

Review the [PSY605: Mila Singer Life Story](#) document. Choose one aspect of Mila's life to alter. This element can be an event, a personal characteristic, an environmental factor, or an aspect of the timeline. In your initial post, identify the original life story element you intend to change and explain how you intend to change it. Use Erikson's psychosocial stages of development to explain Mila's stage of development at the time this change takes place and address how the change affects Mila's psychological development into adulthood.

After identifying the initial change and describing it, create a list of three additional outcomes in Mila's development across the lifespan that will likely be affected by this change. For each, identify the current outcome in Mila's life story and propose a rationale for changing this outcome. Apply either Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory or Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to Mila's life to create a hypothesis as to how and why these outcomes would likely adjust due to the changes you have made.

Briefly summarize your personal reaction(s) to making the initial change and how it altered the subsequent outcomes. Explain how differences in life events create differences in human development.

Mila was born in 1945 in a hospital in Brooklyn, New York. Her parents, Miriam and Leo Lucas, were both in their early twenties when she was born. Mila was the first person in her Jewish-American family to be born in America. Miriam and Leo had escaped Germany as young children with their own parents just as the persecution of Jews was beginning in Europe in the early 1930s.

Miriam was a stay-at-home mother, and Leo worked for his father's successful construction company. Mila spent her pre-school years playing with the other children in their primarily Jewish neighborhood and helping her mother keep up with housework. Once she was old enough, Mila began attending a primary school in the New York City public school system. Her parents had five more children during the next nine years. The family was not wealthy; however, they always had enough financial stability to provide Mila with everything she needed, if not everything she wanted.

Mila's parents constantly encouraged Mila and her siblings to value education and use it to their advantage. Because of this, Mila performed very well in school. Mila was tall and had a lean figure, beautiful brown eyes, and long curly brown hair that often attracted the attention of the boys in her classes. However, her strict religious upbringing caused her to ignore any advances she received. Mila took her religious education very seriously and loved going to Hebrew School to learn the Hebrew language and prepare for her Bat Mitzvah. It was in Hebrew School that she met Oliver Singer, the young man who would later become her husband.

Mila and Oliver were married in a traditional Jewish ceremony in 1965 and took up residence in a neighborhood just minutes away from both their families. Oliver began attending a local college in hope of becoming a pediatrician. Mila went to work as a secretary for her father, who was priming her younger brothers to take over the construction company once they finished school.

Mila and Oliver had two sons: Oliver, Jr. (born in 1966), and Elliot (born in 1968). When her mother died of lung cancer in 1968, Mila's family moved back in with her father and youngest siblings. Mila found that the burden of caring for everyone made it impossible to continue working. Shortly after Elliot was born, Mila left her job and Oliver was forced to leave school so he could begin working and supporting the family financially. Oliver decided to join the family business and worked alongside his brothers-in-law for many years, even after Mila's father died in 1986.

Mila, Oliver, and their children lived a humble life, much as Mila's parents had. Although the family worked hard and always had what they needed, they never became as prosperous as Oliver had dreamed when he began college. As he got older, Oliver became bitter about how his life had unfolded and turned to drinking to cover his emotions. During this period, Mila pleaded with Oliver to seek help for his addiction, but he refused. Their relationship suffered, and Mila often felt depressed. She, too, neglected to reach out for help for her problem. In 1999, Oliver died from complications of liver disease. He was only 54 years old.

Not wanting to be alone, Mila decided at that time to leave Brooklyn and relocate to a small condo in Atlanta, Georgia, to be close to her son, Elliot, and his family. Although she missed her husband, she was admittedly happy to be removed from the unhealthy living situation of their combined troubles. It was a difficult transition at first; having spent her whole life in Brooklyn, Mila never learned to drive, and getting around the Atlanta suburbs without a car was nearly impossible. Over time, however, Mila met other widows and couples her age and began attending local events with her new friends.

Earlier this year, Mila sold her condo and moved in to a retirement community in the area so she could be closer to her friends and avoid travelling to participate in social functions. A Jewish temple is located near her new residence, so Mila can still enjoy an active religious affiliation and sense of community with her like-minded peers. Elliot and his family come over once a week for a short visit. Oliver, Jr. and his family visit two or three times a year. Overall, Mila is very satisfied with how her life turned out and acknowledges that the “bumps in the road,” as she likes to call them, helped her to appreciate everything she has today. While she is beginning to decline physically, she maintains that she is still “sharp as a whip” and enjoys giving back to the community by passing her knowledge on to the youth who visit the retirement community. Mila looks forward to her sunset years.

Eriksonian Developmental Stages



from *The Concise Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology and Behavioral Science*

The developmental theory of Erik Erikson (1950, 1968) provides a life-span account of psychosocial development, which emphasizes the autonomous or conflict-free development of an adaptive ego that organizes experience. He postulates that human beings have a need to categorize and integrate their experiences, as well as a need to satisfy their basic biological needs. A consolidated sense of ego identity—a perceived sense of personal wholeness and “continuity of experience”—is considered to be necessary for optimal personal functioning.

The building and integrating of personality follows an eight-stage life-span sequence governed by what Erikson calls the epigenetic principle, 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 arisen to form a functioning whole” (Erikson 1968, p.92). Each stage, from birth to old age, is marked by a normative crisis that must be confronted and negotiated. These bipolar crises are psychosocial in nature. Crisis resolutions have residual effects on the developing person, with each contributing to the totally formed personality. Ideally, resolutions should not be completely one-sided: A positively balanced ratio of the two poles indicates optimal progress.

The stages, which are assumed to be interdependent, build upon one another in a cumulative manner. Each stage contributes a unique personal quality of strength or virtue, such as hope or faith, to the evolving personality. The achievement of ego identity during adolescence is the central concept in this developmental scheme; it entails the synthesis and integration of prior experiences and developments and provides the foundation upon which future progress occurs.

Stage 1: Trust Versus Mistrust (Infancy)

At birth, infants are dominated by biological needs and drives. The reliability and quality of their relationship with caregivers will influence the extent to which they develop a sense of trust (or mistrust) in others, themselves, and the world in general. The virtue of hope is associated with this stage.

Stage 2: Autonomy Versus Doubt and Shame (Early Childhood)

Social demands for self-control and bodily regulation (toilet training) influence feelings of self-efficacy versus self-doubt. The quality of will, the willful self-discipline to do what is expected and expectable, emerges at stage two.

Stage 3: Initiative Versus Guilt (Preschool Age)

Here children begin actively exploring their environment. Will they sense guilt about these self-initiated activities, or will they feel justified in planning and asserting control over their activities? The virtue of purpose—the courage to pursue personally valued goals in spite of risks and possible failure—now ascends.

Stage 4: Industry Versus Inferiority (School Age)

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The societal context in which the first three psychosocial conflicts are negotiated is predominantly the home and immediate family. In stage four, however, children begin formal instruction of some sort. Mastery of tasks and skills valued by one's teachers and the larger society becomes focal. The quality of competence is said to develop.

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Stage 5: Identity and Diffusion (Adolescence)

This is the linchpin in Erikson's scheme, a time when adolescents actively attempt to synthesize their experiences in an effort to formulate a stable sense of identity. Although this process is psychosocial in nature—a social fit or "solidarity with group ideals" must occur—Erikson emphasizes reality testing and the acquisition of credible self-knowledge. Youths come to view themselves as products of their previous experiences, and a unified sense of temporal self-continuity is experienced. Positive resolutions of prior crises—being trusting, autonomous, willful, and industrious—facilitate identity formation; previous failures may lead to identity diffusion. Fidelity, the ability to maintain commitments in spite of contradictory value systems, is the virtue that emerges during adolescence.

In Erikson's theory, development continues throughout life. The three adult stages, however, are directly affected by the identity achieved during adolescence.

Stage 6: Intimacy Versus Isolation (Young Adulthood)

In this stage, one must be able and willing to unite his or her identity with that of another. Since authentic disclosure and mutuality leave people vulnerable, a firm sense of identity is prerequisite. The quality that ascends during this stage is love.

Stage 7: Generativity Versus Stagnation (Middle Adulthood)

This is the time in the life span when one strives to actualize the identity that has been formed and shared with selected others. The generation or production of offspring, artifacts, ideas, products, and so forth is involved. The virtue of care emerges: Generative adults care for others through parenting, teaching, supervising, and so forth, whereas stagnating adults become self-absorbed in immediate personal needs and interests.

Stage 8: Integrity Versus Despair (Maturity)

The final stage focuses on the perceived completion or fulfillment of one's life cycle. Wisdom is the last virtue to emerge. Wise people understand the relativistic nature of knowledge and accept that their life had to be the way it was.

As a heuristic scheme, Erikson's theory has had a profound impact on contemporary psychology, especially adolescent development. Despite its popularity and apparent face validity, the empirical foundation for the stage theory is relatively weak. The imprecise nature of the theoretical constructs—for instance, hope or wisdom—as defined by Erikson has made it difficult for researchers to independently test specific predictions derived from the theory. Another obstacle has been the need for long-term longitudinal studies to evaluate Erikson's claims about the sequential nature of psychosocial stages and the processes responsible for life-span personality development. Nonetheless, productive lines of research based on and generally consistent with Erikson's views relevant to particular stages have emerged (see, for example, Berzonsky & Adams, 1999; Marcia, 1993; McAdams, Ruetzel, & Foley, 1986; Orlofsky, 1993).

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See also: [Human Development](#); [Life-span Development](#).



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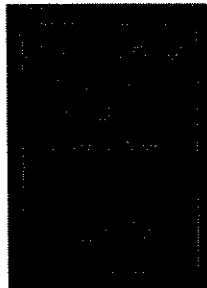
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Vygotsky's sociocultural theory



in *Developmental Psychology*

from *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Psychology*

Lev Vygotsky (1978) integrated the influence of [culture](#) (see [s.1](#) and [s.5](#)) into his theory of development to a much more fundamental extent than Piaget's stage theory. Vygotsky saw development as originating in social and cultural interaction. Three core themes can be identified in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of [COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT](#). First, he proposed that the best way to study and understand the mind is to examine when it changes. According to Vygotsky (1978) the mind is constantly changing as part of a dialectical relationship, with the environment influencing the individual and the individual influencing the world. He believed that this process, not the product, of change should be investigated. Second, Vygotsky proposed that all higher mental functions originate in social activity. Social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition (Wertsch 1985). The basic assumption of this approach is that action is mediated by, and cannot be separated from, the context in which it is carried out (Wertsch 1991). Vygotsky separated two main levels of cognitive functioning: lower-level mental functions, which he argued were genetically inherited and which enable us to react to the environment, and higher mental functions, which result from social interaction. These functions allow us to develop higher reasoning, such as instrumental and intentional action and complex symbolic thought. Development proceeds through mental processes, appearing first on a social level (interpersonal) and second on an individual level (intrapersonal) within the child. We learn from and through interaction with others and then individualise our learning. Vygotsky focused primarily on [LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT](#) and the process whereby children progress from external speech to egocentric speech and finally to inner speech. The third main theme relates to how higher mental functions are mediated by signs and tools. For example, speech is one tool by which the child and the world interact and influence each other. Vygotsky also maintained that learning was most efficient when children engage in activities within a supportive environment, receiving appropriate guidance mediated by learning tools.

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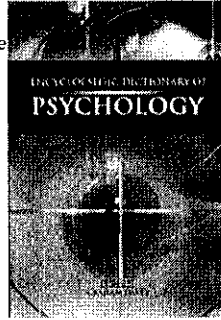
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