

## **My Personal Portrait**

## **Introduction**

Erik Erikson's developmental theory emphasizes on the eight major phases that all individuals experience as part of normal development. Each phase of development is filled with certain issues and dilemmas that every individual has to address and resolve. People experience significant improvements as they move from one phase to another, but those concerns and issues that were not addressed effectively in the initial stages can still reemerge in the succeeding levels of development.

### **Personal Portrait (Erikson's Model)**

#### **A. Infancy**

This phase is centered on the young person's basic demands and preferences that are handled by the family members. The key aspect of this stage is grounded on the capability of the family members to address and provide the necessities of the young person. Once the family members are able to establish an excellent bond with the young person at this phase, the young person will grow up knowing that he or she has a family that will always support him or her (Hoare, 2001). However, if the family members show little care and affection towards the young person, he or she would grow up with hatred towards the family and most likely to other people in the environment.

I grew up with my father and my mother in New York City. I was fortunate to have parents that were God fearing and firm believers of the importance of getting educated. They were always there when I needed support. I can attribute this excellent care that I received from my parents to me having a positive outlook in life, as they showered me with love when I was still an infant.

## **B. Toddler**

Once the family members are able to provide the necessary support and care for the young person, he or she eventually becomes confident in facing the challenges and problems that could emerge along the way. On the other hand, if the family members especially the parents are too strict and become unfair to the young person from the start, he or she would always be afraid to face the realities and challenges of life (Welchman, 2000). It is possible that the young person would never grow up properly and learn to take good care of his or her life.

The place where I grew up in New York City was definitely a rough neighborhood, so my parents kept on reminding me to really choose my friends and stay away from trouble. I liked to go out of the house and began to explore the neighborhood, and unfortunately I got exposed to many illegal activities that at that time was still difficult for me to understand. I was telling what I saw to my parents, and they did their best to explain to me why those activities that I saw were bad and why I shouldn't do them. Since I trusted my parents so much, I believed every word that they said to me, and I am glad that I listened to them. In spite of the rough and dangerous neighborhood where I and my family lived, my parents did not lock me in the house and prevented me from meeting new people and making new friends. This helped me a lot to gain confidence and I appreciated the fact that my parents allowed me to learn what was good and bad at such a young age.

## **C. Preschool**

The young people in the preschool period face the dilemma of initiative as against guilt. They usually encounter the issues and dilemmas connected to the choices that they make. They start to get adjusted to the community and family and begin to assume simple yet challenging responsibilities for their own good. The young people start experiencing a sense of

accomplishment after every responsibility successfully fulfilled (Stevens, 2008). On the other hand, they also start experience a sense of guilt for responsibilities and activities that are not successfully accomplished.

During my preschool years, I became more attached to my neighborhood in New York City, and I was already getting involved into petty fights and quarrels with other young people in our neighborhood. For the first time, I felt the feeling of getting scared with other people, as well as getting frustrated. I remember crying in my room for getting into a fight with a friend over simple matters. Nonetheless, I believe those early experiences definitely made me stronger and wiser in making decisions. I understood why it was important to have friends that I could rely on in times of problems, because my parents won't be always there for me in every single day of my life.

During this period, I was also beginning to get an earful from my parents for my misbehaviors. They were definitely worried that I would also be like those kids that got killed or imprisoned for criminal activities. They seriously thought of moving me out of New York City so I could stay away from the rough neighborhood. However, I was able to convince them that I won't end up being a bad person someday, and I promised to do everything I can to stay away from trouble. I may have disappointed my parents but it was good that they still put their trust on me.

#### **D. Childhood**

This is the stage where the school begins to become an influential institution for the young person towards proper growth and development. Being in school provides plenty of opportunities for the young people to improve their knowledge, skills and important qualities that are going to help them become productive citizens in the future. The parents play an important

role towards motivating their children to do well in school. Once the parents are able to become role models in teaching their children early on the value of education, it won't be so hard for them to aspire for excellence in their studies (Moshman, 1999). The children will always see their parents as their inspiration to perform well in school. On the other hand, if the parents are not able to effectively teach their children the importance of staying in school, there is a huge possibility that their children will eventually drop out and loiter in the streets to become criminals and hopeless individuals.

In my childhood days, it wasn't that hard for me to stay in school because after all, my parents were firm believers of the value of education. I studied in a respectable school and I could attest that my parents really worked hard so I could get educated. Because of the hard work that I saw from my parents, I promised to myself not to disappoint them and instead prove to them that I can get good grades in school. My activities in school basically helped me to stay less on the streets and away from trouble, so it became a blessing for me. Eventually, my hard work began to pay off as I was always getting into the list of top performers in our class. My efforts to do well in school also did not go unnoticed by my parents, and I was always happy that they were proud of my early accomplishments in school. I felt like they gave me more freedom to decide for myself on what I want to do with my life.

### **E. Adolescence**

During my adolescence, I was starting to think of what I would become when I grow up. In school, I became active in playing basketball and I thought I could be a professional basketball player someday. I was one of the best in our school and also in our neighborhood in New York City, but the problem was during that time there were also many other good basketball players that had connections to coaches and agents all over America. I thought that

even though I had the skills, I won't be able to make it very far in this career. That's why I thought of other potential careers that I could possibly pursue as college was really fast approaching.

Then I remembered my early experiences in our rough neighborhood in New York City and those people that were victimized by unfair practices. I remembered those fights that I had with other kids and how I got scared to death and cried in my room. I figured out that I could help our country in preventing these problems in society from getting worse, so I convinced myself to join the military. I wanted to be a tough guy that can be depended on by the country in times of trouble.

#### **F. Young Adulthood**

This was the phase where I worked hard to achieve my dream of being in the military. I had to work and do odd jobs in order to support myself and save enough so I could support my family too. I even worked as a mailman just to make ends meet. Finally, after years of hard work, I was able to become a police officer in our neighborhood.

#### **G. Adulthood**

However, I still felt something was missing in my life. I was happy being a police officer, but I knew I could still be of greater service for the country. This was why I aimed at joining the Army especially as during that time, America was in the midst of war. I was able to achieve that dream, and I became a veteran of the desert war. Overall, my tenure at the Army lasted for ten years, and it became evident that the trauma of the war and the battles that I fought eventually took its toll on me. When I returned home from military service, I was not the same person. I was worse than I expected, which was why I decided to get counseling assistance to be able to restore my life to normalcy.

**Kohlberg's developmental model**

Kohlberg's developmental model states that moral thinking is also comprised of various phases. He was able to investigate the development of moral thinking more comprehensively. Experts believe that Kohlberg's model was more reliable than Erikson's model, mainly because it was able to categorize the human stages of development briefer but more concise and comprehensive.

**Personal Portrait (Kohlberg's Model)****A. Pre-conventional level**

This phase is connected to the younger people, and they assess the ethical implications of an action or behavior through its immediate consequences (Rathus, 2007). When I was younger, it was still very hard for me to realize what was moral and immoral, especially in our rough neighborhood in New York City. I did not understand why people were fighting or cursing one another. I also had little idea on the possible consequences of my actions, and I just did whatever would satisfy my curiosity regardless of its impacts on me and other people.

**B. Conventional**

This is connected more on the young adults. In here, individuals interpret the ethical implications of actions through evaluating them against the standards and beliefs of other people (Shaffer, 2008). At this stage, I was already a police officer and already had a solid understanding of what was acceptable and what was a violation of the laws of society. After all, it was my responsibility to make sure that people followed the rules and laws of the land. While I was helping to enforce the laws, I was also following them strictly, because it was my goal to become a role model for others.

### **C. Post-Conventional**

In here, the individuals believe that they are becoming more and more separated from the developments happening in the environment, which is why there are people that think that their ideas are much better than the ideas of other people (Sigelman, 2008). As people become more mature, they learn to develop their own ideas and become more confident in disagreeing with policies and rules that they think are incorrect or unfair.

During my stint at the Army and being assigned at the desert wars, I also believed that our enemies had become so desperate in imposing their ideas and beliefs that they waged war just to be able to prove their point. It was saddening on my part that these people were ready to die for their twisted beliefs, and they were ready to kill too, so their objectives would succeed. This was perhaps the reason why after ten long years of military service, I had to seek counseling as I brought home along with me the traumatic and painful experiences of the brutal desert wars were I participated.

### **Conclusion**

Erikson's theory of development and Kohlberg's developmental model of moral development can both be applied on my life's development. As I was making this personal portrait, I was happy to reminisce what happened when I was still so young up until what has happened to me at present. Both models were able to provide me concrete explanations concerning why I acted or behaved in a specific way at various stages of my life, and I can definitely attest that those experiences really made me stronger as I became an adult. Now that I am 38 years old, I am excited with regard to what's in store for me as I continue my life's journeys.



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