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# A slight schooling on deaf education

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Kathryn Lynn Hayden  
A Slight Schooling On  
Deaf Education

## ABSTRACT

By comparing a residential school for the deaf and hard of hearing with a mainstream inclusion educational setting, the performance of school-aged children who are deaf is presented. Previous research within the area of education for individuals who are deaf was gathered and used as a historical basis for the subsequent investigation. With the study of Erik Erikson's psychosocial stages of development and Lev Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, an analysis of education for individuals who are deaf was conducted and re-synthesized to provide a new understanding of education.

Erik Erikson's psychosocial stages of development and Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal development was synthesized specifically with the population of individuals who are deaf to fit their specific needs in learning. Previous research and performance was also specifically studied in the areas of academics, social involvements, and identities. The literature identifies several factors that affect the academic achievement of children who are deaf compared to their hearing peers. Factors include a difficulty in communication and social interaction.

Through the lenses of Erikson's and Vygotsky's theories, conclusions showed the possibility of academic delay and future failures when students are isolated and prevented from developing the ability learn industrious skills. Students who are deaf were also suggested as not needing the same accommodations as other individuals listed under special education, but needing more academic rigor and social opportunities with both deaf and hearing peers.

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A SLIGHT SCHOOLING ON DEAF EDUCATION

A project based upon an independent investigation,  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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## INTRODUCTION

When children are born deaf, they have not only lost the ability to hear, but also their ability to have a “voice”. Advocating for the rights of individuals who are deaf is a division of social work not commonly discerned. One of the areas most important in advocating for individuals who are deaf is education. Every person has a fundamental right to education, but how and where a child who is deaf receives the best education is not always clear. Determining where these children are going to accomplish the most learning, experience the best social involvement, and develop a fundamental self-identity is a serious decision that needs advocating. By comparing the components of a residential school for the deaf and hard of hearing with a mainstream public school using inclusion, the education of this population will be examined and understood through the theories of Erik Erikson’s Psychosocial Stages of Development and Lev Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development. Both theories present a philosophy on development and the importance of working in these ranges for effective growth. While children who are deaf may have accommodations in their development, they still need to achieve their “goals”.

Comprehensive research comparing public and residential schools’ aptitude has not been undertaken for children who are deaf. Also, there is a gap between the educational philosophy currently used and the growing needs of children who are deaf. Despite the growing strength of Deaf Culture and residential schools for the deaf, more parents of children who are deaf are deciding to send them to local public schools.

Whether the child is actually prospering in a public school versus a school for the deaf is inconclusive. Studies seem to indicate that a student receives a better education in a public school, but the child loses out on learning about Deaf Culture and communication with other deaf individuals if they are not at a school for the deaf. Parents need to be aware of the discrepancies in each setting and given support when choosing an education. If a child does not receive an appropriate education, along with an enriching social experience (in either setting), he/she can become negatively impacted. This could have a life long consequence.

With a noticeable difficulty in communication, individuals who are deaf are often overlooked and unheard in society. In the 2003-2004 academic year, 79,000 students with hearing impairments were listed under federally funded programs (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). It is therefore, the duty of social workers to help represent populations who have difficulty advocating for their self. For instance, the social worker works to encourage the idea that every human being has a multifaceted profile. While a person who is deaf may have a hearing intelligence that is compromised, they still have other unique intelligences that need fostering in order to acquire knowledge. Social workers can encourage educators into recognizing that students learn differently, respond uniquely to a variety of teaching techniques, and have individual preferences.

Undoubtedly, every child deserves the best education available. When a child receives a good education, it is likely that he/she will obtain more positive opportunities. It is difficult for an individual who is deaf to make a better life for him/herself when he/she is poorly educated. It should not need to be stated, but the deaf are just as capable

as hearing people when it comes to making a difference and contributing to society (if given an educational foundation). Without an education, the deaf are more likely to be excluded from better opportunities in employment, access to resources, and knowledge of living in a hearing world. An individual who is deaf only experiences their hearing loss as a disability if he/she or their society allows it; with an education the individual will gain the skills to prevent this labeling from coming true.

Included in an appropriate education is the development of self-confidence. All children need to be taught that they have something positive to contribute in life. The acquisition of knowledge about Deaf Culture is one significant way of helping children who are deaf appreciate themselves and the struggles others like them have made. Learning about this history can help provide students with an invaluable opportunity to fulfill their own potential and enrich their lives. Education is the vehicle for learning and implementing all kinds of knowledge needed for a successful lifestyle—including both daily living and professional skills. (Notable, the term deaf will encompass individuals with any hearing loss and of all degrees—as categorized by a physician).



## CONCEPTUALIZATION AND METHODOLOGY

Discovering a more efficient way to educate a child who is deaf should be a quest for all researchers. Where is a child who is deaf going to accomplish the most learning, experience the best social involvement, and develop a fundamental self-identity? This study further explores the experience of a child who is deaf in their education and possible ways of fostering more of their capabilities. By using the lens of the Psychosocial Stages by Erik Erikson and Zone of Proximal Development by Lev Vygotsky, potential new ways of thinking about this population in an educational setting will be offered. Erikson will help to provide a deeper understanding of developmental stages in life while Vygotsky's theory will provide a guide for educational development.

Erikson's psychosocial stages have been used in the fields of education and psychology for numerous years. This particular theory explicates the advantages and disadvantages to successfully complete a life stage. While an emphasis will be placed on Erikson's stages two through six, all of the stages are important since children are molded by the accomplishment or failure of their previous stage(s). Erikson addresses the importance of education in his middle stages and how it influences the child as a whole person. He believed that each person experiences internal conflicts that relate to life's key stages—helping to define his or her growth and personality. The levels of these psychosocial crises are labeled as: 1. Trust versus Mistrust; 2. Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt; 3. Initiative versus Guilt; 4. Industry versus Inferiority; 5. Identity versus Inferiority; 6. Intimacy versus Isolation; 7. Generativity versus Stagnation; and 8.

Integrity versus Despair. Each stage is composed of opposing positions that represent the possible positive and negative dispositions of each level. Importantly, Erikson also pointed out that successful development requires a balance between the negative and positive. The experiences that a child who is deaf has in the inclusion and residential setting will be used through this theory to show the improvements needed for educating in that stage. Each stage will be addressed individually and supported by research found existing in the educational setting specified. This theory, (as well as Zone of Proximal Development), will show how these two educational systems are working to the potential of their students.

The (Vygotsky's) Zone of Proximal Development focuses more on the child's development in learning. Since Erikson's theory focuses on a psychosocial development, it is important to also center in on a child's capability in their learning process. Through understanding and implementing Vygotsky's views on development and his Marxist perspective, education for children who are deaf can be accommodated and improved. Vygotsky realized that even children who are deaf could achieve the same academically as those who are hearing, despite research showing otherwise. He discovered that with scaffold guidance from a more educated other, a child is able to extend his/her own knowledge and grow to adopt the new knowledge as his/her own. For a child who is deaf, extra guidance is required because he/she is unable to "pick up" social cues like a hearing child does when they "overhear" conversations. The idea is that the child will be able to become an independent thinker, but in order to do this they have to work collaboratively with their more knowledgeable partner. In situations where communication is lacking, this kind of relationship is challenged. Vygotsky realized the

need for appropriate communication and even providing the student who is deaf with a language such as American Sign Language. He also believed in a united community where everybody was treated fairly and worked together—not made to feel like they are excluded due to a disability.

I will use Erikson's and Vygotsky's theories to examine the residential and inclusion settings in three main areas: academic achievement, social involvement, and positive life/self-identity. Each of these areas is extremely important in the development of any child. Historically, these areas have also displayed unequal successes between students who are hearing and those who are deaf. With the two previously mentioned theories, work with children who are deaf will be further researched and compared with each theory—providing more understanding for the discrepancy between educational success in children who are hearing and those who are deaf.

Each educational setting has displayed areas of needed improvement. As will be explained further in this paper, research on adolescents has also shown that the social skills and interactions in a residential school for the deaf have been more successful. A public inclusion setting however, has proven to do better academically for the student. As for unexpected findings, it could be possible that both of the educational settings chosen to act as models have similar methods and goals of educating their students, but may reach them differently. In any case, both settings will be further investigated and synthesized to help initiate positive work within this population.

A potential methodological bias exists in that I am personally involved with the deaf community. As a full-time employee at a residential school for the deaf and I have strong connections with both staff and students attending the school; so it is possible that

I may find favor with this educational setting. However, in the course of my work I have discovered that while working at this residential school there are areas in the educational process that do not find favor with me. I do realize that there are some benefits in mainstreaming a child who is deaf. Additionally, my devotion toward educational systems in general lends me to a bias. It will be challenging for me to believe that a teacher in either setting does not attempt to suit all of the special needs a child who is deaf requires in their classroom.

Limitations to this study will also include whether there is enough information to support the different parts of the theories. Since there are strict laws protecting children and their privacy, I have to also be aware that information is generally limited in this area. Research will hopefully still give enough insight to working with children who are deaf and the concerns social workers, teachers, and educational administration should be aware of when attempting to enhance the education of this population. More to the point, no child deserves any less than the best—as stated in the No Child Left Behind Act.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PHENOMENON

The highlighted phenomenon is within the exploration of deaf education and the techniques used in current teaching practices. Despite the late 19<sup>th</sup> century boom in residential schools for the deaf, more children who are deaf have been attending mainstream public schools—especially in the last 15 years. There is limited research on the comparison of educational settings and their methods for education, but available information will be presented and analyzed from these two main settings. After explicating the current services and process of educating, a new conceptualization of education will later be provided to encourage the enhancement of deaf education. The question remains however, as to why parents are deciding more frequently to send their child who is deaf to a mainstream setting.

By beginning with a brief historical view of deaf education I will provide a basis for the developments applied today. Furthermore, literature will be presented on two present and contrasting forms of education—Residential schools for the deaf and hard of hearing and public mainstream inclusion schools—while incorporating the contributions (or lack there of) in the areas of academic achievement, social involvement, and positive life/self-identity for a child who is deaf. There are several different theories and educational settings available to individuals who are deaf, but the scope of this paper will remain focused on the divided line between institutional (which uses American Sign Language) and public (using speech and voice) education.

### *History of Deaf Education*

The 1800's saw a great deal of public attention brought to the education of individuals who were deaf. This was a time when one of the most prominent figures in deaf history was alive and fighting for the education rights of the deaf. That man, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, had received training in Paris toward his mission of educating the deaf. When he returned to America in 1817 with Laurent Clerc, they co-founded the first American School for the Deaf (Lauri, 2004). Clerc also went on to become the most important influence on the education of the Deaf during this time. Even more, in 1880 there was a Milan Conference that brought educators of the Deaf from many countries for an International Congress. Each person at the conference spoke about the method they used in the instruction and education of their children. Many used speech, but some did a combined system of oral and sign. The oral method of instruction was becoming more and more popular by this time, but not without resistance. Even today, the conflict of the best educational method continues and is rooted in the belief people who are not deaf know what is best for this population.

Individuals who are deaf have continually been thought of as broken and disabled and needing guidance, but a new "knowledge about the body and the mind of individual 'inmates,' 'patients,' and 'pupils' added to the coming into being of a 'cult of professionalism' (Bledstein, 1976) in the field of special education" (van Drenth, 2003, p. 4). Now the deaf are not seen as 'patients' who have nothing worth living for. Due to the belief in professionalism and the efforts of a man named Samuel Gridley Howe (1801-1876), an increase "in importance of a more humane and caring approach towards [all]

individuals with physical or intellectual impairments” was initiated (van Drenth, 2003, p. 4). Howe was “the director of the first institution for children with intellectual disabilities in the US; the Massachusetts School for Idiotic and Feeble Minded Children opened in 1850” (Kanner, 1964 as cited by van Drenth, 2003, p. 4). In 1817, “the advocacy of Dr. Mason Fitch Cogswell on behalf of his deaf daughter Alice, inspired Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet (1787-1851) to open the Connecticut Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons (from 1819 known as the American Asylum, at Hartford, for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons, and later often referred to as the Hartford School)” (van Drenth, 2003, p. 4).

For several decades at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the establishment of schools for the deaf boomed and “at the turn of the century, there were 112 schools for deaf pupils, employing over 1,300 teachers or “instructors” (Schools for the Deaf in the United States, 1900 as cited by van Drenth, 2003, p.5). These schools helped to continue “the gradual replacement of a negligent or sometimes even repressive way of coping with disabilities in human beings by a more humane attitude, characterized by a more caring approach and respect for the individual “soul” (Scheerenberger, 1983; Winzer, 1993 as cited by van Drenth, 2003, p.4). People who were deaf were now starting to not be seen as incapable of thinking and doing things for themselves. Teachers were also seeing that children who were deaf did not need to be treated as mentally challenged. Hearing people were realizing that with better communication, individuals who are deaf were able to run their own life successfully. They were starting to not only be seen as disabled, but as cultured and able to contribute to society. No longer was this population being pushed aside and placed in hospitals that

excluded them from the community at large. Individuals who are deaf clarified a “distinction between the issue of deafness, as a medical problem, and Deaf individuals and the Deaf community as primarily defined through their specific culture and the value of their own language (Sign Language)” (Bruch, 2002; Butler, McNamee, Skelton, & Valentine, 2001 as cited by van Drenth, 2003, p. 3). Many people who are deaf do not see their deafness as a disability—a term based on “a social construct grounded in cultural, political, ideological, and economic assumptions and biases” (Reagan, 2002). Thomas Gallaudet is the one who has been most marked as promoting the unique language for the deaf. He was greatly “influenced by the manual system of the French philosophers and educators Abbe´ Charles Michel de l’E´ pe´e (1712–1789) and Abbe´ Roche Ambroise Cucurron Siccard (1742–1822)”. The method of:

Manualism was based on the use of sign language. With the support of Laurent Clerc, Gallaudet established this silent method of instruction as the sole effective way of stimulating the use of language among children with hearing impairments, also in educational settings. Oralism [on the other hand], which emphasized the importance of articulation of speech and lip-reading, was found in schools for children with hearing impairments in the US at this time, however, the teaching of speech was considered ‘a mere accessory. (van Drenth, 2003, p. 5)

The controversy between manualism and oralism has continued to be a debated discussion in education. Promoters of Deaf Culture wanted to preserve their unique language and the communication it allows, but many other people believe that the deaf population should learn how to voice since it is a hearing world. It was the manual method anyway, that Gallaudet was most attracted to and used for training teachers at the Hartford School. With manual sign language, more than an articulation of the hands is included, it also involves body language and facial expressions. Through this approach and the Hartford training, the aspirations of the education of the deaf were first initiated.



### *Residential Schools*

With a strong foundation built from Gallaudet's efforts, cultural pride for individuals who are deaf began and encompassed residential schools for the deaf. The supporters of the schools for the deaf are often supporters of Deafness and deafness (the capital 'D' representing culture and the lowercase 'd' acting for any individual with a hearing impairment). Some of the problems these supporters have with placing their children in mainstream/inclusion classrooms are rooted in the problem that "when hearing people think about Deaf people, they project their concerns and subjective perspective onto Deaf people" (Lane Hoffmeister as cited by Reagan, 2002). The choice of an educational setting inevitably leads into a conflict between the values of the Deaf community (whose goal is to promote the unique heritage of Deaf language and culture) and the dominant hearing society who strive to create a non-segregated education system (Lane Hoffmeister as cited by Reagan, 1996). The concern from Deaf community members is that hearing "experts" and decision makers are making decisions for children who are deaf without accurate knowledge of their deaf community's ideals. People within the deaf community worry that if their children are mainstreamed, these children will be taught to see themselves as lacking and subordinate to hearing classmates. Supporters believe by focusing on the teaching of speech and lip reading in education or use of hearing aids to maximize whatever residual hearing a deaf individual may have (which occurs in public education), reinforces the assumption that deafness needs to be fixed (Reagan, 2002). In a school for the deaf, children are not faced with this discrimination. The school's community treats them just as a public school's community

treats a hearing child. Members of Deaf Culture believe that children who are deaf should be respected and rejoiced on the same level as any culturally separate group. By attending a school for the deaf, children who are deaf have access to learning about their own culture which includes the following: communicative competence; a common, shared language; a literary and artistic tradition; a shared awareness of Deaf cultural identity; distinctive behavioral norms and patterns; cultural artifacts; a shared historical knowledge and awareness; and a network of voluntary, in-group social organizations (Reagan, 2002). The addition of these teachings creates a truly bilingual and bicultural education where children who are deaf obtain the right to live in both a deaf and hearing community. Children who are deaf in a residential school can learn about life in a community where they feel safe and able to learn about the hearing world in a structured way set by other individuals who are deaf and understand deafness.

Supporters state, “Deaf pupils need teachers and other professionals who can communicate with them fluently” (Thumann-Prezioso, 2005). Having total communication with teachers and the school community at large is seen as a right and the only way to be successful learners (Thumann-Prezioso, 2005). It is not fair for the child to only have communication with the teacher or interpreter; communication should extend to the hallways, the cafeteria, board meetings and parent conferences (Glickman and Harvey 1996 as cited by Thumann-Prezioso, 2005). Parents do not want to see their child isolated or placed in situations where they are the only “different” one. Clearly, “the most important mechanism for reproduction of knowledge and skills is dialogue” (Ohna, 2005). Communication through American Sign Language is best suited and supported within a school for the deaf because teachers have specialized in this area.

Research states that using a natural first language is the most effective method for further development and learning. A school is more than just an educational institution; it is a microcosm of society where politics of linguistics, identity, culture, and differences should all be taught (Skliar et al., 2004).

The end of the 1880's, however, also had beginnings of change from manualism. The National Convention of Deaf Mutes met in Cincinnati, Ohio and began to tackle issues like the implementation of oralism and suppression of American Sign Language. Even if the child was deaf, the thought was that they still had to live in a hearing world and should grow up accustomed to that. Society then started to think that including children who were deaf into the main of society was the best choice for education. In fact "oralists were convinced that deaf people were made different by using sign language. It was precisely this distinction that created an image of deaf individuals as peculiar or abnormal that bothered oralists" (van Drenth, 2003, p.12). Some schools like the Clarke School for the deaf in Northampton, Massachusetts did adopt the credence of being completely oral and residential. Still, partly due to the fact that most children who are deaf are born to hearing parents, people began advocating for inclusion classrooms.

### *Inclusion*

"Inclusive education/mainstreaming is a key policy objective for the education of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities"

(Lindsay, 2007, p.2). More specifically:

The terms 'inclusion' or 'inclusive education' have largely replaced 'integration' and are intended to represent a different concept; 'integration' may be seen as a child adapting to a host setting (typically a school) while 'inclusion' may refer to the host adapting in order to meet the needs of actual (and potential) pupils. (Lindsay, 2007, p.3)

By responding to these needs the school “understands their individuality and responds to their individual needs: a school for all is a place where every child can develop according to his/her abilities, skills and talents” (Angelides et al., 2004). It is about “equal opportunities for all pupils, whatever their age, gender, ethnicity, attainment and background” (Lawson et al., 2006). The government and its citizens believe the “right to education for all school aged children is now guaranteed and [is] was backed by due process of law” (Florian, 2005). In 2001 there came the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) that amended the 1996 Education Act. The new “Act states that all schools must ‘plan’ for the inclusion of all children, the underlying assumption being that all children will ultimately attend mainstream schools” (Cole, 2005).

Special education was given little attention at the national policy level, but “in 1974 the Warnock Report was commissioned by Margaret Thatcher (then Secretary of State for Education) to review the provision for children with special education needs” (Cole, 2005). For better or for worse, children who are deaf were included under the umbrella term for special education. Predictably, there continued to be “major policy initiatives aimed at supporting children with special needs in mainstream schools” (Cole, 2005). Parents have become more active in their decision making over education. They are expressing their feelings that children seen as “different” should not be made to feel rejected or excluded—especially in education. From this empowered movement, the philosophy of inclusion began.

The motive for inclusion is a “concern that children’s rights are compromised by special education, segregated from typically developing peers and the mainstream

curriculum and educational practices” (Lindsay, 2007). Through inclusion, children who are classified as having a disability such as being deaf will be placed in a classroom with hearing peers for as much of the day as possible. Due to learning difficulties, most of the children with disabilities will still have some classes separated from their other peers and receive a one-on-one aide. Notably, “the deaf and hard of hearing have been mainstreamed frequently; in the period from 1979 to 1985 the enrollment of these children in public school programs increased from 70 % to 80% (Craig & Craig, 1986 as cited by Obrzut, et al., 1999, p. 238).

The expectation was that “the implementation of the [inclusion] law would promote social acceptance and enable disabled children to participate in community life as adults. The congressional report that accompanied the Act said that: With proper educational services many of these handicapped children would be able to become productive citizens contributing to society instead of being left to remain burdens on society” (Florian, 2005). Additionally, other activists saw problems in having different educational approaches/settings and wanted to work toward a consistent and successful system (Lindsay, 2007). Supporters of inclusion soon realized that there were some flaws in the theory of inclusion that needed attention, but “these should drive us to greater efforts to discover how to implement a policy seen as inherently correct” (Lindsay, 2007).

As it stands, the experiences that a child who is deaf receives through inclusion vary according to their individual needs. Some students use audiological equipment, such as personal FM systems, or sound field towers (large speakers) in their classrooms. Many students at the high school level also have one period a day in which they work one

on one with a tutor of the deaf. Other students meet with speech and language pathologists, according to their Individual Education Plans (speech, however, is also provided in some residential settings when the student displays a need or desire for such instruction). Sometimes, there is a specialist for the school system who consults with teachers and ensures that they follow the accommodation provided in the student's IEP. If desired, younger grades could receive some instruction time with American Sign Language (Clarke School for the Deaf, n.d.). The belief is that children deserve the right to know and communicate in a natural language; for the deaf that language is ASL. Many students also receive extended time on tests, both formal and informal. If a student was raised through ASL, there may be grammatical and cultural differences that need extra attention, just as a newly English speaking person may need. These tests include classroom tests, SATs, AP exams, etc. Most importantly, students who are mainstreamed are encouraged to advocate for themselves when confusion or any problem arises (Clarke School for the Deaf, n.d.). When looking at academic achievement, social involvement and identity issues, the differences between inclusion and Deaf education can be viewed and discerned more clearly.

#### *Academic Achievement*

A good education is often one of the primary goals a parent has for their child—even when the child is deaf. Proper education sets a child up for a successful future. Concerns for parents of children who are deaf arises when deciding whether the child would learn more in a residential school for the deaf, or a mainstream public school. Children who are deaf should and can be learning on the same level as hearing children. A residential school is able to tend to the individual needs of a child who is deaf, but they

are not bound by the same academic standards that a mainstream public school follows—parents question if this makes a difference. Research shows that a child who is deaf in a hearing class of peers is “exposed to processes of exclusion from the class community” (Ohna, 2005, p. 117). The child may experience a misunderstanding of information presented, possible group work difficulty, and targeted attention to his/her dependence on a teacher aide. In addition to teaching academics, a school that supports this child needs to provide a transition to future life that is appropriate for a child who is deaf. Research shows that “adolescents and young adults who are deaf face an uncertain future in terms of their transition from high school to community settings. Although persons who are deaf and who complete 4-year college programs tend to succeed on par with their hearing peers in the early stages of adult life (DeCaro & Arenson, 1983; Welsh, 1982; Welsh & Parker, 1982), a segment of the deaf population--which has come to be called "low functioning" in federal legislation (Bowe, 1988)--does not succeed on the same level in work, postsecondary, social, or independent living endeavors after leaving school” (Reiman, Bullis, Davis, & Cole 1991 as cited by Bullis, et al., 1997, p. 347). The question remains as to which primary setting can supply the best transitional program for the child.

A good portion of children who are deaf:

Generally do not go on to a four-year college or university but may attend community college or vocational/technical training centers. More than likely, these persons either drop out of high school, seek employment immediately upon leaving high school, or go on to some type of rehabilitation or community-based training program. Finally, they have little experience and/or training in employment and independent living skills. (Bullis et al., 1997, p.348)

Studies have also shown that students increase their performance academically when factors such as increased years of ASL usage, signed home language, and parent involvement are present (DeLana et al., 2007). Additional factors include “pragmatic assessment procedures to individualize and focus instruction on the skills an individual must demonstrate in order to work successfully and live independently” (Bullis, Freeburg, Bull, & Sendelbaugh, 1990, p.348).

### *Social Involvement*

A better educational setting needs “to be developed so that deaf children can be taught the cultural norms and values that hearing children appear to acquire naturally during the developmental process (Kusché et al., 1983, p. 8). A child who is deaf needs to be taught age-appropriate social involvement and daily living tasks in a different way than a hearing child. Through successful communication and positive reinforcement from society, this population is able to learn the skills needed to live an independent lifestyle. A child who is deaf often faces extra challenges when interacting with the hearing world because he/she is made to feel “weird” and “dumb”. Unfortunately, there are still people today who hold this mindset. This reason alone gives support to why adolescence is an even more crucial period for developing positive social skills in a child who is deaf. Adolescence “is the period when boys/girls become conscious of their changing status in society. They need to reevaluate themselves socially and emotionally in relation to their peers and society in general (Limaye, 2004). If a child experiences “language deprivation and social isolation”, this can lead to “a delay in psycho-social development” (Kusché et al., 1983, p.2). Learning Sign Language is not detrimental to other developments, but not having effective communication is damaging.



### *Communication*

Being deaf is not only a sensory defect; it is a communication disability (Limaye, 2004). Deafness is “primarily a condition of communication differences between persons who are deaf (who rely upon manual communication) and persons who are hearing (who rely upon oral/aural communication)” (Bullis et al., 1997, p.348). In fact, “the adolescent with hearing impairment may not be able to communicate clearly about his/her own needs, thoughts, experiences nor can his/her parents communicate with him/her adequately” (Limaye, 2004, p.2). The people most involved in an adolescent’s life and “play an important role in their everyday communication experiences are parents, teachers, and peers” (Zheng et al., 2001, p.2). This makes it extremely important that the child is placed in an educational setting that will help facilitate and improve communication. Since a child who is deaf cannot literally “overhear” a conversation, “they miss out on the wealth of information that hearing children obtain incidentally by overhearing communication between other persons in their environment” (unless they are in a signing community) (Kusché et al., 1983).

### *Society’s View*

How educators in a particular educational setting view a child who is deaf can influence the child’s development. Supportive structuring of development is sometimes improperly implemented because some people “reject the adolescents with hearing impairments because of a pervasive failure to understand ‘deafness’ and its ramification” (Limaye, 2004, p.2). Conversely, it is hard for people who are deaf to understand and be conscious of their deafness unless hearing people make them aware. Sometimes children who are deaf are “happy with their world, [it is the] many hearing people like parents,

teachers, and relatives [who] force them to behave according to the rules of hearing society” (Limaye, 2004, p.5). Additionally, research also suggests that parents underestimate their children’s hearing difficulties (Zheng, 2001, p.2). This can cause a lot of frustration on the part of both parent and child. It is not out of place to assume that teachers may also be unaware of the severity of a child’s deafness. In turn, this may lead to miscommunication that can sometimes cause trouble and inappropriate behavior from the child. Once this happens, stereotypical views that a child who is deaf is a “problem” commences and again negatively impacts him/her into furthering the problem behavior.

Society struggles to understand the challenges that a student who is deaf faces and often assumes that they are less capable or cultured. Many individuals who are deaf do not want to assimilate with the hearing world; they are proud of their deafness. This is an aspect of Deaf Culture and needs to be respected like any other culture. With all off the advances in technology today (cochlear implants, hearing aids, etc), many hearing people assume that deafness will be “solved”—but acceptance of being deaf is vital to the identity of many Deaf people and should not be overlooked.

#### *Positive Life/Self-Identity*

For any human being to develop a positive identity, the person needs to learn that he/she is important and can live a happy life. Having a positive Self-Concept and being generally happy in life’s experiences is essential for having life satisfaction. A proper education can help ensure these factors are developed because schools are not only educational institutions, they are also critical in the social and emotional development of children.

### *Self-Concept*

Self-concept can often be interchangeable with self esteem, self-regard, and self-perception. Piers (1984) said:

A relatively stable set of self-attitudes reflecting both a description and an evaluation of one's own behavior and attributes. Self-concept influences children's school performance and social relations. Many psychologists believe that it serves as a critical index of mental health as well.

Children often develop their self-concept in relation “to the feedback [they] receive from parents, peers, teachers, and other significant persons. Such feedback may occur as verbal responses, actions, or changes in contingencies” (Obrzut et al., 1999, p.239).

Children learn about failures and successes from these experiences and internalize the perceptions as foundation for their image of self (Leigh and Stinson, 1991; Piers, 1984 as cited by Orbzut et al., 1999, p.239). In fact, the road to a poor self-concept for a child who is deaf is often created during poor early language development when they are receiving negative feedback and socialization (Obrzut et al., 1999, p.240). The main communicators in the life of a child who is deaf need to hold a positive attitude and professionalism towards disability and persons with disabilities in order to help the child develop positive self-regard. It is extremely daunting on a child who is deaf to feel incapable and isolated from supportive role models. Children who have a harder time of adjusting and building a positive self-image may “experience emotional and behavioral problems such as social withdrawal, short temper traumas, anger towards themselves and their parents” (Limaye, 2004, p.371).

### *Life Satisfaction*

Past research has defined quality of life among “objective indicators, such as income level, gender, and crime statistics, among others” (Gilman et al., 2004, p.1). This however, only accounts for a portion of the factors. Quality of life “is largely regulated by internal mechanisms, rather than by objective experiences (Bearsley and Cummings, 1999 as cited by Gilman et al., 2004, p.1). In fact, studies have “reported that low life satisfaction predicted the onset of depression two to three years earlier and other health status problems” (Gilman et al., 2004, p.2). Secure personality development is important when attempting to achieve a successful life. It is intimately affected by the experiences of socialization and can cause psychological consequences when one perceives him/herself as “different” or damaged from others in the environment (Goffman, 1963 as cited by Kusché et al., 1983, p.154). Findings “suggest that life satisfaction appraisals not only result from an interplay of personal and environmental conditions, but also in turn influence subsequent internal and environmental experiences (Diener et al., 1999 as cited by Gilman et al., 2004, p.2). This may point to the importance of allowing the child to decide which educational setting he/she feels is most comfortable because it could affect how successful and capable he/she is as an adult. The environment setting that the child is placed into needs to “foster a sense of belongingness or support positive interactions with peers, teachers, and parents” so that the individual does not “view his/her condition as particularly stigmatizing” (Warrick, 1994 as cited by Gilman et al., 2004, p.4)

### *Summary*

There has been a long history of development within the education of the deaf. Viewpoints have fluctuated and progressed on how to “understand” these individuals and how to foster their academic development appropriately. Research presented previously continues to support the placement of a child in both a residential setting and a mainstream/inclusion setting to varying degrees. Undoubtedly, both settings have provided an education for the child, but determining which benefits the child most is still debated. Moreover, while research may show that a mainstream setting has proven to better educate children academically, a child in this setting often becomes isolated and depressed—eventually causing the child to refuse the continuation of their academic learning. The gap in academic achievement may be due to the lack of structured standards in residential education, but a residential setting does provide the best socialization which children who are deaf need. Socialization is essential for a positive self-concept and achievement in life. On the other hand, children who are segregated to a residential school may not receive the same in-depth exposure to the hearing community in the same way that a mainstream school could provide. A mainstream education places the student in small-scale situations similar to that of the larger community by attending class with hearing peers. Children who are deaf need to learn how to interact in a hearing world because they will face that obstacle everyday. To ignore Deaf pride and the importance of their culture (which involves going to a residential school) is unethical and Audistic (the belief that people who are hearing are superior to people who are deaf).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PSYCHOSOCIAL STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

Erik H. Erikson first presented the Psychosocial Stages of Development in his book *Childhood and Society* (1950, 1963). In the chapter entitled, "Eight Ages of Man" (pp. 247-274) Erikson outlined his life cycle schema. Beginning with infancy, Erikson explained how a child first faces the challenge of basic trust versus mistrust. Erikson viewed this period as the time for a child's first social achievement. It is a time when the child tests his/her ability to let the mother out of sight without undue anxiety or rage. An infant learns from an effective mother that she is its inner certainty and outer predictability (Erikson, 1950, p. 247). Considering the development of a child who is deaf however, this may be a stage where, according to Erikson's theory, we could see a hindrance in development. Most children who are deaf are born to hearing parents/families. A deaf infant does not have the same capabilities or opportunities to distance him/herself from its parents as does a hearing child. A child who is deaf is more apt to place itself in a dangerous situation when not under the protection of his/her parents. The child would not be able to readily communicate its need for help or stay out of harms way as easily as a hearing child could. For example, if a deaf child were to crawl away from its parent and into the road, it would not hear a vehicle coming its way. Additionally, if the child were to survive it would still have to learn how unsafe our world could be. The child may even begin to think that its parents do not have the capacity to keep her/him safe. Certainly, Erikson's life cycle schema presents an

additional set of obstacles for the deaf community in its quest for psychological development and social achievement.

The second stage that Erikson presents in his work involves the child's struggle between autonomy and shame. It is his belief that a child becomes painfully aware of how visible he/she is to the world and sometimes pursues its desire "to force the world not to look at him, not to notice his exposure" (Erikson, 1950, p. 252-253).

Unfortunately, and regardless of interest or lack of understanding, a child who is deaf constantly receives overexposure from peering eyes. When a hearing person sees someone struggling with communication or using a sign language, they often stare and make judgments (good or bad). This kind of exposure can be intimidating for any child, but it is especially harsh on a child who is beginning to realize his/her difference and its permanence.

In Erikson's third stage, he presented his views on initiative versus guilt. Again, this is where the child is apt to develop the ability to be "more loving, relaxed and brighter" in his/her judgments (Erikson, 1950, p. 255). If the parent of a child who is deaf is over protective of the child because of the deafness, the child may require more time to find strength in implementing its own initiatives. Also, a child who is deaf often does not have the same role models in his/her life to mimic initiative. This is because they cannot communicate or understand other people's motivation to implement various initiatives. A lack of role modeling in how to initiate different situations can prove to be a hindrance in learning an important lifelong skill. For example, children learn from adults how important it is to vote because they constantly hear other people talking about it.

Children who are deaf do not “overhear” these conversations and are often only given the points of a topic and not the full and enriching discussion.

Erickson's fourth stage involved industry versus inferiority. This is the point where children enter into school and develop skills that will help them be successful in life. While a child who is deaf still may have all of the capability to learn and succeed, he/she may require a different approach to instruction than a hearing student. Erikson recognized the importance of proper training and the value of having a qualified institution for a child to attend. The school system that a child who is deaf attends can have a profound effect on the child and their development, even helping to build or strengthen the social skills that failed to form in previous stages.

Identity versus identity confusion is the fifth stage of development that Erikson presented. This is a time when many of the issues in past stages are reflected upon and the child has to learn what fits him/her and their future view of life. For a student who is deaf, this is also a crucial point in development. It may be that the child will take on deafness as an identity or a disability. Alliance with Deaf Culture is also most crucial at this point in development because of the influence it may have on personality. Like other cultures, an individual’s awareness of their culture may help strengthen identity and the ability to find pride or appreciation of their population—a basis for the sense of belonging. How an individual who is deaf interprets their position within the deaf population and Deaf Culture has a primary impact on which educational setting they feel more comfortable in as well (i.e. Schools for the Deaf are considered a main aspect for Deaf Culture).



In the sixth stage of development Erickson stated that children begin to explore the experiences of intimacy or isolation from intimacy. A child at this stage is ready to learn how to “commit himself to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments, even though they may call for significant sacrifices and compromises” (Erikson, 1950, p. 263). The challenge for children who are deaf is whether they are in situations where communication is available with peers in a way to facilitate the discovery of intimacy. If the student who is deaf has been placed in situations where he/she is the only one who is deaf, it may be more difficult to find intimate relationships.

The seventh stage of Generativity versus Stagnation deals with later life situations and the concern for preparing the next generation for adult life (Erikson, 1950, p. 267). For the Deaf community, this focus may be more appealing when concerning only other deaf members who are growing up. Either way, the appeal to give back to the younger generation may explain why many of the staff members at a school for the deaf are deaf themselves.

The final original stage of development involves integrity versus despair. It is at this stage that a person has accepted their life and all of the accomplishments or failures as purposeful. For an individual who is deaf, he/she may now fully understand the reason for having become deaf and the positive aspects it may have brought to their life.

#### *Historical Connection*

It is believed that Erikson was referencing William Shakespeare’s “As You Like It” when titling this chapter. In Act 2, Scene 7 of the play, Jacques (one of the lords attending Duke Senior) observes:

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players,  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. (p.44)

Shakespeare presented his view of men's experiences in these seven ages. The ages actually begin with infancy and end with old age. The first stage of infancy, he explained, consisted of mainly "mewling and puking in the nurse's arms." The second, he defined as the whining schoolboy, "with his satchel and shining morning face, creeping like a snail unwillingly to school." The third he explained as the lover stage, "sighing like a furnace, with a woeful ballad made to his mistress' eyebrow." Progressively, the next is explained as the soldier who is, "full of strange oaths and bearded like the [leo]pard, jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel, seeking the bubble reputation even in the cannon's mouth."

Justice is the fifth age, "with his part" in "fair round belly with good capon lined, with eyes severe and beard of formal cut, full of wise saws and modern instances."

The sixth age was the change over period "into the lean and slippered pantaloone with spectacles on nose and pouch on side; his youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide for his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice, turning again toward childish treble, pipes and whistles in his sound." The last age he presented through this description is the "last scene of all that ends this strange eventful history." This is also where the stages circle back around in description as a "second childhood and mere oblivion, sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything" (pp. 44-45). Just as development begins in infancy with a dependence of elders, so too do the elderly later depend on the youthful.

Comparatively, Erikson's stages eventually gained another stage to Shakespeare's "seven ages" version. Joan M. Erikson, Erik Erikson's wife, explained later in the extended version of *The Life Cycle Completed* (1997) how the additional stage came about. It was during the late 1940s when the Eriksons were invited to present their developmental stages at the Mid-Century White House Conference on Children and Youth. Just before this conference, Erikson was also asked to present the stages to a group of psychologists and psychiatrists in Los Angeles. Since the couple was living in Berkeley at the time, the drive to a train station in South San Francisco was a long endeavor, but also a beneficial time to discuss the presentation. The two Eriksons noticed that Shakespeare had neglected to include a play stage in his model and they wondered if it was possible for Shakespeare to make such a mistake. Could they too have missed a stage, they wondered. Joan concluded that it was erroneous to have the stages jump from Intimacy to Old Age. During her reflections she revealed there needed to be a stage between the two. It was at this moment that Generativity versus Stagnation was initiated.

Even though the extra stage seemed to be added at the last minute, it still reflected the construction of the whole theory. In a biography on Erik Erikson by Lawrence J. Friedman, he mentions that "Erikson had been working on his life cycle schema for a decade or more before it was presented at the White House Conference in 1950" (Donald, 2004, p.5). There were a few years during this period when Erikson made little progress as he searched for the right "conceptual clarity" that fit "Freud's early psychosexual stages with psychosocial ones covering the full life cycle" (Friedman, 1999, p.217). Shortly after, Erikson reached a breakthrough when he unfortunately experienced a marital and family crisis with the birth of his fourth child in 1944. The child was born

and diagnosed with Down syndrome. Strong emotions that this experience brought for Erikson gave him new insights toward a psychosocial development. With the help of his wife Joan, Erik Erikson began to take into consideration the developmental challenges he saw his own children go through.

After the implementation of the seventh stage, only a few terminology changes were made. When charting his stages, Erikson was also mindful to place them diagonally rather than vertically “in order to show that each stage is present from the very beginning of life and remains present throughout” (Donald, 2004, p. 5).

Joan Erikson later added three chapters to the original version of Erikson’s book. As she watched her husband grow older, she began to incorporate a ninth stage based on the actions of her elderly husband. He was a gracious elderly man who showed appreciation for those who helped him along. Joan was also very aware of her own self and the changes she experienced as she progressed into old age. She was not one who wanted to give up the fight, but wanted to work on her studies and the “ninth stage” of development. Joan was truly Erik’s other half and his voice for theory when his time had ended.

#### *Understanding Erikson’s Stages*

The belief in terms of Erikson’s work was that every person is born as “an undifferentiated potential and grows through a series of psychosocial stages” (Hamacheck, 1985, p.139). In other words, this means that somehow a sound and unaffected self has experiences as it matures which can either further or hinder personality development. The first five psychosocial stages are seen both as self-as-object components (in the sense of having certain physical, social, emotional, and intellectual

attributes) and self as doer elements (in the sense that certain perceiving, performing, thinking, and remembering functions) that need to be accomplished (Hamachek, 1985, p.139).

Furthermore, the development that a person goes through was once compared to the rings of a tree seen in a cross-sectional slice of its trunk. Just as a tree can show information about the ecological conditions the tree has lived through during any particular ring in its growth, so too does a human's development become formed or thwarted by unfavorable conditions at that time (i.e. the balance of weather conditions as compared with parenting style changes, etc) (Hamachek, 1985, p.139).

Erikson saw the first year of life (infancy) as a time where basic trust versus mistrust develops in the first ring of his psychosocial stages. All babies are born in a state of "discomfort caused by the immaturity of homeostasis" (Erikson, 1950, p. 247). When the child starts to demonstrate an ease of feeding, deep sleeping and relaxation of his bowels, the baby has now built the first steps to social trust. Importantly, it is also the quality of the maternal relationship and how the child's unique needs are tended within a trusted cultural lifestyle that influences its trust (Erikson, 1950, p. 249). With consistency in care of the child and the child's appreciating a feeling of goodness, the child gains a "rudimentary sense of ego identity which, [Erikson] thinks, on the recognition that there is an inner population of remembered and anticipated sensations and images which are firmly correlated with the outer population of familiar and predictable things and people" (Erikson, 1950, p. 247). When a child has mastered the ability to trust another person, he/she is then also able to learn to trust him/her self and the choices he/she makes.

Erikson believed that the best way to understand an absence of trust is to view infantile schizophrenia (as labeled in Erikson's lifetime). When understanding a process of differentiation between inside and outside as the origin of projection and introjection, there can be made a parallel to how an infant wishes to externalize pain and internalize pleasure. In introjection a person feels and acts as if an outer occurrence has become an inner certainty. For projection, the inner experience of harm is placed on someone else as if they were evil and not our self (Erikson, 1950, p. 249). If a child develops these incorrect methods of understanding or relating, he/she will experience trouble with love, trust and faith again in adulthood. Of course, as in all of Erikson's stages, there must be space for optimal frustrations—another form for learning.

Erikson believed that his stages could develop “either hostile or benign expectations and attitudes” (Erikson, 1950, p. 251). The elements of each stage are not meant to insinuate all of one and none of the other. There must be a balance between the two. For the stage of autonomy versus shame and doubt the concern resides in too much or too little.

As the child begins to stand on his own feet, firmness must be initiated to protect him against his yet untrained sense of discrimination. It must also protect the child from meaningless and arbitrary experiences of shame and early doubt (Erikson, 1950, p. 252). Frighteningly, if the child does not experience a gradual and well-guided form of autonomy, the “child will turn against himself all his urge to discriminate and to manipulate” (Erikson, 1950, p. 252). The child could then become obsessed with his own gain in power and not mutual regulation. Shame can then add to the situation and remind the child that they are not all-powerful. The shame that opposes autonomy is better

understood as rage against the self. However, too much shame only leads to sneaky and defiant behaviors—not more shame.

“Doubt is the brother of shame” (Erikson, 1950, p. 253). A person often develops doubt in relation to how they perceive and are treated by other people. The child is “magically dominated and effectively invaded by those who would attack one’s power of autonomy” at this stage (Erikson, 1950, p. 253-254). Children at this stage can easily feel that other people are against them. Children who are deaf have especially experienced this feeling since they are constantly stared at in public when communication fails them or even when talking in ASL. As an adult, the child will have learned to perceive others as doubting their actions. This will thus present a loss of self-control and self-esteem. With conviction however, the sense of autonomy could serve as the “preservation in economic and political life [as] a sense of justice” (Erikson, 1950, p.254).

As the child progresses through his own stages of development, he/she becomes “more himself, more loving, relaxed and brighter in his judgment, more activated and activating” (Erikson, 1950, p.255). Such is also the case for initiative versus guilt. Initiative adds to the foundation of autonomy the ability to plan and feel confident when undertaking the proposed task. Erikson saw guilt as the danger of this stage because of the goals contemplated and “acts of aggressive manipulation and coercion” (Erikson, 1950, p. 255). Children are believed to feel so guilty and jealous of peers that they could become violent with other people. For a child who is deaf, they may feel jealous of how easily some things come to those who are hearing. The child however, has the capability to gain a mutual regulation where moral responsibility and insight will help him to participate responsibly with others. An adult who fails to successfully accomplish the

balance within initiative often finds that he/she overcompensates and shows off when all he/she means is to “duck” instead of “[stick] his neck out” (Erikson, 1950, p. 257).

Erikson believed that the child “is at no time more ready to learn quickly and avidly, to become bigger in the sense of sharing obligation and performance than during this period of his development” (Erikson, 1950, p.258). In order to do this, the child joins with peers for the purpose of planning and modeling after “ideal adults recognizable by their uniforms and their functions, and fascinating enough to replace, the heroes of picture book and fairy tale” (Erikson, 1950, p.258).

In industry versus inferiority, the child must “forget past hopes and wishes, while his exuberant imagination is tamed and harnessed to the laws of impersonal things” (Erikson, 1950, p. 258). Industry is thus the adjustment of self from play, to the productive world of employment. It is considered that the beneficial lessons children learn in schools may be in part from observations of older students who successfully achieve the accomplishments younger children are attempting. The danger:

In failing this stage lies a sense of inadequacy and inferiority. If he despairs of his tools and skills or of his status among his tool partners, he may be discouraged from identification with them and with a section of the tool world. To lose the hope of such ‘industrial’ association may pull him back to the more isolated, less tool-conscious familiar rivalry of the Oedipal time. The child despairs of his equipment in the tool world and in anatomy, and considers himself doomed to mediocrity or inadequacy. (Erikson, 1950, p. 260)

It is the schoolchild who starts to become aware of and feel “that the color of his skin, the background of his parents, or the fashion of his clothes rather than his wish and his will to learn will decide his worth as an apprentice, and thus his sense of identity” (Erikson, 1950, p. 260). Children will even become more interested in athletics to help appease their growing need to become industrious and not a “failure” (Ginsburg, 1992)



Childhood is beginning to end for a child who is successfully accomplishing the stages of development. Youth is now beginning and with such a change comes more questions about the tasks achieved before. The child contemplates its choices in the eyes of others as compared with what it feels it is; worrying about how to bring its new self into an adult world. Identity and role confusion challenges the child's view of him/herself in the past with how it will continue successfully in adult tasks. Role confusion has mostly been related with a child's inability to identify its career path and thus its future identity. Some children try to mask this difficulty by "falling in love" and hoping to find identity in the other person (Erikson, 1950, p. 262). Those who are insecure of their identity are also often found to lash out at others, against those who seem "different".

When discovering one's identity, there may emerge a need for combining that identity with another person. Intimacy versus isolation is thus the next critical stage of development. The child has to learn how to make compromises with another person. If the child avoids such an intimate experience for fear of ego loss, isolation and self-absorption will occur. Instantiation from intimacy creates a desire to "destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one's own" (Erikson, 1950, p. 264). Erikson also saw an alternative however. He saw the possibility of a partnership that isolated the couple together and protected them from the next stage of development—Generativity.

Generativity versus stagnation is a stage that can be important in both its own right and in how the person relates to childhood. Erikson wanted to point out in this stage the need that a mature man still has in the guidance from younger generations. Of course, through Generativity there must also be an establishment of guidance for the next

generation. It must be understood that the relationship can be mutual—and not specifically for one’s own offspring. For a person to want or even have a child does not achieve Generativity (Erikson, 1950, p. 267). Unfortunately, failure in this stage leads to a pseudo-intimacy and personal impoverishment, which is most likely linked to a too strenuously self-made personality in earlier stages.

Erikson believed that the individual who successfully accomplished all of the previous stages would then achieve Ego Integrity versus Despair. While Erikson lacked a clear understanding of a definition for this stage, he did see it as the ego’s ability to have “accrued assurance of its proclivity for order and meaning” (Erikson, 1950, p. 268). A person who obtains integrity is able to defend the actions and life style that have become unique to him/her. Ego Integrity also allows the individual to be satisfied with his life and not fear the future. Despair however, “expresses the feeling that the time is now short, too short for the attempt to start another life and to try out alternate roads to integrity. Disgust hides despair” (Erikson, 1950, p.169). Integrity also wraps back around to the first stage of development with trust because trust can be defined as “the assured reliance on another’s integrity” (Erikson, 1950, p. 169). Erikson summed it up best when he stated “that healthy children will not fear life if their elders have integrity enough not to fear death” (Erikson, 1950, p. 169).

### *Critiques*

It should be noted that while Erikson may have achieved great integrity in his own lifetime, there are many critics who have challenged Erikson’s vision. Feminists, for example, have routinely criticized Erikson’s deliberations on identity and intimacy. Erikson lived in a period of time when women’s rights were less recognized. This fact

alone was a reason (intentionally or not) for many renowned figures to express their beliefs in overly masculine and sexist ways. Feminists who have challenged Erikson's work find that he does not take into account how differently women approach intimacy and identity than men do (Horst, 1995, p. 271). Research has supported the idea that women typically place more importance on relationships than self-improvements. Gilligan (1982), for example, believed that Erikson's developmental stages needed a complete reworking to be gender appropriate for women. She felt that Erikson's "original portrayal of the progression through identity to intimacy reflects a masculine bias that emphasizes separateness from, rather than connection to, others" (Horst, 1995, p. 271). Gilligan (1982) believes that women come to know themselves through their relationships with others while men place separateness before attachment and thus identity before intimacy work. Close to two decades before Gilligan, other research was discovering how "boys tended to present a more definite, concrete picture of identity than girls did. Boys [...] talked about occupational plans [...], girls talked about the future in relatively unrealistic, indefinite, and romantic terms" (Horst, 1995, p. 271).

Horst (1995) pointed out that writers like Gilligan "have helped us recognize the damage done by this process of making women's experience invisible". Furthermore, people's "experiences and traits that are not treated as important, that do not count in constituting the norm, too easily become perceived as 'abnormal' in the pejorative sense" (Horst, 1995, p. 271). There are negative implications for individuals who are deaf, even with their ability to be equal to hearing people. Just as it was hard for Erikson to think beyond male traditions of his time to understand the differences women experience in development, so too is it possible that he failed to perceive the unique aspects of deafness

in development—because of deafness’s separation from mainstream convictions. Individuals who are deaf only know their difference in the eyes of hearing people. They are not inferior or less intelligent, just as women are not less so than men. Differences, however, have marked the essence of society for centuries because it has been America’s unwritten directive that the enabled, white, rich man sets the standards for all other human beings.

Other criticisms of Erikson’s work continue as his theory ages and refute the validity of his basic premises.

The theory is more and more considered to be irrelevant to current social conditions” and “second, although empirical psychological research following Erikson regarding identity has, [...] concentrated on the individual and on personal integration, developments in the social sciences that have occurred mostly outside of classic Eriksonian identity theory and research have forwarded new analytic perspectives that threaten to undermine what seem to be regarded as Erikson’s theory’s basic premises. Valid issues related to identity are being broached regarding topics such as personal agency, individuality and relatedness, multiple selves, and so forth. (Schachter, 2005, p.138)

Many critics of Erikson believe that his theory identifies a development that remains essentialist, ethnocentric, and potentially oppressive (Schachter, 2005, p. 152). A healthy personality and development is understood in modern times as involving more structures such as spirituality and community. Modernists believe that a theory like Erikson’s needs to be rejected since even an “attempt at integration would merely be an accommodative ‘add-on’ that would fail to transform the basic concepts of the dominant theory’ (Schachter, 2005, p. 153). While there are other writers who did point out that Erikson mentioned the importance of culture because of his work with an American Indian tribe, many critics still believe that Erikson’s developmental theory lacks the importance of diversity that marks the modern world.

Diversity has also been one of the most controversial topics when considering appropriate programs for the education of the deaf. Some parents who have deaf children prefer that their children attend mainstream schools. They often mention the importance of diversity- with hearing and deaf students academically learning together. Residential education likes to point out that an education with peers who are all deaf provides students a learning environment free of social challenges related to deafness. As previously stated, some research has proven that residential education does not academically prepare students to the same high level as mainstreaming. Erikson pointed out in his stage of initiative versus guilt that it is essential for the school child to experience a crisis and conquer his/her fears to eventually “grow together’ both in his person and in his body” (Erikson, 1950, p. 255). So far, both the residential and mainstream education has failed to challenge the student who is deaf in both of these areas simultaneously. More research and intervention is indicated for the deaf student.

#### *Erikson Connects to Individuals who are Deaf*

School years are the building blocks for a successful future. As mentioned previously, a school that educates someone who is deaf needs to also provide an appropriate transition from school to the real life. Erikson pointed out in his industry versus inferiority stage that the school years are when a person is “all set for ‘entrance into life’” and thus “begin to be a worker and potential provider” (Erikson, 1950, p. 258-259). While parents are also responsible for preparing their children for independent living, a school must also be prepared to be a resource and supporter of life skills. This is important since all adolescent students, says Erikson, struggle with the “inability to settle on an occupational identity which disturbs individual young people” (Erikson, 1950, p.

262). Students who are deaf may have received a great amount of discrimination in the work environment and on the college campus. They need the support and resources to realize that their opportunities do not have to be limited because they are deaf.

Erikson also saw the beginning of the school years as a time when initiative brought jealousy and rivalry against those who have accomplished more first (Erikson, 1950, p. 256). An educational setting that has children who are deaf needs to be aware of the possible Audism in teaching styles; otherwise students who are deaf may internalize the jealousy they have and turn against themselves or others. Deaf children may need more time to achieve trust in the world (an early stage for Erikson), so the school needs to provide an environment where everyone feels comfortable and does not need to act on jealousy. With proper and equal education for everyone, all students learn the information they need to be just as successful as their peers. If the student who is deaf receives insufficient treatment from the educational setting, then he/she will not gain all of the tools needed to be a cultivated person.

The social environment that a child experiences while attending school has as much impact on their future as academics. Individuals who are deaf should have all of the rights and capabilities to live independently, but they need to be taught life skills in a different way than hearing students. For example, they need to learn alternate ways to reach 911 in an emergency, especially if they are living on their own.

The school years are the time when the importance of others builds. Students who are deaf have extra challenges to reach this developmental task especially when they have a hard time communicating. A school child that is deaf has learned that he/she is “different” and has to struggle to comprehend where he/she fits in the world. Developing

and having a sense of belonging or culture can be essential for positive social interactions, while being mindful of one's own self (Erikson, 1950, p. 260). Erikson (1950) acknowledged that a "school seems to be a culture all by itself, with its own goals and limits, its achievements and disappointments" (p. 259). The aim of the school however, should be to have every student a part of that culture—like in a tossed salad. A tossed salad has many different parts to it when creating the whole, but each individual and unique piece can still retain its own identity.

#### *Stages of Development Highlighted For Deaf Population*

Adolescents face a new challenge in Erikson's stage of Identity versus Role Confusion. The growth of a positive identity is crucial to development and must be achieved and supported in a school setting. School age children need to achieve a student identity as part of their whole identity. The challenge to this achievement rests in whether the child feels a connection to their school and community. Erikson saw this stage in a person's life as being more influenced by other's views. If a child who is deaf has already faced discrimination for being deaf, this point in development will pose more difficulty. Successfully accomplishing this stage will give the child more chances to perform proficiently in academics. Even the perceptions from teachers have a deep effect on the developing child; thus the importance for teachers to be educated on the needs of children who are deaf. The world is filled with millions of people who do not understand deafness, but a school that has access to resources for and about deafness has no excuse for restricting the child's learning.

Satisfaction in life can be contingent on the experiences a student has while in school. Many times, school has been especially hard for students who are deaf because

they have been labeled as disabled. They have long been denied the same opportunities to compete for appropriate resources. School should provide the building blocks that help to ensure life satisfaction and help to foster a reduction of negative outcomes in the future. Erikson mentions that children need to strengthen an “accrued confidence” at his identity stage (Erikson, 1950, p. 261). For a child who is deaf, this means that he/she needs multiple accomplished opportunities early on, if they are going to have future a filled with positive life experiences. A strong identity nurtured in school can provide individual strength for initiating intimacy and reliance on others. Erikson points out however, that if a sense of identity is not achieved, then he is not ready for “concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments” (Erikson, 1950, p. 263). Without an identity, students will learn to close themselves off from the world.

#### *Stage Failure Consequences*

If a person has learned to isolate themselves from other people, the next stage of Generativity versus Stagnation is almost impossible to achieve. While this is a stage that comes about later in life, it is dependent on the previous stages’ accomplishments. If the deaf population is going to continue to achieve successes and open opportunities for living a full life, they need the positive experiences of generations before them.

Generativity “is primarily the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation” (Erikson, 1950, p. 267). Deaf Culture bases their existence on community and hence Generativity. With successful role models who are also deaf, the younger generation of individuals who are deaf will learn that they too can achieve their goals in life. All too often children who are deaf receive messages or information later than hearing children,



but with experienced adults who are deaf guiding them they can achieve more and sooner than past generations did. Everyone needs the feeling of belonging and purpose nurtured in their life—otherwise what was such a short life worth?

Once again, a person who has felt unaccomplished in earlier stages of development will not fully experience the final stage of Ego Integrity versus Despair. If the deaf are deprived of a full and proper education during the earlier stages of development they run the risk of developing problems in their later years. This lack of development could then lead to despair at the end years of life because only true ego integrity is found in “him who in some way has taken care of things and people and has adapted himself to the triumphs and disappointments adherent to being” (Erikson, 1950, p. 268). Realistically, most people will not achieve everything they had planned for in their life. The key is to feel that overall it was successful, meaningful and fulfilling—even with experiencing a few shortcomings.

#### *Supportive Related Research*

Erikson’s developmental theory has been used when understanding the nature of vocational behavior. Munley (1975) points out that with Erikson’s eight developmental stages, individuals “must face and cope with a central psychosocial problem or crisis”; and guides them into a vocation (p.318). These stages also aid the development of an “individual’s psychosocial effectiveness and subsequent personality” (Munley, 1975, p. 318). These factors are what help an individual fit into their particular vocation. Thus, Munley (1975) found that “individuals who show adjusted vocational choices [also] demonstrate a higher level of psychosocial development across Erikson’s first six stages than do individuals with problem vocational choices” (p. 318). This emphasizes the

importance of providing an educational setting which addresses the effective development of Erikson's stages, especially for a historically ignored population like the deaf. Overall, Munley's (1975) findings support Erikson's theory that "individuals who are more successful in resolving the stage crises and developing positive stage resolution attitudes are more successful in coping with age-appropriate decisions and developmental tasks" (p. 319).

Other research has also highlighted the importance of Erikson's stages in planning for future occupational fit and enculturation. Hershenson (1967) followed Erikson's discovery of identity in adolescence and discovered that only when an individual has "adopted his society's patterns and processes" can an identity be fully established (Hershenson, 1967, p. 323). For an individual who is deaf, the process of understanding and fitting into a hearing world is a lot more complicated than if they were hearing. Hershenson (1967) points out that a child needs to achieve this understanding or the formation of an identity is hindered. While Hershenson did not talk about deaf culture, the benefits of adopting that culture could be assimilated to his research because of the easier method of adopting that community's structure. Once an individual is able to establish their identity, they can figure out their future occupation and the value they place on it in their life—if their other psychosocial stages have also been successfully accomplished.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT

In the last twenty years there has been a renewed interest in the psychological work of Russian born Lev S. Vygotsky (1836-1936). Because of this interest he has emerged as one of the major psychologists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Werch, 1998). One of the major themes of Vygotsky's theoretical work is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Additionally, a crucial aspect of his theory is that the potential for cognitive development depends upon what he calls the "zone of proximal development". This area is attained when the child engages in social behaviors. Vygotsky's work in cultural psychology can offer us much insight into the issues that face our society today, especially with the diverse populations that we work with. To completely understand how this theory developed however, Vygotsky's history must be presented.

In learning about Vygotsky's background we can see why his works were suppressed and hidden away. Vygotsky was a Jewish man who experienced limited educational opportunities in his home country of Russia. At that time only 5% of the Jewish population was allowed to enter a university. Although Vygotsky was on one of the few permitted to attend school, he was unable to fulfill his ambition of teaching. Instead, he studied medicine, philosophy, history, and law and expanded his scientific expertise between the years of 1913 and 1917 (Clabaugh, 2007). We must keep in mind that Jews in Russia were not normally as fortunate during this time. In fact, Jews were

not allowed to practice law without a special permit. The Russian Orthodox Church was the country's main religious organization. Additionally, between 1881 and 1914 there was a mass emigration of more than 50,000 Jews each year that left Russia. Soon after this time, the Russian Revolution of 1917 was another significant event disrupting the culture of Russia and even though Jews were finally granted citizenship, there were anti-Jewish riots throughout most of the country.

Vygotsky's work was not fully appreciated in Russia during his time since he was not appreciated as a Jewish man. It seems contradictory however, since many of Vygotsky's theories in child development and educational psychology was reported as influenced by his belief in Marxism. Ironically, Marxism at this time was appreciated. This was a philosophy that emphasized the importance of one's social origins and place in the scheme of life (Springer Netherlands, 1999). Vygotsky, like Marx, believed that society was more important than the individual. Nonetheless, Vygotsky's work was not published until after his death. In fact, two years later his work was suppressed and kept in a secret library that could only be accessed by permission of the Peoples Commissariat for Intern Affairs (Blunden, 1999-2008). Thus, Vygotsky was not as well known and appreciated as he could have been, until now.

Fortunately Lev Vygotsky's works survived and his theory of education has also become a popular theory within the 21<sup>st</sup> century, though it has not been as influential in the area of special education (Gindis, 1999). In his view, the same social and cultural goals as general education programs should be applied to special education. He felt that both should follow the same principles. There appears to be a disconnect in applying his theories to that of special education even though Vygotsky has been noted as finding

special education to be of a significant stature for both his professional and personal life (Vygodskaya & Lifanova, 1996). Special education was where Vygotsky was able to obtain research that supported his general theoretical concepts. He saw special education as the place where general psychological laws were “discovered on the basis of various anomalies” (Gindis, 1999). The difficulty in applying Vygotsky’s theories to special education may reside in the fact that many researchers have interpreted his work differently. Important to mention for the purpose of this paper, is that work with special education during Vygotsky’s time (in Russia) covered only the following disabilities: children who were hard of hearing or deaf, children who were visually impaired or blind, children with mental retardation, and children who were speech-language impaired (Gindis, 1999). Special education did not include psychopathology nor learning disability or emotional disturbance (Gindis, 1999). This clarification may also contribute to the difficulty found in combining special education and Vygotsky—but it should be less so for this study.

The area of Vygotsky’s research that did include special education became known as Defectology (Gindis, 1999). Unfortunately, this word does not have a real parallel in the English language and sounds demeaning since it literally means “study of defect” (Gindis, 1999). As once noted by a U.S. scholar, “This term would not survive 3 minutes in a discussion of the handicapped in the Western world today because it carries too much negative connotation toward the disabled” (McCagg, p. 40, 1989). Naturally, in reference with the deaf population this choice of wording is taken offensively. Readers should take into consideration however, that this reference is a sign of the times. On the other hand, it should be realized that the connotation presented here is about

discrimination for individuals who are deaf. Just as there are common words used in jest, but have racial underpinnings; so too has this Audistic choice in words continued the process of oppression for individuals who are deaf. Discrimination has become so deeply ingrained into society that even a person's choice of word can be hurtful and yet unrealized. Despite Vygotsky's unconsciously discriminating choice of words and lack of sensitivity to the needs of individuals who are deaf, his method of understanding individuals like the deaf was groundbreaking and meant to be accommodating.

Vygotsky saw a "disability" not as a biological impairment having psychological consequences, but as a sociocultural developmental phenomenon (Gindis, 1999). As mentioned previously, Vygotsky believed that individuals who are deaf only see themselves as different when they are placed in a context where they are made to feel that way. Vygotsky realized that it is the social context that places apart individuals who are deaf. He (1983) believed an impairment of any physical organ, "leads to a restructuring of social relationships and to a displacement of all the systems of behavior" (p. 63). In his view, it is not the person with an impairment who is lacking and needs to change; it is the community that they live in which needs a new system to work with that individual. Additionally, when different cultures and social environments (including Deaf Culture) are taken into account, the individual again may require restructuring of development around them so that they are able to develop a bicultural identity. Vygotsky was alive in a time when Deaf Culture was less structured and thus a limited area of study. This means, Vygotsky saw deafness as most problematic since it prevented the mastering of speech, blocked verbal communication, and barred entry to the world of culture. Today, however, with the development of a strong and unified Deaf Culture these blocks can be

less apparent. Society however, is the one that needs to learn from Deaf Culture that this population is on equal footing as hearing individuals. If this understanding is adopted, then the education of children who are deaf can be better implemented in this hearing world. Again, it is not the individual's problem to overcome so much as it is society's duty to restructure.

For interactions within the classroom, Vygotsky envisioned a specific role for the teacher when working with individuals who are deaf. He believed that "the teacher must deal not so much with these biological factors by themselves, but rather with their social consequences. Vygotsky believed special education should provide a setting where the entire staff was able to exclusively serve the individual needs of the child with a disability" (Gindis, 1999, p. 339). This is the kind of philosophy that a school for the Deaf embraces because it believes in supporting the individual in their deafness.

Vygotsky explained this further with the disability of blindness. When there is a boy who is blind as the object of education, then it is necessary to deal not so much with blindness by itself, as with those conflicts which arise for a blind child upon entering life" (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 102). Based on this thinking, Vygotsky established the core concepts of: the primary disability, the secondary disability, and their interactions. A primary disability "is an organic impairment due to biological factors. Secondary disability refers to the distortions of higher psychological functions due to social factors" (Gindis, 1999). As a result of the organic impairment, the child has difficulty mastering social skills and acquiring knowledge in the traditional rate and form. Society has traditionally seen this difficulty as an abnormality in behavior and has thus predisposed these individuals' knowledge, experiences and opportunity to acquire psychological tools

(Gindis, 1999). Vygotsky (1995) believed that changing societal attitudes about individuals with disabilities should be one of the goals of special education. The recognition of positive capacities and qualitative characteristics in the upbringing of children with disabilities is the essence of Vygotsky's view. A school for the Deaf does this simply because they eliminate peer differences in deafness; everyone has the same opportunity to communication and thus, future experiences.

In fact, through Vygotsky's cultural view, individuals who are deaf are not seen as missing normal development. He wrote (1983), "a child whose development is impeded by a disability is not simply a child less developed than his or her peers; rather, he has developed differently" (p. 96). Students who are deaf require a different approach to education because they do not experience and learn life strategies in the same way as their hearing peers. Vygotsky saw a development in higher psychological functions as a way to overcome the obstacles produced from failed natural functions (deafness). He stated that "training sharpness of hearing in a blind person has natural limitations; compensation through the mightiness of the mind (imagination, reasoning, memorization, etc) has virtually no limits" (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 212). Vygotsky envisioned the future of education to be able to create a disability-specific profile that could help support children with disabilities in a social context that fit their specific needs. He also believed that special education programs should require the same sociocultural goals as a general education so as to form a unified system (Gindis, 1999).

In Vygotsky's writing "Defect and Compensation", he wrote about the two sides of a handicap (a word of his choosing): an underdevelopment or absence of the functions related to an organic defect and formation of an adaptive-compensatory mechanism. The



effectiveness of this mechanism depends on the adequacy and timeliness of the methods of correction used in educating the child. The focus of the compensation should be the intensification of cultural enlightenment, strengthening of the higher psychological functions, the quantity and quality of communication with adults, and social relationship with a collective (i.e., an organized group of peers). For the development of an effective self and formation of positive collective relationships, there needs to be communication and this can and does include American Sign Language. Vygotsky actually discussed how different tools for communication can convey the same educational information and meaning. He said, “Different symbolic systems correspond to one and the same content of education. [...] Meaning is more important than the sign, let us change signs but retain meaning” (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 54). Sign Language was thus recognized as a sign that accommodated the needs of individuals who are deaf. With Sign Language, a child who is deaf is also better able to move into their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1993).

#### *ZPD Explanation*

Vygotsky used three basic concepts to explain how development comes about as a consequence of education: zone of proximal development (ZPD), internalization and mediation. Mediation is the way human intellect operates by using instruments such as signs and symbols that play an instrumental role in mediating between human participants and the objects on which they act. In education, “the child imitates the teacher through a process of re-creating previous classroom collaboration” (Gredler & Shields, 2004, p. 22). Internalization explains why the ZPD leads to developmental progress (van Geert, 1998). For the purpose of this paper, the ZPD will be highlighted.

While Vygotsky was not the first to realize that children are more able to learn with guidance from an adult or more experienced peer, he did establish this idea into a theoretical generalization known as the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1991) believed that “it is not only what the child can do himself that is indicative of the child’s mind and its development; what he can do with help from others is to some extent even more indicative” (p. 398). Additionally, Vygotsky’s theory points to three categories of problem solving skills when considering the ZPD: those performed independently by the student; those that cannot be performed even with help; and those which fall between the two extremes, the tasks that can be performed with help from others (21st Century Schools, 2004). Even in play, Vygotsky pointed out ZPD learning shows that “a child behaves beyond his or her average age” and that “play creates a ZPD of the child” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102).

Vygotsky saw two levels in development. The first level was referred to as the actual developmental level; “the level of development of a child’s mental functions that has been established as a result of certain already completed developmental cycles” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The second level is the Zone of Proximal development:

The distance between the actual development level as determined by the independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)

Effective intervention within the ZPD involves both a graduated and contingent help.

Graduated refers to the appropriate level of assistance and encouragement within the dyad of a more experienced member and a novice. The purpose is to give a minimum amount of guidance. Contingent help therefore, means that help should be offered only

when it is needed and withdrawn as soon as the novice shows signs of independent learning (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994, p.468). It can often be tempting for an educator to offer more than guidance and actually do the work for the child (especially if the child is struggling academically due to their deafness), but an appropriate educational setting can challenge this. Furthermore, it is within the adult guidance and child pairing that the adult adopts responsibility for the child's growth while attuning to the pace of the child. In order to execute this process in both a graduated and contingent way, the Vygotskian perspective believes that the ideal role of the teacher is to provide scaffolding (collaborative dialogue), reciprocal teaching or guided instruction to assist students on tasks within their ZPD (Hamilton & Ghatala, 1994, p. 277). Scaffolding refers to:

The process that provides higher levels of initial support for students as they enter the ZPD with the gradual dismantling of the support structure as students progressed towards independence. Eventually the scaffold would disappear and a new one be built to help construct the next stage of learning. (Harland, 2003, p. 268)

While using the scaffold method, there are also different roles and steps that the student and teacher assume. The teacher provides modeling behavior for the student and the student imitates that behavior. A fading of direct instruction by the teacher also helps the student learn to pick up the teaching and master it independently. It is important for the teacher to build interest and engage the student while they are modeling behavior. Once the student is actively participating, then the task should be broken down into smaller subtasks. Keeping the student focused at this time will help them to concentrate on the important ideas of the assignment. Additionally, one of the most integral steps in scaffolding is to keep the student from becoming frustrated. It is the obligation of the teacher to then model how the task is completed successfully and without anguish (Feden

& Vogel, 2006, p.189). Schools have traditionally used recitation as their teaching method. It is important in Vygotsky's view that the teacher does not control the class with rule and structure in a mechanical memorization way, but with collaboration, support and direction (Hamilton & Ghatala, 1994, p. 277). Especially for children who are deaf has it been easy for teacher in a mainstream setting to want to control and do the work for the child. This is often because the teacher is unable to fully communicate her/his expectations and becomes frustrated. Within reciprocal teaching with good communication, students can work collaboratively as they take turns being the teacher for a pair or small group—allowing room for independent thinking.

Vygotsky believed that “learning awakens a variety of internal development processes” and that “properly organized learning results in mental development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). He emphasized the importance of history and culture on development because of its benefits toward learning. Davydov and Kerr (1995) reported that Vygotsky asserted that specific functions are not given to a person at birth but are only provided as cultural and social patterns. Vygotsky saw “intellectual abilities as being much more specific to the culture in which the child was reared” (Kristinsdóttir, 2008). He realized that people adapt to their surrounding environment based on their previous experiences and interpretations of that event (Fosnot, 1996). Therefore, people gain knowledge as they interact with other people and learn from these experiences.

In his text *Thought and Language*, Vygotsky explained the two patterns that set the stage for learning. The first is “potential concepts”, a certain body of experience that individuals have accumulated over the course of their life activities (Vygotsky, 1982).

They are not part of intellectual education, but are possible under certain circumstances. With the right mechanism of generalization these potential concepts can become true concepts. The second type of pattern is a “pseudo-concept” that is composed of various types and levels of generalizations (Vygotsky, 1982). Therefore, when generalizations from culture are possible, learning is possible. Education based on the ZPD involves these encounters or then there is nothing to further generalize and learn (Berejkovskaya, 2006, p.2).

Vygotsky realized that there is also value in making mistakes during learning. During the process of concept formation these mistakes are made and can impact future learning (Wellings, 2003). The thought is that a child will make sense of the world and gain knowledge by how they experience and manipulate their encounters—they have to change their egocentric thinking for reality.

A problem with potential concepts arises for individuals who are deaf because they are often left behind when it comes to early experiences—too many mistakes. The occurrences that many hearing children come into contact with are usually understood through communication and even accidental encounters. A child who is deaf, may not have the chance to communicate as well or even accidentally with the majority (especially if their parents are hearing). Children who are deaf, however, do not lack the capability of acquiring their potential concept; they may only lack the means to gain it. Just as with any child, a child who is deaf will construct their own meaning based on an interaction between their prior knowledge (however or whenever that was acquired) and their current learning experiences (Harland, 2003, p. 266). The student needs only to learn to ask questions about their learning and compare against their own experience.

Vygotsky saw development in the above mentioned patterns through a cultural lens. For the Deaf community this cultural incorporation could also include Deaf Culture (despite Vygotsky's belief in one harmonious culture). In fact, development is only seen successful once it has achieved two stages, "first on the social and then on the psychological plane, first between people, as an interpsychic category, and then within the child, as an intrapsychic category" (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 145). For a child who is deaf, social interaction through Vygotsky's method is only possible when there is fluent communication—possibly with American Sign Language. Vygotsky believed that "language was not only a cognitive tool of communication, but that the use of the tool has shaped our cultural evolution" (Yang, n.d.).

Texts written by Vygotsky stated that "any higher mental function was external because it was social before it became an internal, properly mental function; it was previously a social relation between two people" (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 145). Thus, social relationships are most important and the essences of the interpsychic function—even for individuals who are deaf. Additionally, the creation of the interpsychic form of a higher mental function is only possible where the intentions of the child and of the adult intersect in the body of a sign, symbol or tool (Zuckerman, 2007, p. 6). The interaction is not only to be "a developed (adult) mind meets an underdeveloped (childlike) mind, but that it is precisely different minds that meet" (Zuckerman, 2007, p. 6). It is believed that there must be a "process of harmonization or coordination of the two intents of the interaction [that] leads to a result that is interesting, unexpected, and notable from the point of view of each participant in the interaction" (Zuckerman, 2007, p. 6). Moreover, the interaction works on problem solving as its central task that intends to advance the

child's capacity for abstract thinking (Vygotsky, 1987). It is here, that even the adult experiences something new because he/she has to adjust their action to the action of their particular student in a way that allows a reaction in the place where both participants meet (Zuckerman, 2007, p. 9). The child must also contribute by adding in his own initiative. If they do not, facilitation from an adult or more mature peer is fruitless. Further, if he does not understand the task it is possible that he/she is out of range of their ZPD (Veresov, 2000).

Society has historically believed that “what indicates the degree of development of the child's mind is his ability to solve tasks independently, without outside help. If he was asked leading questions or shown how to tackle the task...or if the teacher began the task and the child completed it or solved it in collaboration with other children—in short, if the child deviated even a little from solving the task independently, then his performance is no longer [considered] indicative of the development of his mind” (Vygotsky, 1991, p. 398). ZPD however, points out that the idea of developmental teaching is not a description of naturally occurring processes, “but the draft design of quite another interaction” (Zuckerman, 2007, p.23-24). The importance is found in what is present in the child at the moment of interaction:

A latent (hidden from the observer) world picture; a means of constructing this picture, a means of connecting the atoms of experience into the sensation (knowledge) of his own continuity and self-identity; an inclination toward the transformation of this picture on the basis of his experience of action and interaction; an inclination toward a definite form of material interaction with a teaching adult; and a capacity for initiating and maintaining this form of interaction. (Zuckerman, 2007, p. 23-24)

In close examination of Vygotsky's texts, we can conclude that he believed that “future learning independence of the school graduate is not how much material is mastered in the

first (fourth, seventh) grade or how many tasks from the textbook the child can solve on his own or with help from an adult. What is important is what he himself, on his own initiative, does with this knowledge or ability” (Zuckerman, 2007, p. 24).

### *Criticism of ZPD*

One of the first complaints about implementing the ZPD in an educational setting arises when it is used for the mastery of elementary literacy. Children who are taught sound analysis of words in their native language encounter a problem when they realize that the sound is nothing like the written word. It is believed that children need to learn rules of grammar to master this disconnection from sound and print; “which falls outside the zone of proximal development, [and] is somewhat beyond the particular capabilities of six-year-olds, so it is much harder and demands great effort both on the part of the pupil and the teacher. A rule is often beyond children’s comprehension and has to be drilled mechanically” (Berejkovskaya, 2006, p.8). For a child who is deaf, there is also a struggle with the sounding of a word when learning pronunciation, but obviously they are unable to pick up on word sounds they “hear”. Typically, they do not have prior experience with “overhearing” patterns of pronunciation, so rules are often used for aiding their speech (that is, if he/she or their family wants the child to learn speech—which is not always the case).

The second place where there is found to be difficulty when using the ZPD, is in elementary arithmetic. For example, when there is “difficulty adding two and three digit numbers in their head, teachers and parents often remedy the situation by teaching children to do the work ‘in columns’ on paper. [...] This is not surprising, as the ability to perform actions of this type, ordering actions that involve a simple algorithm, lies within



the zone of proximal development for eight and nine year old children” (Berejkovskaya, 2006, p.9). The problem arises when later in life these children are faced with more complex mathematical problems and the simple column rule will not help them. For example, in order to calculate a percentage of a number, there has to be an understanding of percents (Berejkovskaya, 2006, p.10). Children are not being shown what the meaning is of the numbers they are manipulating if the ZPD is followed here. Additionally, it is believed that there is a “danger in giving pupils a means of action before they are aware of the need for it” because adults often “desire to teach children something as early as possible and as well as possible” (Berejkovskaya, 2006, p. 11). For example, critics state that a child should learn what the decimal places mean before they are given methods to manipulate the problems.

A third criticism arises in the concern that the ZPD method may favor more of a student’s personality development rather than the mastery of academic discipline (Berejkovskaya, 2006, p 11). Critics have stated that concern for a child’s undesirable behavior could appear if a child begins to act out within the ZPD. Children at the older preschool age are developing a readiness to take on a personal position of association and may display inappropriate behavior. While this is within the ZPD, the reinforcement and method of guidance usually provided in a ZPD structure could develop a true personality focused on misbehavior because they are unaware of the meaning behind the child’s actions. Critics suggest that there needs to be neither positive nor negative reinforcement from adults so that the behavior will prove “to be situational and fleeting, with little significance” (Berejkovskaya, 2006, p. 14). In other words, some critics believe that misbehavior needs to be better understood before it is dealt with socially.

Predictably, critics state that the concern remains that the potential concepts mentioned above and a given experience's generalization "has nothing to generalize and works to no purpose, becoming an end in itself" (Berejkovskaya, 2006, p. 15). There comes a time when some believe there are not enough encounters to fully facilitate more learning within the ZPD. Children need a basis to work from and some critics believe children cannot gain all of their knowledge through encounters.

Critics have also expressed concerns about scaffolding and how it "leaves open questions for children's creativity" and that "children's development is circumscribed by the adults' achieved wisdom" (Griffin & Cole, 1984, p. 47). Vygotsky defined scaffolding instruction as the "role of teachers and others in supporting the learner's development and providing support structures to get to that next stage or level" (Raymond, 2000, p.176). The belief is that the restrictions in scaffolding could hinder creativity since it defines a goal and uses various constructed strategies in achieving the goal. Some people believe that there should be more room for independent growth.

Vygotsky's methods and approaches in education are often compared to that of Jean Piaget's since they both offer explanations for children's cognitive learning styles and abilities. Vygotsky did admire Piaget's detailed pictures of children's thinking, his assertion that development occurs in distinct, measurable, and observable stages, his focus on what children have, not what they lack, and his finding that difference between adults' and children's thinking is qualitative, not quantitative (Vygotsky, 1962). Piaget however, believed that the child is the maker of his or her own development, while Vygotsky emphasized the role of teaching and guidance and the formative effects of culture and society (van Geert, 1998). Vygotsky did not see biological and social

development as isolated from one another (Mace, 2005) like Piaget did. Piaget also saw learning as a result from both mental and physical maturation plus experience (Moll, 1990, p. 50). This means that Piaget saw development preceding learning while Vygotsky observed learning processes leading development (Moll, 1990, p. 50). Vygotsky communicated, “learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human, psychological functions” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). Though these researchers view cognitive development in children differently, they both offer good strategies on how to teach materials in a developmentally appropriate way.

#### *Supportive Related Research*

Despite the criticism that has followed some of Vygotsky’s work, additional research has proven to support the techniques he observed and outlined. For example, in Cesar’s work (2006) on exclusion to inclusion he highlights the positive effects on school systems when working collaboratively in Vygotsky’s ZPD. Cesar has pointed out that as schools are changing over to more inclusive environments, they have to become more multicultural and prepared for students categorized as having Special Educational Needs.

Cesar focused on Vygotsky’s importance of social interactions during the development of complex functions in children—a key aspect when working in the ZPD. He notes that in his subsequent studies (Cesar, 1998), and he also outlines the importance of collaborative work in knowledge appropriation and in the mobilization and development of students’ competencies (Cesar, 2006, p. 335). In 2003, Cesar had also discovered the contributions of collaborative work when students learned to negotiate meanings, roles, arguments, or solving strategies in order to co-construct their knowledge

and their identities. Cesar also pointed out that through Vygotsky's method, all students (even those under Special Education) are given "a voice, allowing them to become legitimate participants, engaged in relevant learning decisions, including the evaluation process" (Cesar, 2006, p. 335). It is here that Cesar realizes the importance of working with children to help facilitate their development. The same thought process can be related to individuals who are deaf. If they are incorporated more as collaborators in the educational process, they will also follow Cesar's observations of higher levels in development. By working together, students also learn "that diversity can contribute to every single student's development, making them profit from one another's characteristics" (Cesar, 2006, p. 342). In closing, Cesar also discovered that the use of Vygotsky's method lead to an impact not "only during their time in school but also in their broader life projects and in their expectations towards their future. This was particularly decisive for students who were at risk of exclusion, whether these were SEN-related, came from poor backgrounds or showed disruptive behaviors" (Cesar, 2006, p. 343).

In another study with the use of Vygotsky concepts, there have been benefits pointing to enhanced development. Since Vygotsky believed that mental processes are first introduced to the child within a social context, Morelock et al (2003) was prompted to investigate the interaction between child and caregiver. Morelock et al (2003) discovered that through facilitated pretend play there is a connection to cognitive and language development.

During these interactions, Morelock et al (2003) also pointed out that mothers were able to respond to cues about their children's developing competence by providing

hints for extending play. Due to these kinds of interactions, children tended to exhibit advanced reasoning abilities. Through their studies with gifted children, Morelock et al (2003) found mothers using play materials and actions both to support and challenge their children's memory and reasoning skills. Morelock et al (2003) believe that these early experiences could be the beginning of abstract thought. In fact, Morelock et al (2003) pointed out that if children with a hearing impairment were given the same opportunity in communication they too might access greater development. Ultimately, Morelock et al (2003) emphasized the importance in quality of mother-child pretend play interactions in order to extend the child's development—a vision rooted in Vygotsky's belief that knowledge is extended when collaboratively guided.

Research with individuals who are deaf and Vygotsky has also proven effective in development from studies by Plessow-Wolfson et al (2005). It has been discovered that “deaf children of deaf parents generally have better language abilities than deaf children of hearing parents” (Plessow-Wolfson et al., 2005, p. 369). This fact is often connected to feelings of powerlessness and future controlling, non-mediating parental communications and poor functioning in school (Plessow-Wolfson et al., 2005, p. 369). Vygotsky's theory on collaboration with a mentoring figure is brought into the child's learning and supported as promoting “cognitive development and enjoyment of mutuality” (Plessow-Wolfson et al., 2005, p. 375). Plessow-Wolfson et al (2005) found that children in their study who scored within their age range had also interacted in a reciprocal relationship with their parents during story time (p. 375). Parents working collaboratively made “sure their children understood the text” (Plessow-Wolfson et al., 2005, p. 376). The children who participated also showed that they enjoyed the project

and thus confirmed: “story reading is an excellent framework for both cognitive and emotional growth within the parent/child dyad” (Plessow-Wolfson et al., 2005). It is Vygotsky (1978) who considered affect and intellect to be interrelated components: “Every idea contains a transmuted affective attitude toward a bit of reality to which it refers” (p. 10). Any child who enjoys learning will aspire to do it more.

## CHAPTER SIX

### DISCUSSION

Education is more than only learning academics (even though that is fundamental); it also involves developing into an identity that includes a future contributor of society. Erikson and Vygotsky were two significant thinkers of their time who also realized how essential academic learning was in a child's development, but not as the lone utility in life. The same is true for children who are deaf, yet they have traditionally been given less attention for their needs beyond the special education category (Cole, 2005). Not all students who are deaf have learning disabilities that need them to receive a modified education. During the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, more schools for the deaf were developed and helped to give the deaf population more opportunities (Schools for the Deaf in the United States, 1900 as cited by van Drenth, 2003). For centuries before, students who were deaf faced discrimination because of their difference from the dominant culture and were referred as "deaf and dumb". Even today, perceptions of the deaf population are often clouded by ignorance and a failure to understand the special needs of this population. Some people are even unaware of how prejudice they are toward individuals who are deaf. For example, members of the deaf community refer to their community as being from the planet "eyeth" because of how isolated they feel living on the hearing "earth". Parents of children who are deaf face a

struggle in educating their children at a residential school for the deaf and hard of hearing versus a local public inclusion option because of the unsettled divide between the hearing world and the Deaf world. Parents of children who are deaf continue to struggle to decide where their child will succeed academically, socially, and personally (identity achievement). Hopefully, this paper has clarified these areas for helping parents make a decision while considering the previously mentioned theorist and their theory of learning development.

### *Erikson*

Erikson's stages of industry versus inferiority, identity versus role confusion, and intimacy versus isolation are all main points during development when education is most vital. In industry versus inferiority, Erikson talked about the child's move out of play and into the beginning stages of an employment world. Erikson saw school as the first steps to preparing for the workforce and the skills needed to maintain success as an adult. Even athletics were seen as a display of appeasing a child's growing need to become industrious and not a "failure" in the life ahead (Ginsburg, 1992). Children who enter into a school are also now exposed to a larger number of peers and older students. It was considered, by Erikson, that this exposure proved beneficial since younger students are able to model after the accomplishments of older students and share obligation (Erikson, 1950, p. 258). Those children who do not achieve these developmental tasks find that they will always have a sense of inadequacy and inferiority (Erikson, 1950, p. 260). Erikson does remind people however, that it takes a balance of each pole within the stage



to be successful. A child is not successfully developed when they are overly industrious; they need a mix and experience of inferiority too. Nonetheless, the importance of avoiding too much inferiority relies in the fact that adopting this pole may discourage identification with peers—dooming themselves to inadequacy. Erikson pointed out that a school child is already exceedingly aware of their “awkward” presence in the world; to fail at industrious acts in school could feel as committing their self even more to persecution and thus, isolation.

Children are learning and developing their identity often based on the feedback they receive from peers. Erikson’s stage of identity and role confusion is heightened as the child grows into their middle school years. The experiences they have had thus far start to form their identity in relation to career and future. Sometimes, when a child is unable to figure out their identity, Erikson believed that the child tries to mask this by “falling in love” and hoping to find an identity in the other person. Realistically, this can leave the child feeling empty for the rest of their life.

In intimacy versus isolation, Erikson talked about the healthy development of connecting with another person. Here the child learns more intimately about compromising with another person (Erikson, 1950, p. 263). If the child is unable to connect with another person, isolation and self-absorption are again threatening formation of identity. Possibly, the reason a child may not connect with another person is because of the lack of opportunity and they are forced into a more self-sufficient and self-absorbed identity (i.e. lack of communication).

## *Vygotsky*

Vygotsky's view on learning also mentioned the importance of connection with other people. In his concept the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) Vygotsky established that children are more able to learn through guidance and collaboration from an adult or more experienced peer (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Vygotsky believed that in problem solving everyone had a knowledge base, skills that they could not perform (even with help) and the area in between the two extremes (ZPD). Within the area between the knowledge base and skills unable to perform is an inclination of knowledge from prior experience that enables guidance to be influential and thus, establishing the ZPD.

The ZPD is an extension in learning, but still in the range of capability for that person. It is an area beyond the child's current and independent knowledge where potential development is cultivated and eventually moved into full independent knowledge (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994, p. 468). In order to properly activate the ZPD, Vygotsky had a few methods for enacting the progress of a person's ZPD. For education specifically, he believed in using scaffolding. This method ensured that educators work in a gradual way, ensuring a support structure that dismantled slightly with each advance and allow for a new one that promoted the next stage of learning (Harland, 2003, p. 268). Ultimately, the goal is for the child/student to be able to perform the task independently. The educator in this dynamic acts as a model and helps the student to avoid becoming frustrated. While the teacher is working to demonstrate a learning activity, they must also focus on avoiding complete control of the situation. Vygotsky stressed the

importance of collaboration in this process and not a mechanical structure where the teacher talks at the student and not with the student. The student needs to add his or her own initiative in the learning process or guidance from the teacher is less effective.

In addition to the typical school educators, Vygotsky believed in collaboration and connection to society's community for learning. It is society that provides experiences and guidance before school knowledge is fully accessed (Kristinsdóttir, 2008). People are a product of their environment and have historically developed according to their surroundings. Knowledge is also gained from interactions with other people in the community. These interactions are an essence of the inter-psychic function and are often unpredictable, allowing for mistakes in concept formation. In Vygotsky's view this is a positive experience since it allows a change in egocentrism for reality (Wellings, 2003). As with Erikson's belief in a healthy balance between poles, here too there must be a balance of mistakes and accomplishments—not excessively to one side. It is by experiencing different people (some similar and some different in their own experience) that the person is able to advance their central thinking for more abstract thinking.

Vygotsky believed that once a person's abstract thinking was better established (typically after a graduation); this also opened the possibility to more independent learning. He also pointed out that what was most important after gaining the knowledge was how it was used and what more it could accomplish. Thus, educators who were

involved in guidance of the student were also involved with preparation of the student's future.

### *Phenomenon*

Schools are institutions that have and continue to help develop all students into who they are and will be as adults. This includes many different types of schools from private to public. In fact, it also encompasses many different populations of students, including this paper's focus on individuals who are deaf. The next detail that generally involves schools is how each setting constructs their learning—and if that fits the student.

The decision of school choice for children who are deaf has been an extreme controversy for years. Promoters of the residential schools for the deaf and hard of hearing believe that the children need to be educated where there is free access to communication and Deaf Culture. To be more precise, members of Deaf Culture actually see residential schools as an integral part of Deaf Culture. On the other side, supporters of mainstreaming in public inclusion classrooms believe that children should not be segregated (The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). They believe that because people have to live in a world with differences, they should experience this in a school setting as well. The truth is that more and more parents (including parents who are deaf and those who are hearing) are choosing to send their children who are deaf to the mainstream (Craig & Craig, 1986 as cited by Obrzut, et. a., 1999, p. 238). The reasons for this decision are wide and varied, but for purposes of this paper only the available information on teaching methods and results of these two settings will be synthesized

with Erikson and Vygotsky's theories. Furthermore, information has been matched into three categories: academic achievement, social involvement, and positive life/self-identity.

### *Academic Achievement*

Generally, children who are deaf have not historically gained the same success academically as hearing children. Some attention to mainstreaming has reported that students who are deaf receive better academics because of the state and federal laws they are forced to follow (i.e. passing standardized tests). There is also the fact that a child who learns ASL as their first language has accustomed themselves to a different grammatical structure than English and may struggle more in a mainstream setting if the teacher does also use a language like ASL (Evans, 2004). The child must then learn reading and writing in a second language that they are not exposed to by auditory means (an exposure that helps hearing children develop proper language). Additionally, student who are deaf need to be prepared for life as an adult and schools are partly responsible for teaching this life lesson. The needs of this population for independent living are not the same as a hearing child. This transition from school to work is important since many students who are deaf do not go on to a four-year college or university. In the past, many individuals in this population have not succeeded on the same level in work, continued education, or independent living endeavors as an adult (Bullis et al., 1997, p.348).

### *Social Involvement*

Social Involvement has been one of the greatest challenges for children who are

deaf since they live in a hearing world. They cannot acquire experiences in the same way that hearing children do and this often leaves them isolated (a situation that can add into further difficulties) (Limaye, 2004). Social interaction is an important part of life, but if a student who is deaf is not able to execute this developmental task they are not receiving the skills they need for life. Typically, the reason for the lack of involvement is a lack of effective communication (Limaye, 2004). Even with the presence of an interpreter there can be weak social involvement for a child. Students who are deaf have reported interpreters and paraprofessionals working with these students are often unqualified and act as a barrier to building friendships because of their constant presence (Giangreco et al., 2005).

Unqualified educators of students who are deaf may improperly implement support because of their lack of knowledge on deafness. Miscommunication in this area could lead to trouble or inappropriate behavior from the child (Kusché et al., 1983, p.2). Mainstream schools are often only able to educate a student who is deaf if he/she has a cochlear or hearing aide—a controversial topic in the Deaf community. Without the communication, teachers are easily able to assume that the student is less capable or cultured. Moreover, many students who are deaf find pride in their Deaf Culture and still, many people do not realize it is a culture like any other culture.

#### *Positive Life/Self-Identity*

Many supporters of Deaf Culture believe that the development of this culture has helped to establish more positive life/self-identities of individuals who are deaf.

Experiences in the hearing world have often diminished these identities because of the difficulties hearing people place (often unconsciously) on individuals who are deaf. Students who are deaf need positive experiences in the world to develop properly (just like any child). Schools ideally help to form a self-concept with high self esteem, self-regard, and self-perception. These cannot be formed positively however, if the feedback the students receive from parents, peers, teachers, and other significant persons is filled with discrimination, confusion, or ignorance of deafness (Obrzut et al., 1999, p. 239). Teachers, parents, and relatives are the most influential people in a child's life and still often underestimate their children's hearing difficulties and thus, their children as well (Zheng, 2001, p.2). Positive socialization is often a key component to helping encourage life satisfaction and preventing isolation consequences.

Life satisfaction has often also been affected by the negative influences of a poorly developed self-concept. Every person has a vision of what makes him or her satisfied in life (from objective indicators to internal mechanisms), but what shows more is that low life satisfaction is predictive for the onset of depression (Goffman, 1963 as cited by Kusché et al., 1983, p.154). By having positive experiences during the school years, a child may develop better resiliency when encountering difficult situations.

### *Analysis*

#### *Academic Achievement*

Erikson pointed out that children who are unsuccessful in developing industry during their school years would learn to feel inadequate. Since studies were shown in the

academic section of this paper that children who are deaf are not performing to the same ability academically as hearing children, it is more than possible that inadequacy has set in. As soon as a child who is deaf realizes that they are different from the majority of people, they also start to realize how much easier society is set up for hearing people. Once this realization is adopted internally, the inadequacy that they feel becomes a vicious cycle and further weakens their ability to perform academically. Since it does take more effort for a student who is deaf to succeed in a hearing world, they require a positive outlook (from society) to encourage continued development (or the psychological damaged mentioned previous is more apt to develop). When students attend mainstream schools they are often taught to assimilate with their hearing peers academically, so that they have more opportunity for performing better academically (otherwise teachers and aides have a difficult time understanding the student). The role models that Erikson talked about however, are less and far between in a mainstream school because typically a student who is deaf attends a school where the deaf population is low. Mainstream schools are also not concerned with teaching Deaf Culture to students and have more time available for teaching the academics that Erikson saw as the first steps toward employment.

Erikson also believed that the choice in future employment was based on the student's experiences and forming of identity. The type of identity that a student develops often guides them into a field that they feel passionate when working. If a student has learned inadequacy and isolation however, they often will not persevere



academically and thus limit their employment opportunities. Studies show that a good proportion of this population does not attend four-year colleges and if they do, they do not all finish the program (Bullis et al., 1997, p.348). Part of the reason may also be that children who attend the residential school then attend a more mainstream structured setting in college (unless they attend Gallaudet College). Erikson suggested that individuals who lack a personal identity would then try to find themselves in another person and through “love”. This too may deter a person from continuing their education and/or career paths because they become too involved with that other person. Since many students who are deaf are unable to find many people to connect with if they are mainstreamed, once they do find someone it is not unfair to assume they would want to attach. With possible limited experience in connecting appropriately with another person however, the student who is deaf may be overly self-absorbed in Erikson’s view. A student whose identity is filled with this self-absorbed attitude will not look for help academically—especially where communication is already a struggle.

The basis of Vygotsky’s theory relies on the student’s ability to work collaboratively with a more knowledgeable other. If a student is unable to connect with other people then they will miss out on the information they are suppose to gain from their peers and teachers. Inevitably, if the student does not gain the information he/she needs then they could fail academically. Without a connection on the part of the more knowledgeable other there is also more risk for academic failure. This is especially true when unqualified interpreters have been provided to students in the mainstream setting

and thus may set the student up for failure. Students who are deaf often lack independent knowledge that most of their hearing peers have already gained because hearing children receive more exposure to learning when “overhearing” conversations. Knowledgeable others who lack knowledge and qualification about deafness cannot scaffold the student’s learning because they do not know where the student’s knowledge is starting. The confusion, which results in situations like this, often also leads to frustration; a feeling that Vygotsky warns will stunt a student’s learning. The educator’s frustration could also cause them to do the work for the student. Vygotsky taught that for a student to truly learn, they must take on knowledge independently and not have others do it for them.

### *Social Involvement*

Students who are deaf have to face many obstacles when they are in situations where they are the only deaf person, especially in an educational setting. Erikson saw one of the benefits of school as being given exposure to older and different students that the younger (or less experienced) student could model. This exposure is part of how Erikson believed the student would learn the first steps into employment. However, a student who cannot communicate effectively with their peers cannot fully understand what it is they should be learning. What the student who is deaf may see is that their hearing peer is capable of doing something that they cannot and once again possibly experiencing inadequacy. In adolescence, social involvement is one of the most important tasks for any child and helps them to define who they are in the world (as explained by Erikson). If the child’s peers are not responding positively to him or her,

then the student becomes negatively impacted. All relationships are affected by this confusion and can even adversely affect more intimate relationships where skills like compromise and cooperation are sharpened. Adolescence is already a period of development filled with image concerns; let alone if the child has already learned to feel inadequate—causing even more isolation.

Communication is at the root of enabling effective social interaction with peers, teachers and the larger community. For a student who is deaf and lacks communication, they may also be unable to express their needs, thoughts, and experiences adequately (Limaye, 2004, p.2). While some students benefit from using devices like hearing aides, other students do not or will not use them. Strong promoters of Deaf Culture often state that they see hearing aides as a way to disregard Deaf Pride.

Vygotsky talked about the importance of society and connecting to that culture. He saw the interactions performed in the general community as similar learning opportunities to when a teacher or more knowledgeable peer were guiding a less knowledgeable student into their ZPD. Since a child experiences their community before a school, the involvement should be positive and encouraging of independent knowledge. Vygotsky believed that because of the importance of this interaction there needs to be an effort on the part of society in making conditions more accustomed to the needs of the deaf. In Vygotsky's view, the deaf are only "different" once the hearing world has placed them in that position. Deaf Culture can be seen in this view as the community where individuals who are deaf do not have to feel different. Of course, life is full of

struggles and these can help to define a positive identity because they allow a change in egocentrism.

Social involvement continues beyond the school years and can be positively experienced in the future when the basis in childhood was also successful. Both Vygotsky and Erikson saw the importance of early experiences in developing a successful adult. The more learning experiences a child receives, the better abstract thinking they will have later in life. Then Erikson's later stages of giving back to society can also be achieved.

Erikson's later stage of Generativity versus Stagnation can also be seen as quite similar to Vygotsky's belief in being educated by a more experienced other. The giving back to younger generations that Erikson pointed out in his later stage shows how important he saw social interaction for school-aged children. In Vygotsky's method of having a connection with a more experienced other, the social interaction is also crucial to the success of the student academically.

### *Positive Life/Self-Identity*

As people grow up they are often trying to figure out how the world works, where they fit in and what makes them feel satisfied. Social involvement is a key factor in this development and Erikson goes as far to say that it is one of the most important accomplishments in life. As stated earlier, if a child does not develop a solid identity, then they face discouragement and isolation. Once a child is stricken with a negative identity, they are open to more problems including depression and other mental health

related consequences (as mentioned above). In Erikson's view, these results also restrict a person from developing in the stages that follow the identity versus role confusion stage. Mainstream schools may face the greater possibility of causing a negative self-identity in a child who is deaf because of the lack in Deaf Culture and interactions with other children who are deaf. Schools do not focus enough on supporting peer relationships for these children (Jarvis, 2003). The truth is that in a mainstream setting the child is a minority and forced to be with a one-on-one aide throughout the educational career. This also leaves less opportunity for the student to learn for himself or herself since they always have someone telling them what to do. Students have also reported that they feel a one-on-one aide acts as a barrier from other children interacting with them. In a school for the deaf, children are given more freedom to act themselves and be more independent academically. Independence can help to form the life-satisfaction that they need to live, once the school years have finished. Additionally, whether the child believes that a career or a family (or both) would be life satisfying, they must learn how to interact with people in a hearing world. Of course students who are deaf need to also have interactions with other children like them, but they also have to learn how to negotiate the world around them.

Vygotsky's theory on working collaboratively with a more knowledgeable other is a positive way to first learn how life works. People need to work with each other in order to succeed in life. While some tasks are done independently, there will always be a situation where other people have to be involved. Children in Vygotsky's view should

grow up learning how to use their independent knowledge when in social situations that then helps to expand their knowledge and possibly the knowledge of those around them. This collaboration is also why Vygotsky stressed the importance of society working together in creating a community and supporting the younger generations. While Deaf Culture was not a significant entity in Vygotsky's period, today this Culture shows the importance of pride for self in the deaf community. Individuals who are deaf are living better and more independent lives now than they have in centuries past because of their ability to strive for life satisfaction. This struggle would not be possible however, if they were not able to bond together and make more of their lives. The hearing community needs to do the same for this population.

### *Synthesis*

Life today is more conducive to the needs of individuals who are deaf with all of the technical advances, but there are still more obstacles to overcome. Education is the root of beginning to solve any obstacles that is still present for the deaf population. It is during these early school years and the school that they attend that sets the basis for how well developed a child becomes. How a person learns to handle the obstacles that they will face is in great part learned from the skills a school provides. This is not to say that the parents have no control of how their children grow up, they obviously do, but a school reinforces the life skills needed to be successful people and contributors of society.

In order to enhance the success rate of this population, there needs to be changes

in the educational system. This is true for both a mainstream and a school for the deaf and hard of hearing setting. In a school for the deaf setting there can be changes made to address the population's weaknesses. Since children who are deaf have to live in a hearing society, these children should receive some exposure to that society in the school for the deaf context. Maybe the school could require some of the classes to be combined with local mainstream classes or activities each day. The same could be true for a student who is deaf in the mainstream setting. These children deserve and need some contact with their Deaf Culture; American freedom gives this population the right to know and live this culture. If the mainstream school that they attend does not have a high population of deaf students, then the students who are deaf should be given opportunities to attend at least some of their day to a school for the deaf. Especially students who are profoundly deaf need to be interacting with peers who can communicate through Sign Language because of the importance of social involvement. This could also be a time where the mainstream child gets clarification on information presented to him earlier at the mainstream school. Students who need exposure to other students who are deaf can also attend camps in the summer that are geared just for their population. On the reverse side, if a parent has their child attending a school for the deaf during the year, they might want to send the child to a mixed camp for the summer. All of these options provide the child opportunities to get a balance of success and struggle for their particular stage of development. Furthermore, just because students may be deaf does not mean they should be sheltered from rigorous academics in either setting. They do need special

accommodations, but not in the same way as other students qualified under special education.

When in the classroom setting, Vygotsky's theory may help to provide a basis for initiating change in both school settings. By having the gradual steps in a process of learning, the student is able to work from a knowledge base that they understand and can build upon. This also gives the teacher an opportunity to model the guidance in a way that fits the unique ability of the student. It may also be helpful for the student to have more than one role model who has established a connection with them, which is why the school for the deaf has often been so appealing. At this setting it is free for the child to communicate with everyone they see. At the mainstream setting there may only be one other person who they are connected to in some way, and they may not even understand deafness. This has been open for possible misunderstandings in the past since the child may be a member of Deaf Culture and their understanding in some areas are different from the hearing community. Problems in children are often developed at this point as well because the child becomes frustrated that they are not understood. Vygotsky imagined collaborative work as a compatible relationship between the teacher and the learner. For a student who is deaf, they need to have guidance from someone who is qualified to communicate in Sign Language. A student who is deaf should not be limited in communication. If a child is expected to learn voicing, they should also be given the opportunity to learn a sign language (keeping in mind that ASL does have its own



grammatical structure).

### *Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses*

In conducting this study, there were points in the research that went along well and others that did not. The first hypothesized problem that occurred was the limited research found in comparing the two educational settings. While there was some information available to draw from, it sometimes required an intensive reading and connecting of similar ideas from other readings. I was able to find ample information on these theories separately and ways of using the theories in different scientific ways. Each theory did prove to have similar points and hold a focus on development that was easy to assimilate.

The hardest part about Erikson's development theory is that he never used it with the deaf population. Vygotsky had at least mentioned his interest in special education and how he viewed the deaf population. This made it easier to combine his work with the deaf population, especially in a school setting. Even though Erikson's theory was not geared only toward education, he did mention the importance of it in a person's development. Both theories brought education into their method and allowed for my connection with the deaf population in school. Nonetheless, Erikson looked at the whole development of a child. Vygotsky's theory was more in the educational area as an overall theory, but it could also be applied to all kinds of learning and experiences throughout development. Vygotsky's method also proved to work the best for the deaf population because of the need to create a gradual learning environment for them. Since

the deaf population has typically been misunderstood, there needs to be an education method that works with them and not at them. Erikson's theory helps the teacher realize the internalized dilemmas that a child is going through, but this study helps to acknowledge a step further with deafness added.

When it came to the research on each residential setting, there was also limited information about them individually and comparably. I was unable to find any information where both settings were investigated under similar circumstances with the long-term effects. I was also unable to find that either of the educational settings had a theory applied to it like I did with this study. I was also unable to gather information on the reasons for why parents had decided one setting over the other. Information on whether any student switched back and forth between settings was also not found in the present research. The hardship that a parent experiences in making this decision was also an area outside of this study, but may have shined light onto the process of choosing a school appropriate for their child.

#### *Implications for Social Work*

Social workers work to the needs of their clients, but there are not always social workers that can specify with a particular population like the deaf. The hopes of this study is to show that there are special needs when working with the deaf population, but that does not make them disabled in their capabilities or personhood. Children who are deaf need to figure out their world and learning in a different way than their hearing peers. This does not mean however, that they will not or cannot achieve to the same level

as everyone else in the world. For a social worker to work with this population, they need to understand these differences and the strong connection many individuals who are deaf have with Deaf Culture. Since education is one of the biggest decisions parents can make for their children, social workers can be instrumental at this stage (considering that they know the population and the educational opportunities). With statistics showing that more children who are deaf are attending a mainstream setting, social workers need to be prepared for the emotional risks that may prove more prevalent (i.e. delay in psychosocial development) (Kusché et al., 1983, p.2). Additionally, there is growing concern for members of the Deaf community that their culture will be dissolved with the growing technology in hearing devices. To these people, their deafness is not a defect or disability. A recommendation for the social worker who wants to work with this population is to become familiar with American Sign Language and Deaf Culture even more than this study presents (despite if the parents are hearing or deaf); both to benefit the family and the social worker.

As with working in any therapeutic relationship that involves different cultures, social workers should be aware of their own countertransference. This population has faced many obstacles over the years and continues to show that struggle today. Some of the issues or problems that they face are in relation to the hearing world and how they as individuals who are deaf experience and feel in a world that is not accustomed to difference from the dominant culture.

### *Conclusion*

People who do not understand something like deafness are the ones who develop terms like "Deaf and Dumb". In the case of the deaf population, this misunderstanding can negatively impact the life of this population. With this in mind, Vygotsky's theory offers a method that can help students who are deaf to overcome negative impacts placed on them. The connection established between these partners provides an area of understanding for both the student and teacher; especially if the teacher is hearing. A student who is deaf in Vygotsky's theory will receive an education that is structured to their needs and be able to communicate collaboratively with the more understanding teacher. As of now, students who are deaf are typically not achieving on par with their hearing peers and thus setting up for feelings of inadequacy throughout life. Students who are deaf are not receiving the same encouragement to achieve as their hearing peers and it ultimately impacts his/her career choices later in life. While this study has focused on the teaching of students who are deaf, there also needs to be an initiation in teaching all young children about appreciating/respecting differences. Maybe if the members of society better understood the deaf population, the decision of which school to attend would not be such a hard one.

When it comes to deciding which setting is "best" for a child who is deaf, the answer may not be found for years to come. What has appeared in the course of this research is that there needs to be changes and more care given to this topic. The choice between a residential school for the deaf and hard of hearing and a mainstream public

inclusion setting may not prove conclusive for an entire population, but gaining an independent knowledge about deafness/Deafness will help create an identity that may prevent an entire population from isolation.

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