

Psychology in Health and Social Care

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Understanding Jenny's Development Through Erikson's Psychosocial Theory A Community Support Plan for a Young Carer (Age 16)

Scenario Overview

Jenny, age 16

Caring for her mother for 5 years

Father passed away

Mother: mobility issues, memory problems, low mood

Jenny responsible for daily household and admin tasks

Limited support network

Young carers often experience emotional and academic strain (Benson and Bundick, 2007)



Why Erikson's Theory?

- Lifespan developmental approach
 - Focus on identity, social roles, and relationships
 - Highlights environmental and emotional influences
 - Directly relevant to adolescence (12–18 years)
 - Widely used to understand identity formation (Schachter and Galliher, 2018)
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Erikson's Psychosocial Theory (Overview)

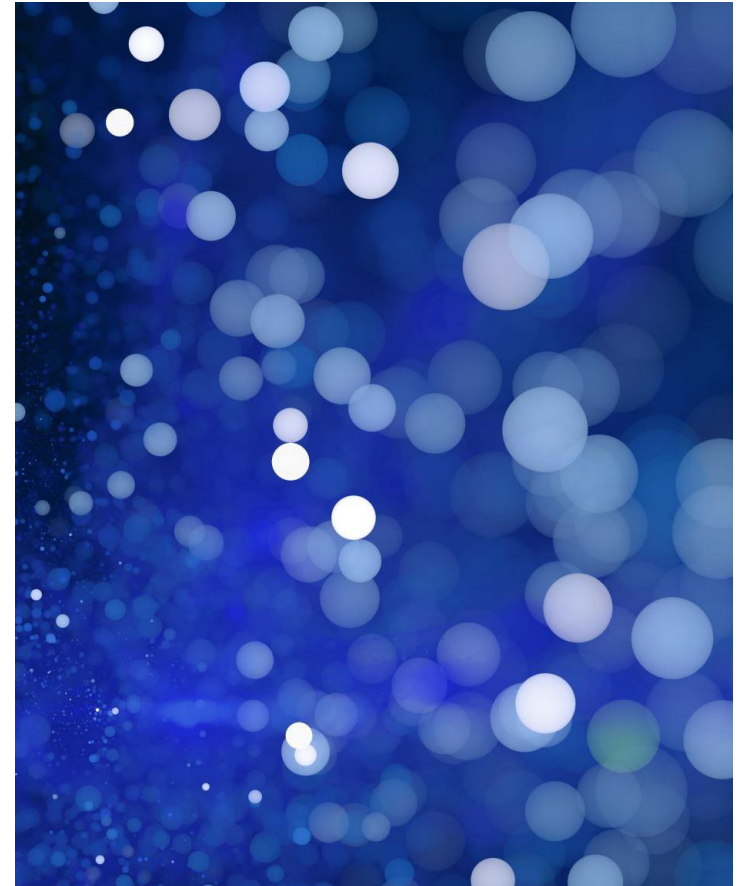
8 stages across the lifespan

Each stage = psychosocial crisis

Successful resolution → psychological strengths

Unresolved crisis → later developmental difficulties

Identity development central to adolescence
(McLean and Syed, 2015)



Relevant Stage: Identity vs Role Confusion



Age range: 12–18 years



Key task: forming a stable sense of identity



Influenced by peers, independence, exploration



Risks: confusion, low self-esteem, lack of direction



Identity formation is a core adolescent task (Kroger and Marcia, 2021)

Impact of Caring Role on Identity Development

Parentification
(adult responsibilities too early)

Limited time for hobbies, interests, self-exploration

Reduced peer interaction and social development

Emotional strain and unresolved grief

Possible guilt or pressure to prioritise mother's needs

Risk of identity confusion due to restricted independence

Caring roles can disrupt autonomy development (Rorije et al., 2023)



Nature and Nurture Influences

- **Nature**
- Temperament
- Emotional resilience
- Genetic predispositions
- **Nurture**
- Bereavement and loss
- Long-term caring responsibilities
- Mother's mental and physical health
- Limited external support
- School environment and teacher relationships
- Identity shaped by interaction of personal and social factors (Schachter and Galliher, 2018)

Current Risks for Jenny

Emotional exhaustion

Social isolation

Anxiety or low mood

Academic disruption

Limited future planning

Identity confusion due to restricted adolescence

Young carers often experience reduced well-being (Benson and Bundick, 2007)

Jenny's Current Needs

Emotional support and safe space to talk

Reduced caring burden

Opportunities for peer connection

Support with education and future goals

Access to youth services and community support

Practical support for mother

Autonomy support is essential for healthy development (Rorije et al., 2023)

Support Plan Based on Erikson





How the Plan Links to Erikson

- Reduces role overload → supports identity formation
- Restores balance between “carer” and “teenager”
- Encourages autonomy and independence
- Supports healthy peer relationships
- Promotes successful resolution of Identity vs Role Confusion
- Aligns with Erikson’s emphasis on social context shaping identity (McLean and Syed, 2015)

Critical Evaluation of Erikson

- **Strengths**
- Lifespan perspective
- Highlights social and emotional influences
- Useful for understanding adolescent identity
- Helps explain young carers' challenges
- **Limitations**
- Stages may be too rigid (Kroger and Marcia, 2021)
- Lacks cultural and contextual diversity
- Does not fully explain complex caregiving roles
- Overlooks socio-economic pressures
- Modern identity theories offer more flexible models (Schachter and Galliher, 2018)

Conclusion

Jenny's caring role has significantly shaped her development

Erikson's theory explains risks to identity formation

Support must reduce caring burden and promote independence

Evidence-based interventions can improve her well-being and future outcomes

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