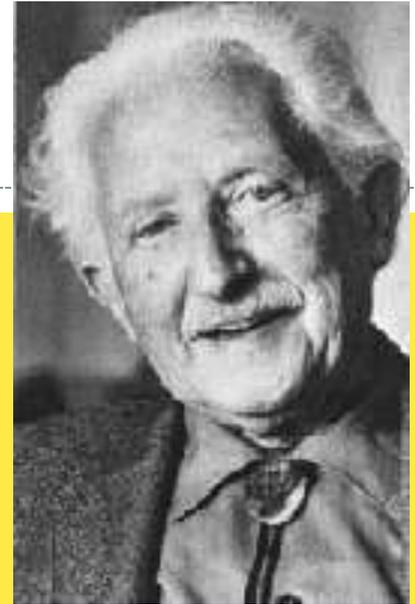
Erik Erikson

*Thanks to Professor Don Hartmann, University of Utah, for some awesome slides*
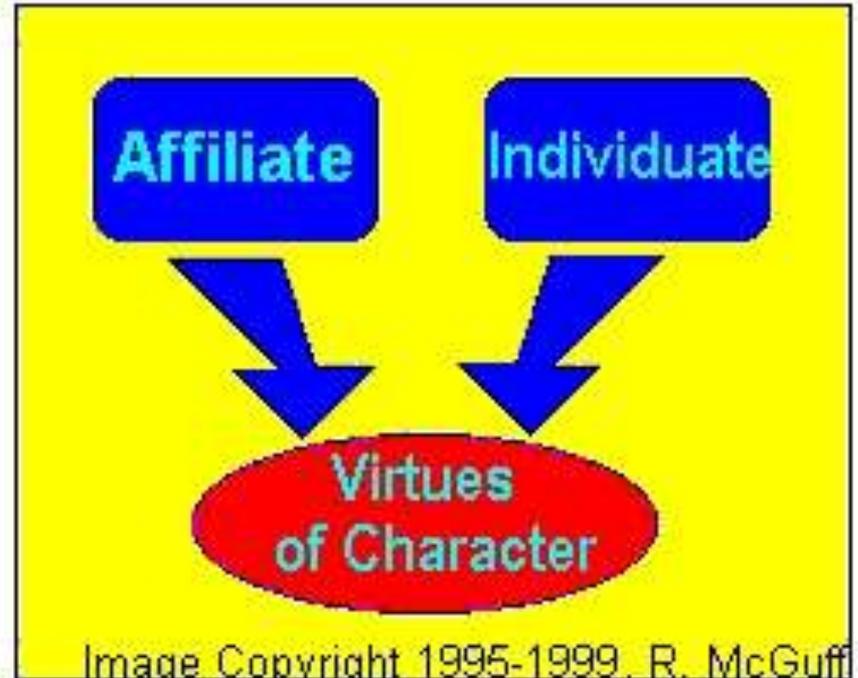
- **Adolescents can experiment with various roles and senses of self trying them out or on, and seeing which ones they (and their peers) like.**
  - Identity involves a variety of aspects: gender, sexual, occupational, political, religious, moral, etc.
  - identity concerns do not begin, nor end, with adolescence. But they are pivotal during that period

- **As a result of this experimentation (of their identity <u>crisis</u> -- that is where it comes from), a new sense of self is consolidated.**

- **The adolescent who does not resolve this crisis of identity enters a phase of identity _confusion/diffusion_**

- **—resulting in either isolation, or losing one's identity in the crowd.**

How does personality form?
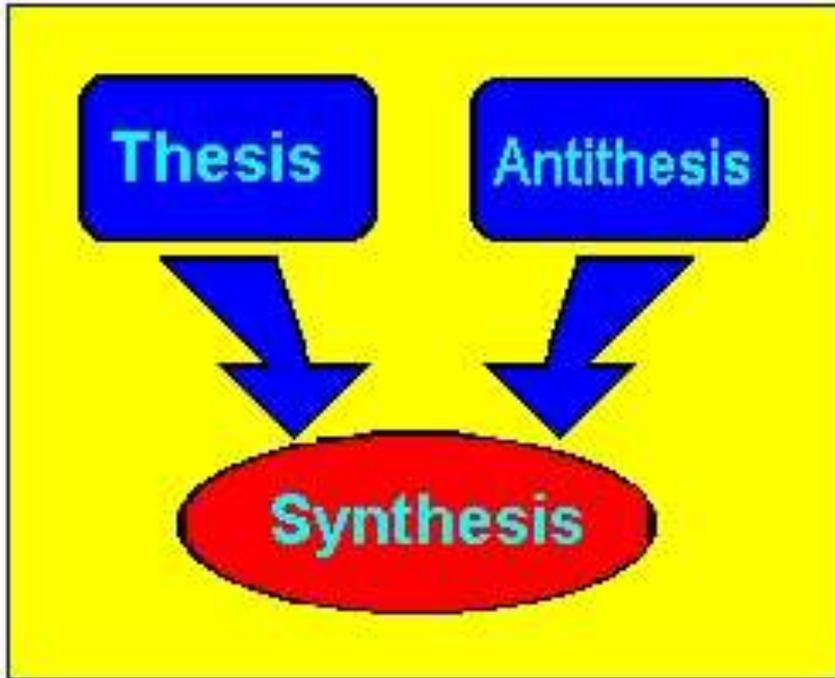
Hegel's dialectical conflict   Erikson's drive conflict

**Through a series of 8 dialectical
conflicts that, over the lifespan,
produce 8 cardinal *virtues of character***

…according to Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development

Identity Development; Introduction:

IDENTITY IS CLEARLY AN IMPORTANT TOPIC IN ADOLESCENCE

SOME THEORISTS (E.G., E. ERIKSON) ESSENTIALLY EQUATED ISSUES OF IDENTITY WITH ADOLESCENCE.
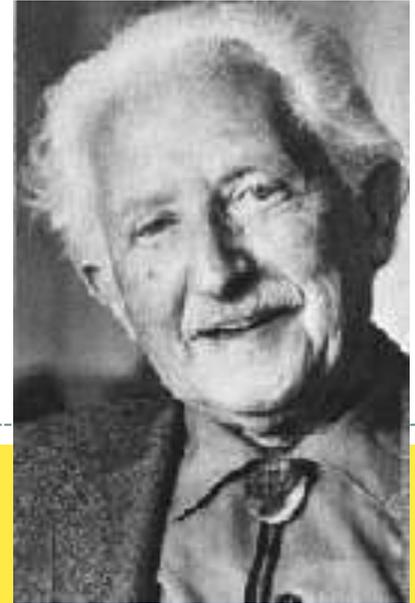
The extremes of youth:

…These extremes, particularly in times of ideological confusion and widespread marginality of identity, may include not only rebellious but also deviant, delinquent, and self-destructive tendencies. However, all of this can be in the nature of a moratorium, a period of delay in which to test the rock bottom of some truth before committing the powers of the mind and body to a segment of the existing (or a coming) order (*Identity: Youth and crisis.*** 1968, p. 235-36).**

James Marcia:

From Marcia's "Ego identity development," 1980:

Although some identity crises are cataclysmic and totally preoccupying, identity formation usually proceeds in a much more gradual and unconscious way. It gets done by bits and pieces…The decisions may seem trivial at the time: whom to date, whether or not to break up, having intercourse…Each of these decisions has identity-forming implications.…

….Of course, there are ways in which one can circumvent the decision-making process: one can let previously incorporated, parentally based values determine one's actions; one can permit oneself to be pushed one way or the other by external pressures; or one can become mired in indecision. (pp. 60-61).

Marcia: identified *crisis* and *commitment* as the major variables leading to a state of identity. These two factors generated his four-fold classification of statuses, or modes of resolution, extending Erikson's theory:

identity diffusion,

foreclosure,

moratorium,

and achievement

Marcia's 2 X 2 Identity Classification:

Commitment

High   Low

Crisis/Exploration/ Motivation

High

Low

	Commitment High	Commitment Low
High	Achievement	Moratorium
Low	Foreclosure	Diffusion

What the four statuses might look like:

- **Diffusion**: I haven't chosen the occupation I really want to get into, but I'm working toward becoming a _____ until something better comes along. When it comes to religion, I just haven't found any that I'm really into myself.

- **Foreclosure**: I guess I'm pretty much like my folks when it comes to politics. I follow what they do in terms of voting and such. I've never really questioned my religion. If it's right for my parents, it must be right for me.

- **Moratorium**: I just can't decide how capable I am as a person and what jobs I'll be right for. There are so many different political parties and ideals, I can't decide which to follow until I figure it all out.

- **Identity Achievement**: A person's faith is unique to each individual. I've considered and reconsidered it myself and know what I can believe.

DOONESBURY — by Garry Trudeau

Diffusion:

Results:

- **Experiences anxiety with involvement in immediate, right-now sensation**

- **More feelings of inferiority, alienation, and ambivalence; poorer self-concept; less clear sex-role identification.**

- **In general, less mature in cognitive complexity, emotional development, and general social development**

- **Less cooperative, more manipulative and deceptive.**

- **Associates with other uncommitted teens and adults.**

- **Least likely to have intimate, long-term relationships.**

- **Perceives parents as rejecting; youth and mother both describe the other as unaffectionate.**

- **More likely to occur in cases of personality disorder, intellectual deficit, drug addiction.**

Produces:

- **More use of denial and repression.**

- **Quiet, orderly, and industrious lifestyle. Endorses authoritarian values (obedience, strong leadership and respect for authority).**

- **Often come from warm and affectionate homes (!?), and the kids continue to be dependent upon their parents.**

- **Constricted personalities, rigid in their commitments.**

- **BUT – May also result in some who come from rigid, authoritarian, militaristic parents.**

- **OR - …is the result of traditional, Western or Non-western cultural upbringing.**

Moratorium:

- **The most anxious, and exploratory. Lack well-defined goals and values; self-conscious.**

- **Appear to be comfortable with others, and are generally socially adept and effective.**

- **Feelings of guilt and difficulty in maintaining dignity are common -- seem torn between values.**

- **High perceived companionship, physical affection, and support of parents.**

- **Parents perceive child as independent.**

- **Extends typical adolescence into emerging adulthood, *especially if one goes to college.***

Identity Achievement:
Creates:

- **A harmonious balance between individuation and social needs for relatedness/affiliation.**

- **High perceived companionship, physical affection, and support of parents.**

- **Parental perceptions of high levels of independence.**

- **Self-confidence, security, social adeptness, emotional maturity, advanced ego development.**

- **In the healthy adult the ego can gradually take on the functions of the id and superego.**

- **More intimate and long-term relationships; better management of impulses; less defensive, less anxious, less neurotic guilt.**

- **Note role of authoritative parenting in promoting identity achievement.**

Critiquing Marcia:

- **Marcia has oversimplified Erikson's notions of identity**
- **There are many facets to identity: gender, ideology, religion, occupational/educational plans, etc.**
- **When individuals are assigned to one of the four cells in the table, all the domains are typically not considered.**
- **People do not typically "achieve identity" by some pre-ordained age, but refine and articulate identity as they mature throughout 20's, into 30's and beyond.**
  - *Critiquing the critique*
- **Identity development is very powerfully culturally and ethnically determined.**

Ethnic Identity Development:

- **The ability to identify with one's own and others' racial or ethnic group**

- **Depends on awareness of the permanence of ethnic identities**

- **Beliefs and values associated with ethnic identity**

Identification

…with Ethnic Group

…with Majority Cultural Group

	High	Low

High	**Bicultural**	**Assimilated**
Low	**Separated**	**Marginal**

Note the difference between social and emotional loneliness. Both are subjective, but one more so than the other. -Robert Weiss