

Choose one stage or axis of the Great Round of the Archetypal Stages of Mandala and demonstrate how it has manifested in at least three different moments in your life. Keep in mind that each stage of the Great Round represents a distinct state of consciousness that has parallels to psychological development and stages of the lifespan. Analyze the similarities and differences of examples of this stage by providing clear examples from your own life and references to the literature. You may include influences, role models, major life events, and anything else that influenced your development such as community, culture, and significant relationships. Take note of the feelings you remember having, challenges and any strengths unknown to you at the time, but that you can see now in retrospect. In particular, compare your lived experience to what might be considered typical according to developmental theorists. Where there is a discrepancy, please provide your understanding and analysis of this difference. It may be helpful to interview others to gain insight about aspects of your development, refer to sketchbook/ journal that you will use throughout this course and to make use of reflective questions included in the textbook.

To become a better art therapist, I am learning the significance of being self-aware of my patterns, habits, and experiences, and how they can unexpectedly resurface while working with clients. While this semester has provided a theoretical framework for looking at client artwork through the perspective of the Great Round of the Archetypal Stages of Mandala, it is important to analyze how this framework has manifested itself in my own personal experiences to gain further self-awareness. Reflecting on my own experiences, a theme of beginnings and endings reoccur. Analyzing Stage 4, the Beginning, and Stage 10, the Gates of Death, I can reflect on moments where I jumped back and forth between the two stages as I struggled to find balance amongst the difficulties of the experiences.

Similar to one's movement around the Great Round of the Archetypal Stages of Mandala, Eric Erikson's theory of psychosocial development allows for movement amongst the stages as well. Erikson intended the psychosocial conflicts "to reflect how each stage is present from the very beginning of life and remains present throughout; however, the psychosocial conflict assigned to a given developmental stage reflects that period in life when it is more critical" (Capps, 2004). I have noticed the dominance of certain psychosocial crises based on my developmental stage; however, based on specific life events, I have encountered other psychosocial crises alongside the assigned psychosocial crisis.

Through many endings and beginnings in my life, I have experienced the dichotomy of the Great Round and Erikson's psychosocial stages of development. Stage 10 coincides with Erikson's psychosocial crisis of integrity vs. despair and Stage 4 coincides with Erikson's developmental crisis of basic trust vs. mistrust (Potash, 2014). While I have resolved the first stage of Erikson's stages of development, I have yet to enter late adulthood for integrity vs. despair. Reflecting on my experiences, I noticed a struggle with various stages of development,

but I feel as though I did not resolve them and will not fully resolve them until I enter the appropriate physical age.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory is a theory that should be considered when looking at all of my experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). Culture and society played an important role and continues to play an important role in my personal experience. I grew up in a traditional, middle-class, patriarchal Korean home in the Northeast. To give an example of this environment, no one in my family could take a bite of his or her meal until the father took his first bite. My siblings and I were raised in a strict, religious home where we were required to go to church every Sunday and could not wear flip flops or jeans to church. In exploring my past experiences through the perspective of various theories, it is important to notice how the culture and society I grew up in influenced how I handled certain situations. With this in mind, I know the culture and society of future clients always needs to be considered as well.

The first life event that relates to Stage 10 and Stage 4 Axis is the birth of my little sister. For seven years, I was identified as the baby of the family and became accustomed to being the center of attention. According to Erikson's theory of psychosocial stages of development, I was trying to resolve the psychosocial crisis of industry vs. inferiority. During this stage, the child gains a sense of competency by his or her need to learn important academic skills and compare favorably with peers (Erikson, 1950/1963). At 7-years old with two significantly older siblings, I regulated my sense of competency based on the praise and comparison of others. My parents would say praises such as, "---, you have much better handwriting than your brother..." and my siblings would say criticisms such as, "---, why can't you ride your bike without your training wheels like all the other kids?"

As I tried to resolve this conflict as a child, I entered Stage 10 in my middle childhood while my family prepared for a new baby. With parents who were 44-years old, a 16-year old brother, and a 13-year old sister, everyone was taken aback by the unexpected surprise of another child. Personally, it was a time for me to forcefully let go of my identity as the baby of the family and attempt to welcome the change. However, as a 7-year old, this proved to be more difficult. Industry vs. inferiority confronted me when I had to choose between developing confidence as my new role in the family, or continue to dwell in jealousy and feel inferior to my new little sister.

Although I could not fully understand the idea, I still knew an enormous change was coming and could feel the shift of becoming a middle child even before my little sister's arrival. In an attempt to process all the new change, I found myself modeling after my two older siblings. Based on the social learning theories, which focuses on how children acquire personality characteristics and social skills, modeling is observational learning or learning by imitation (Bandura, 1999). Switching my role from the baby of the family to an older sister required me to model my behaviors after my own older sister, but also required me to accommodate and assimilate all this change (Piaget, 1970). I had to adjust to a new understanding of my family dynamics. The birth of my little sister also meant the birth of a new relationship where I took on a new role of nurturance and protection, entering Stage 4.

Reflecting on my early adolescent years, I initially struggled to find an event where Stage 10 would appropriately fit. Moving from the emphasis of competency in middle childhood, I can recall a time where social competence was the most important component of my life. In the midst of self-image and developing an individual identity while still conforming to peer groups, the environment I was raised in was uprooted. I had grown up in a small town in Connecticut and

moved to the Metro Atlanta area in Georgia a week before my freshman year of high school began.

As I reflected on this life event, it was helpful to incorporate Riley's perspective of art therapy with adolescent treatment. Projection, especially through art and verbal communication, reflects social, cultural, and familial context, and environmental influences emerge (Riley, 1999). Environmental influences hugely affected this stage of my life as I faced Erikson's identity vs. role confusion psychosocial crisis. In this stage of development, the focus is on social relationships and developing a sense of personal identity through choices about values and vocational goals (Erikson, 1950/1963). Entering Stage 10 while also trying to resolve identity vs. role confusion perfectly manifests together to assess the life event of moving to another state. I had to learn to let go of my friends, the house I grew up in, my school, and my daily routine to "embark on the search for a new sense of continuity and sameness" (Capps, 2004).

The environmental change also allowed me to spur a change in the way I explored my identity based on social relationships. I was raised in Connecticut and was set in the values and ideals given to me. From the perspective of Marcia's Identity Status, I fell into the category of foreclosure, where individuals make commitments with little or no exploration of alternatives (Marcia, 1993). Reflecting on this time, I realize my father was authoritarian and did not allow room for exploration of other alternatives (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). My parents raised me to know what was right and what was wrong, to obey without questioning, and to believe whatever I was told. However, the new environment combined with entering high school, I explored my independence. I lacked commitment, but was open to exploring different identities and cliques. I was constantly changing the way I acted and dressed based on the social group I was spending my time with.

In moving to Georgia, I was confronted with cultural differences where I had to reassess what I thought was my personal identity and adjust the way I approached social relationships. The area in Connecticut I grew up in had a non-existent Korean American population and my family would drive an hour and a half to go to a Korean church on Sundays. In Georgia, there was a large population of Korean Americans, a Korean church every 10 minutes, public schools that were 60% Asian, and Korean restaurants lined down the streets. In Connecticut, I was always seen as a Korean American girl, but when I made acquaintances with Korean Americans in Georgia, they called me “preppy and white.” This period of meeting Korean Americans in Georgia stands out in my memory as the first time when the importance of my race and ethnicity was thrust forward as the defining aspect of my identity (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). I felt like I needed to choose between identifying myself as a Korean American, a culture that separated themselves from other races, or identify myself as a “white-washed Korean” and only socialize with white people. During this time in my life, I failed to commit to a racial identity and felt vulnerable to later discriminatory experiences when I entered college (Cross & Fhagan-Smith, 2001).

The final personal life event is one that is a current struggle and exemplifies movement between the axis of Stage 4 and Stage 10. According to Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development, the stage of development I am predominantly facing is intimacy and isolation (Erikson, 1950/1963). While certain aspects of my life currently may be focusing on relationships, I can relate also to the integrity and despair crisis in regards to this particular life event because it is a unique experience to my age group. I moved to the DC Metro area and felt I was in Stage 4 with a new beginning in a new city and new opportunities before me (Potash,

2014). However, in November of 2013, I was suddenly diagnosed with SLE Lupus, a chronic autoimmune disease.

As I attempted to process an unexpected change that most 22-year olds do not have to face, I felt like I was forced to surrender the “healthy” version of myself. I was faced with a crossroads of how to assess this diagnosis into my life. Similar to how adults approach the problems of aging by trying to correct them when it would be better to find a healthy and adaptive perspective during the developmental stage of integrity vs. despair, I also felt I had to find a workable way to adapt to a chronic illness into my life (Kerr, 1999). Erikson’s view on this crisis showed the dichotomy of integrity and despair when he said, “integrity is also a determination to stave off the inevitable feelings of despair that may cloud this state of mind from time to time” (Capps, 2004). While trying to maintain an accepting perspective through this diagnosis, I continue to encounter periods of despair and anxiety when the active lupus causes flare-ups in my immune system.

The outward concerns I had regarding the move to the DC Metro area, such as the materialistic “necessities” for the apartment, drastically changed to reassessing my goals to find the right treatment options for my specific case of lupus. As mentioned in the class podcast, the idea of impermanence emerged and I was able to find appreciation for the important aspects of my life (Potash, 2014). I did not yet know how severe my lupus was, but I knew I could still walk, I was not completely covered in a skin rash, I could continue my graduate program as a full-time student, and the lupus had not attacked my internal organs yet. This appreciation led me back to Stage 4. As I had to close the door on the “healthy” version of myself that no longer existed, I had to look towards nurturing this new self and the potential it could lead me to. In entering Stage 4 through this life event, Erikson’s theory of intimacy vs. isolation again became

the predominant psychosocial crisis I tried to resolve (Erikson, 1950/1963). As the treatment process began and my symptoms became more manageable, I could refocus my attention on relationships with others.

As I transitioned back to Stage 4 from Stage 10, attachment became prominent in my daily routine as I coped with the diagnosis. Attachment theory is based on the idea that “the infant and caregiver participate in an attachment system that has evolved to serve the purpose of keeping the infant safe and assuring his survival” (Bowlby, 1969/1982). John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth argue that regardless of age, adults are biologically predisposed to assure proximity and protection to the infant, just as infants are biologically predisposed to seek proximity and nurturance from certain adults (Rajecki, Lamb, & Obmascher, 1978). The transition in my life due to the distress of change instilled a desire to reconnect with the past and I felt a need to reconnect with my mother. She immediately drove 10 hours from Georgia to Washington, D.C. to take care of me for a weekend when my symptoms peaked. She and I talked on the phone every morning for the first month after the diagnosis. I had to heavily rely on my family to meet my needs of intimacy and to help me manage the stress of lupus. The establishment of trust in my infancy and continual successful resolution of crises allowed me to trust that my family will once again be responsive and provide a safe place (Erikson, 1950/1963).

Joan Kellogg’s Great Round of the Archetypal Stages of Mandala has manifested at various stages of my life, especially when considering Stage 4, the Beginning, and Stage 10, the Gates of Death. From Erikson’s theoretical perspective, the successful resolution of crises continued to influence my experience with new crises and I have experienced the struggle of various psychosocial crises, regardless of my physical age. However, I do not believe I have fully resolved the psychosocial crisis of integrity vs. despair that is beyond of my physical age

and will return to that crisis when I enter late adulthood. While many theoretical viewpoints fit into my experiences, I do not think one particular theory perfectly works and I see the importance of a holistic view. However, looking at my own personal development through the perspective of various theorists has further instilled self-awareness in my training to be an art therapist.

References

- Bandura, A. (1999). Social cognitive theory of personality. In L. Pervin & O. John (Eds.), *Handbook of personality* (2nd ed., pp. 154-196). New York: Guilford Press.
- Bowlby, J. (1969/1982). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. New York: Basic Book.
- Broderick, P. C. & Blewitt, P. (2010). *The life span: Human development for helping professionals*. (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Capps, D. (2004). The decades of life: Relocating Erikson's Stages. *Pastoral Psychology*, 53(1), 3- 32.
- Cross, W.E. Jr. & Fhagen-Smith, P. (2001). Patterns of African American identity development: A life span perspective. In B. Jackson & C. Wijeyesinghe (Eds.), *New perspectives on racial identity development: A theoretical and practical anthology* (pp. 243-270). New York: NYU Press.
- Erikson, E.H. (1950/1963). *Childhood and society* (2nd ed.). New York: Norton.
- Kerr, C.C (1999). The psychosocial significance of creativity in the elderly. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 16(1), 37-41.
- Maccoby, E.E. & Martin, J.A. (1983). Socialization in the context of the family. In P.H. Mussen (Series Ed.) & E.M. Hetherington (Vol. Ed.) *Handbook of child psychology: Vol 4. Socialization, personality and social development* (4th ed., pp.1-101). New York: Wiley.
- Marcia, J.E. (1993). The status of the statuses: Research review. In J.E. Marcia, A.S. Waterman, D.R. Matteson, S.L. Archer, & J.L. Orlofsky (Eds.), *Ego identity: A handbook for psychosocial research* (pp. 22-41). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Potash, J. (Producer). (2014, February 4). Stage 4: First years. *Human Development & Art Therapy*. Podcast retrieved from <http://www.blackboard.gwu.edu>

Potash, J. (Producer). (2014, April 8). Stage 10: Late adulthood. *Human Development & Art Therapy*. Podcast retrieved from <http://www.blackboard.gwu.edu>

Rajecki, D.W., Lamb, M.E., & Obmascher, P. (1978). Toward a general theory of infantile attachments: A comparative review of aspects of the social bond. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 1*(3), 417-464.

Riley, S. (1999). *Contemporary art therapy with adolescents*. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley.