

THE EFFECTS OF HEARING
ON THE
DEVELOPMENT AND EXPRESSION OF THE SELF

by

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Thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
in
Sociology

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June, 1974
Blacksburg, Virginia

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1974
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my committee members, Professor Richard Scheig, Professor Russ Crescimanno, co-chairmen, and Dr. Charles Ibsen for their assistance, steadfast support, patience and tolerance in this endeavor.

Appreciation is also extended to those members of the Faculty of the Department of Sociology that gave me aid, encouragement and understanding during my graduate study. My thanks also go to my fellow graduate students for the privilege of knowing and working with them.

Special thanks should go to my family, Mr. Robert Hallberg and Mrs. Sonja Hallberg, and my brothers, Robbie Hallberg and Alan Hallberg for their belief in me.

I also wish to express my gratitude to my friends for their tolerance, praise and moral support during my graduate study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The importance of language in the formation and in the maintenance of the 'self' has been postulated by such theorists as Cooley (1902), Mead (1934), Rose (1962), and Stone (1972). In particular, it was Mead who contended that language is the critical mechanism that allows the self to emerge; processually through symbolic interaction. One obvious agent that facilitates language development is hearing. And, if Mead is correct, the ability of an individual to hear is a variable that is related to the development of the concept of self in the individual (Mead, 1934:234).

The problem that we are concerned with here is "What are the effects of hearing on the development and expression of the self concept?" As the investigation seeks to empirically measure and analyze the self concept in terms of the problem statement, the project will consider the impact of the inability to hear on language development and consequently on self and on self definition. Expression of the self concept of an individual reflects that individuals internalized definitions of himself as social object. This develops as he assumes the attitudes of particular 'other' towards himself and as he becomes capable of assuming the perspective of a more "general-

ized other" toward his own behavior. Before going further, then, it is necessary to examine the interplay between self, self concept, hearing and language.

Theoretical Framework

Meadian social psychology views the individual in constant interaction with himself at the same time that he is interacting with others. The behavior that an individual displays in a certain situation is a result of this communication between the individual as a 'subject' treating it-self as an 'object.'

The self that arises in the process of social experience through the mechanism of language... The importance of what we term communication lies in the fact that it provides a form of behavior in which the organism or the individual may become an object to himself...at the same time that he is a subject to himself, and from which the individual experiences himself from the standpoints of other members of the social group to which he belongs...

(Mead, 1956:202-203).

The self that emerges, says Mead, is inherent in this interaction process. Probably the most important point advanced by Mead necessitates understanding the self as process. This emphasizes the continuous 'reflexive' defining process that allows the self to indicate, initiate, and direct the actions of the individual. In other words, the capacity of the individual as subject to treat himself as object is realized through language, and it is this, argues Mead, that pro-

vides one with a self that is most essential in forming and guiding our conduct (Blumer, 1969). Within this process, Mead incorporates three elements; the self, the other, and the vocal gesture, or language.

Briefly, the self finds its meaning only in the response that it calls out in the other. The essential point in this triadic relationship is the vocal gesture or significant symbol which tends to arouse in one's self the same or similar response that is aroused in the other. It is the vocal gesture that allows one to hear what he himself is saying and so to stimulate oneself as an object.

Language is the significant vocal gesture which tends to arouse in the individual the attitude which it arouses in others, and it is this perfecting of the self by the gesture which mediates the social activities that give rise to the process of taking the role of the other...

(Mead, 1934:161).

This process gives rise to the role taking that occurs as the individual is able to respond to himself as he perceives others responding to him on a variety of situations. At this point, then, the self arises through the social meanings accorded the vocal gestures. He is insured conscious control over his behavior as he calls out in himself the same response that he calls out in the other. Moreover, he is often able to guide and direct the behavior of the others as he anticipates the direction of their actions and adjusts and fits his behavior accordingly. In Mead's terms:

...The central nervous system provides a mechanism of implicit response that enables the individual to test out implicitly the various completions of an already initiated act in advance of the completion of the actual act, and thus to choose for himself, on basis of this test-the one which it is most desirable to perform explicitly or carry into overt effect...

(Mead, 1934:117).

The organism enters this experience by becoming an object to himself just as other things and individuals are objects to him or in his experience; and he becomes an object to himself only by "taking the attitudes of others toward himself" in the context of behavior in which both he and the other(s) are involved. In this manner an individual is able to take an objective, "impersonal attitude toward himself". His conception of self is internalized through the definitions made by others in social interaction (Mead, 1934:140).

The process of role-taking is necessary to the development of the self as the organism must take the role of others in order to see himself as an object. He not only assumes these roles individually, but he further organizes them in terms of each other and eventually in terms of the larger community as an organized collectivity.

The game represents the passage in the life of the child from taking the role of others in play to the organized part that is essential to self consciousness in the full sense of the term...

(Mead, 1934:152).

These social values and attitudes are learned from others

primarily through direct experience and constitute the self that is a manifestation of the social group. The personal dimension of the self, the 'I', calls out the social 'me' during the actual course of action. The thought that takes place in this interaction is reflexive, i.e., the subjective 'I' is simultaneously aware of itself as an objective 'me'.

Mead makes the point succinctly:

For the individual organism is an essential and important fact or constituent element of the empirical situation in which it acts; and without taking objective account of itself as such; it cannot act intelligently or rationally...but communication in the sense of significant symbols, that is directed to others as well as the individual himself it introduces a self...But it is where one does respond to that which he addresses to another and where that response of his own becomes a part of his conduct, where he not only hears himself but responds to himself, talks and replies to himself, that we have behavior in which the individuals become objects to themselves...

(Mead, 1934:138-139).

Here Mead emphasizes that the emergence of a fully reflexive self is vitally dependent upon the tool of language as the vehicle that ultimately allows the individual to engage himself as an object. Moreover, he points out that one becomes aware of himself as a social object through a constant communication process that involves making meaningful indications to oneself and others.

Being able to hear one's own voice, we can hypothesize, is thus a vital precondition necessary for fully reflexive self consciousness to develop. If we postulate the inability to

hear and so to verbally stimulate oneself, (as is the case with the deaf), we should expect to find something less than fully reflexive self consciousness and all the encumbrances and complications of interaction that this disability implies. The issue here, then, is to determine the effects of being unable to hear on the development and expression of reflexive self consciousness. With this end in mind, a review of literature is presented in an effort to examine pertinent data documenting the nature of the relationship between hearing (or the inability thereof) and self development.

Review of the Literature

The ability to hear determines or restricts the sensory input that a child may utilize in his development. The receiving apparatus which makes audition possible does not function for the deaf child and he must learn by some other perception the knowledge that other children acquire through hearing (Altshuler, 1967:66-68).

To be born without hearing is to be born without the most powerful developmental mechanism of all—the ability to experience the sound system of the environment in general and the sound system in the realm of human voice in particular. Those that enter this world in a world filled with silence do so without the natural ability to acquire verbal language; and without verbal language, normal human development is blocked.

(Levine, 1960:27).

The most apparent and seemingly significant result of the

inability to hear is the deaf individual's lack of language. The primary mediating channels, audition and vocalization are severely restricted, with the consequence that the symbol system we call language cannot spontaneously germinate and mature (Switzer, 1965:10). The role of hearing in language development and human experience has been presented by Levine when she states:

Because the ear can perceive sound and the brain interpret it, man is enabled to reach out from his own small world of self into the minds, hearts, and worlds of his fellow man...to become one of the company of mankind. He does this through the medium of verbal language; and the miracle of language is the epochal outcome of man's inability to hear...

(Levine, 1965:54).

The inability to hear has its most profound impact on the individual's language experience. One who is deaf and who cannot hear the spoken language remains in a vacuum, unaware of the meanings associated with sound that make one a part of the social world.

It is clear that the ability to hear influences language acquisition. Although a review of the literature revealed no research specifically devoted to the problem statement, a summary of findings that express the differences in hearing and non-hearing individuals will emerge and illustrate the role of language in the self process.

The child who is deaf from birth lacks auditory experience and verbal symbolism. His experiences and growth processes are

established and structured differently from those of his hearing counterparts (Myklebust, 1960:60). In their formative years, children learn the reception and expression of speech language primarily through the ear. When the association between experience and the symbol used for that experience is grasped by the infant, inner language is established and receptive language (that which is understood from others) begins. At this point, the inner and the receptive language simultaneously evolve to the point that expressive language may be possible. Thus, the product of this sequential process is the spoken word which occurs about the 12th or 13th month (Myklebust, 1962:2). Obviously the profoundly deaf child is at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to symbolically conceptualizing the reality of his everyday life.

The content of oral communication is the message or meaning itself that language conveys. The ear to voice link is critical for talking and listening; it is the basis of a child's initial attachment of meaning in speaking, in writing, in listening and in reading words and combinations of words. Consequently, he is able to identify and to internalize his experiences as meaningful (Davis and Silverman, 1961:443).

The birth of meaning (i.e. symbolic communication) is the subject of many theories. What is generally agreed upon is that during the sensorimotor stage of development the infant learns to differentiate self from non self without linguistic symbols.

Somewhat later, the child learns that objects have names. In order to achieve this feat, a child must add to the distinction between himself and words, and between words and objects (Werner and Kaplan, 1963; in Schlesinger and Meadow, 1972:48-50).

When the deaf child begins to learn language, he is already behind his hearing contemporary as far as the conceptual feel for language is concerned. Unlike the hearing child, the deaf child has missed all of the psychological and social stimulation that is conveyed through sound from the moment of birth. Further maturation requires the establishment of a fluent, two way system of communication between himself and the others who speak his language. The deaf child must learn his "mother tongue" in order to grasp the meanings and thinking processes indigenous to his socio-cultural setting (Levine, 1967:34).

The deaf child as well as the hearing child must initially acquire the "norm of experience" to be symbolized by the word. Thus, a fundamental consideration for children that are deaf is the difficulty that they have in gaining the experience so necessary for the internalization of meanings. The problem that is manifested occurs when the deaf child encounters words that are not concrete (i.e. relational) such as because or unless (Myklebust, 1960:234). That is to say, the deaf child without verbal language does not have the "conceptual hooks" to hang his experiences on. Consequently, these linguistic symbols are not operating to structure personality development

as they would be normally (Psychiatry and the Deaf, 1967:66). Studies by Deutsch (1963), Hunt (1961), Reissman (1962), Furfey (1965), and Sussman (1965) have indicated that the social isolation of the deaf is their most frequent problem in that their patterns of psychological adaptations and cognitive achievement are similar to those found among the culturally disadvantaged. Other studies by Blanton and Nunnally (1965), Furth and Youniss (1964), and McNeill (1965) have indicated that, in general, deaf subjects respond like younger hearing subjects in terms of language and cognition. Language is thus viewed as a crucial tool in the "normal" development of one's self concept. Since the language of the deaf does not follow the sequential stages, the development of higher order abstractions and the child's self (which includes by definition "the other") is delayed along with his language and personal development (in DiCarlo, 1965:70).

Gellman (1965) and Sussman (1965) note that the deaf experience difficulty in communication and, as a result, experience difficulty in learning role performance and role expectations as well as in empathy and interpersonal understanding, i.e. taking the role of the other which modify his self perception and his appraisal of others.

In a study by Myklebust (1960) deaf and hearing adolescents were instructed to draw a human figure in order to study their personality and emotional adjustment. They found that

perceptual behavior is altered, the deaf child's body image is different from the normal; his perception of himself and of others varies characteristically. Moreover, the nature of his body image varies by sex as well as by the type of school which he attends. For example, deaf males more than deaf females drew parts of the body that were proportionately too large, a characteristic of younger children. On the same level, deaf children from residential schools expressed less disturbance of normal identification than did the hearing children from day schools (Myklebust, 1960:173).

Dr. K. Meadows has compared deaf children with hearing parents to deaf children with deaf parents and found that deaf children with deaf parents differ significantly in positive self esteem as well as in communicative abilities of most types (in *Psychiatry and the Deaf*, 1967:129).

Dr. Kenneth Altshuler reported on a psychiatric preventive program in a school for the deaf in 1967. Those involved in his experiment initially gathered a group of 10-12 year old boys to explore the potential for interaction between them as well as to determine the problems and patterns of thinking that existed for these handicapped youngsters. After four or five meetings the leaders decided to stop with this group and start with an older group. It seems that the individual boys involved were unable to develop or display any kind of interest in each other or in group identification. In addition, the girls group

that was observed was thought to be more communicative as well as more adaptive in abstract thinking than the boys. The deaf children seem to be more separate from each other, less involved with each other's feelings, than hearing children (in *Psychiatry and the Deaf*, 1967:12). Altshuler also found that deafness becomes most clear as a handicap at the time of early adolescence. The author attributed this difficulty in part to the time at which "socialization really begins" and that the parents most acutely become aware of the limitations that are involved in this handicap.

Schlesinger and Meadow likewise recognize this critical period of development and write:

...over the whole span of adolescence the developmental task is to integrate earlier elements into a true sense of identity as a separate individual, no longer taking a partial or external view of the self...

(1972:20).

Comparisons of the three groups of deaf students in the study done by the author reveal many significant findings that are relevant to this problem. The group of children of deaf parents attending residential schools performed or were rated at a higher level than either the group of children with hearing parents attending residential schools or the group of children having hearing parents and attending day schools. It is interesting to note that a comprehensive view of the test scores by age and by sex suggests that several factors may be

in play over time in contributing to the deaf child's self conception. For example, those younger than thirteen had a proportion above the median of 63% (residential:deaf parents); 35% (residential:hearing parents); and 50% (day:hearing parents). Those older than thirteen have median scores of 50%; 63%; and, 30% respectively. The decreasingly positive self image scores of groups one and three in the different age groups tested "lends additional support to the suggestion that the findings are related to a crisis in deaf adolescent identity, tied to peer group and school context" (1972:136). The increasingly positive self image over time scores of the children with hearing parents was thought to be related to the increase in communication and interpersonal relationships that is experienced when the "unique" deaf child in a hearing world lives among deaf peers and some well functioning deaf adults (Schlesinger and Meadow, 1972:130-149).

Research done by the John Tracy Clinic indicated that children in schools for the deaf respond with greater uniformity than do their hearing counterparts. This was due to their "restrictive repertoire". Similarly, another study that compared hard of hearing adults to deaf adults found an adjustment pattern in these adults that was similar to the profile found in psychosis. Results from the MMPI disclosed a pattern of "lack of apprehension, worry and concern with oneself". The primary conclusion drawn on the basis of this evidence was

that deafness imposes a characteristic restriction on personality that often results in a feeling of severe social isolation and detachment for the handicapped individual (Myklebust, 1960:158)

Another aspect of relevance to the impact of deafness on the development of self centers around the commonality that groups these individuals together; their inability to hear. Goffman (1963) has elaborated on the stigmatized person that is considered "not quite human" and offers a component element of deviance that is attributed to the deaf population. Similarly, McCay Vernon analyzed "Deafness and Minority Group Dynamics (October, 1969). In this article, Vernon borrows from Lauritsen, (1969) and Stewart (1969) and presents this view:

"The deaf individual in this attempt to be oral and to integrate finds frequent rejection and damage to self esteem. Finally, when he turns to other deaf people for primary social interactions, he does this with the inappropriate feeling that he is a failure..."

Moreover, he cites Schlesinger (1967) to build upon his stance:

"It would appear that the deaf population because of these adverse conditions is often left without direction for the development of the positive values which come from interaction with successful deaf people. Deaf persons should have the same healthy 'ethnocentrism' which characterizes and which is so important for successful minority groups..."

(1969:17).

It seems from Vernon's perspective that the deaf as a minority group experience difficulty in establishing their pride

as members of such a group. Furthermore, the individual who is deaf and who confronts this inconsistent behavior from the hearing as well as the 'other' deaf would appear to encounter many obstacles that would prevent him from developing an organized positive self concept. This picture is complicated even more when one finds that Murphy (1960) and his colleagues report that special teachers find deaf students to be the least desirable.

Research that has utilized measures of self concept is another area of concern to this project. Problems arise in administering tests to hearing and deaf adolescents that may be considered valid and/or reliable because of the unique factor of language and the meaning that the test (s) have for each group on the basis of their communication experience. This matter will be investigated more closely, however, at another time (see conceptual and methodological issues).

This review of the literature suggests, in sum, that the inability to hear may influence the normal development of the self concept of an individual. Thus, the deaf persons self concept may be expected to be different than the hearing persons self concept; the inability to hear oneself use the language would in some way impede the development of the self concept of that person. Tests of the self concept of deaf and hearing adolescents would expect to discover that the handicapped children express a self concept that is "impoverished".

Conceptual and Methodological Issues

Mention has already been made of some of the conceptual and methodological issues that relate to this project. In general, discussion will be limited to matters that arise when dealing with "self" measurement of hearing and deaf adolescents.

Many problems exist when researching the concept of self in the social sciences. The manner in which the term is used typically changes when used in various logical frameworks. Moreover, the concept itself is subjective in terms of its inferred referents in the empirical world. Gordon and Gergen write:

Problems in the behavioral sciences are compounded by the inherent necessity of basing knowledge of internal process and structure on external behavior or the vagaries of introspection. Both the inferential leap necessitated by this approach and the method of observation are fraught with potential error...

(in Gordon and Gergen, 1968:1).

Probably the first requirement for an adequate research of the self is a definition that would establish a point of orientation for the project, and, in doing so, specify the relevant dimensions of this process that are to be included:

The self is not a thing; but a complex process of continuing interpretive activity—simultaneously the person's subjective stream of consciousness (reflexive and nonreflexive, indicating, perceiving, evaluating, etc...) and the resultant accruing structure of (the special system of self-referential meanings available to this consciousness)...

(in Gordon and Gergen, 1968:1).

More specifically, a measure is needed here that will tap the attitudinal dimension of the self that is consistent with

Mead's view of the self as a reflexive process. Kuhn and McPartland considered the question of accessibility and concluded that the most beneficial design would aim directly at self attitudes rather than through the use of inference. The specific test adopted asked the respondents to write twenty answers to the question "Who Am I?" as if they were asking the questions to themselves. The investigators also found that this Twenty Statements Test did, in fact, identify and measure identity in terms of social statuses, general self attitudes, importance, etc., as reflected by the ordering of responses as well as the range of self attitudes (Kuhn and McPartland, in Denzin, 1970: 447-467).

Their technique sorts the answers according to content and categorizes them as either consensual references or subconsensual references. "Consensual" refers to statements which represent "groups and classes whose limits and conditions of membership are matters of common knowledge" (e.g. boy, dad) and subconsensual refers to those "statements which refer to matters that would require interpretation as a result of relative position in terms of other people" (e.g. sad, cute). The number of consensual responses given by the respondent is indicative of the degree of social anchorage that an individual experiences since this category's boundaries are clearly definable. Conversely, subconsensual references require interpretation by the respondent himself and are in this way judgmental.

However, upon examining the data in terms of Kuhn and Mc-

Partland's analytical scheme (1964) it was discovered that dichotomizing responses in terms of consensual and subconsensual categories often failed to illuminate the fundamental inappropriateness of many of the deaf students remarks. For example, one deaf boy wrote "I am a dress pretty." Now, assuming he means "I am dressed well" this response would be classified as subconsensual. But in so doing, the "strangeness" of the remark is lost along with what it suggests about the atypical nature of this self-reflexive development. Therefore, it was decided to present excerpts from data in their original form to preserve their distinctive character.

Gordon (1968) suggests that operationalization of self conceptions may be approached most meaningfully through a "relatively unstructured spontaneous-response technique which will allow either categories or attributes to be expressed as they are called up in the respondent himself" (1968:119). Categorical responses typically associate the respondent with others as in references to roles, groups, etc., and the attributive responses generally distinguish the respondent from others or at least describe him individualistically (1968:133).

Such, in brief, are some of the issues and questions that are involved in this research project. With these in mind, consideration may be given to the specific research design that was adopted to discover the effects of hearing on the development of the self.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH DESIGN

The two variables that are critical to this research are hearing (non hearing) as the Independent Variable, and self conception as the Dependent Variable. Studies employing projective techniques represent the latest phase of personality investigation of the deaf (Sussman, 1965:51). Only by contrast with the situation of an average deaf adolescent is it possible to appreciate the extent to which verbal language plays a part in the development of the self concept of the hearing adolescent (Levine, 1960:33). In the absence of normative data, however, there is no alternative but to use tests designed for the hearing, keeping in mind that haphazard use of hearing norms to evaluate test performances of deaf patients would be "foolhardy and misleading". Although the generalizations drawn from such exploratory investigations are limited, they at least provide a "descriptive portrait" of the group on which they are based. Comparisons of deaf subjects with hearing subjects provide insights into the similarities and differences in the two groups with respect to the development of the self.

With the aforementioned in mind, three techniques are employed here to tap the self image; the effects of hearing on self development will be arrived at through the comparative

analyses of the experimental and the control groups on the bases of their responses. More specifically, an exploratory study of the self through the "Who Am I" test, an open ended test entitled "The Person You Are" and an adaptation of Gordon's self configuration scheme to the "Who Am I" responses will seek to determine the nature and dimensions of the self in each group. In doing so, excerpts from the control and experimental groups will be utilized to reveal the contents, patterns and structures of responses that exist in the two groups.

Statement of Sample

The sample for this project consisted of twenty deaf adolescents and twenty hearing adolescents. The ten boys and ten girls in the non hearing group were enrolled in the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind in Staunton, Virginia and were selected from the sixth and seventh grades by school officials. They represented all children enrolled in this state residential school between the ages of thirteen and fifteen. Members of this group had been deaf prior to any verbal language acquisition. That is, the deaf participants were considered beyond the range of any hearing ability and had been deaf from birth.

The control group of hearing children were students enrolled in Christiansburg High School in Christiansburg, Virginia. Similarly, the students were selected to participate from the

eightth grade by school officials. They represented the population enrooled in this public school facility between the ages of thirteen and fifteen. Moreover, this control group was matched with the deaf group on the basis of age, sex and socioeconomic background. Other studies by Schlesinger and Meadow (1972) and Myklebust (1960) have shown that there is no significant difference in comparing students based on age level or grade level.

The group of adolescents from Staunton used a combination of oral and manual methods of communication in the classroom. Both the speechreading and the sign language have several limitations; their common drawback is that they are both exclusively dependent upon visual reception. Essentially, their mode of communication is more concrete and pictorially less symbolic and flexible than the auditory language system employed by the normal hearing child. Furthermore, residential schools, such as the one in Staunton, have long been a focal point of the deaf subculture. In the absence of exclusive formal instruction in sign language, the residential schools have become the setting for the communication of sign language from one group of deaf individuals to another. These children are those who know their own version of sign language and teach it to their peers. This method of communication certainly restricts meaningful interaction between the hearing and the deaf. Whether or not the deaf should be integrated in the hearing world or segregated in the "isolation" of the non

hearing world is an issue that remains to be resolved (Schlesinger and Meadow, 1972:117-120).

Data Gathering Technique

The "Who Am I" test and the open ended paragraph were administered in that order respectively to minimize the chances that the respondents would merely borrow from the test administered first or second. Even though the subjects might have tended to respond to the second measure in the same manner that they answered the first, the directions were such that the "Who Am I" test asked subjects to answer as if they were addressing themselves so it would reflect the self attitudes of the respondents without promoting or suggestion. The second measure, however, was more specific in its instructions in that it requested the individual to indicate what comes to his mind to reveal or to tell about the person he is in paragraph form. Moreover, it directed the responses further as it instructed the subjects to ignore such things as they would convey from their past experiences (autobiographical information) and to concentrate on how you "feel about the way you really are" i.e. who, what, why.

The tests were administered in one sitting with twenty minutes allotted each test. The experimental group situation enlisted the aid of an instructor who was called upon to interpret the meaning of the written instructions for the deaf children. The behavior of the deaf students during the testing experience deserves some mention. After the students were issued the tests,

they read the instructions and appeared quite confused. Some of them lost interest in the situation at hand and appeared to remove themselves from the task. These youngsters played among themselves or bothered others that were close to them. Other students paid close attention to the instructor's explanation of what was expected of them, remained confused and asked questions accordingly. Examples were given to clarify the directions for the deaf subjects and still they did not seem to grasp the essence of what was expected of them. They certainly did not (even after several minutes of the aid of the interpreter) comprehend their individual role in self expression-at least not to the point of independently carrying on with their personal performance. Rather, virtually all of the subjects carried on some level of communication among themselves throughout the entire testing situation. Several turned to other classmates and signed messages relating to the tests. It seemed that they were vitally concerned about their evaluation on the test(s), i.e. what was the appropriate thing to answer especially as reinforced by other respondents. Even after the instructor indicated that the tests did not count and that it was critically important that the students give only their own thoughts and that they did not borrow or cheat from other student papers, several students remained concerned enough to eye other tests or to "sign" their ideas to each other. A few students were moved to other places in the room and told that they were moved because they were thought to be

"borrowing" from others. This did not seem to affect several of the students as the interaction during both tests continued. A number of students, most of them girls, eventually settled down to concentrate on filling out the tests as best they could.

Although the "borrowing" did not occur in the hearing group, there was more disruption throughout the entire classroom in between the tests as some students finished the tests while others were still working on them.

The fundamental point to be underscored, however, is the basic inability of the deaf group to comprehend the nature of the task assigned them, as over against the comparative comprehensive ease displayed by their hearing counterparts. Adequately responding to the question "Who Am I" would seem to presuppose the acquisition of a level of reflexive self-development beyond that reached by the deaf.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Who Am I Test

Close examination of the "Who Am I" test reveals data which illustrate the kinds of responses that are of most use in determining the effects of hearing and non hearing on the expressions of "self" in each group. Such similarities and/or differences that represent the essence of the self in each group will provide insight into the problem at hand. Discussion will initially outline a description of representative models of the self in each group. Excerpts from specific cases are introduced to support the direction of the discussion.

In sum, it is thought that this technique will bring to light differences in the content, range and dimensions of the self concept in the two groups.

The group of hearing boys offered many of the same responses to the question "Who Am I?" In general, mention was made most often of name (14), sex-male or boy (10), age (9), hunter or I like to hunt (8), and sports-fan or I like sports (7) or specific sports (13). Less common were the words associated with student status-school or direct label (6), fishing-fisherman or I like to fish (4), and girls (4). With respect to family orientation, total references numbered (10);

(i.e. brother; 5, son; 2, family; 2, relative; 1). Three boys included race in their self expressions, only two referred to religious orientation. Similarly, friends and animals were listed in some way three times each. Only three boys indicated their height and/or hair color; two listed weight. Other expressions of self that were found in some form on over three papers were "fun, shy, mean, happy, hard worker."

The following are typical illustrations of the manner in which the hearing boys responded to the question "Who Am I?"

I am (name)
 I am (age)
 I am a (boy, male)
 I am a hunter
 I am a sports fan or I like sports
 I am a football player or other specific sport
 I am a boy who likes girls
 I am a student at Christiansburg High School
 I am a boy who likes to play cards
 I am a boy who likes animals

The group of deaf boys did not share in common many answers to the question "Who Am I?" It should be noted that one boy, reflecting a total inability to comprehend the task at hand, simply copied the directions (in random order) to the test where his answers should have been. Another subject simply wrote his name and "I am Jo Stanley" on fifteen lines. Only five of those lines were largely illegible and/or nonsensical to the author, (i.e. "I want town down, I am Mr. Weolke Tech"). Still another deaf boy listed only his name, his age and a date ("I am May 15, 1996"). The remainder of the lines were blank save the two words "I am." Certainly, these three

cases are significant in and of themselves. It does not seem simply coincidental that these three boys tested below 73 on IA. Specifically, these boys had IQ's of 73, 72, and 57, respectively. Clearly the subjects did not comprehend the nature of the task at hand. This occurrence suggests that the attitudes of the "self" in these three boys were either severely limited or insignificant in that the respondents may have been unaware or, at best, imperfectly aware of their "selves" as social objects.

The following are typical illustrations of the manner in which the deaf male adolescents responded to the question "Who Am I?"

I am (name)
 I am (age)
 I am (boy, male)
 I am sorry
 I am a new car
 I am went to park
 I am saw to TV
 I am pretty girl
 I am not home
 I am brown eyes

It is obvious from a comparison of the deaf and hearing responses that few self attitudes were common to both groups. Some of the patterns found in several of the deaf males remaining answers invite subjective interpretation in that they seem to differ markedly from those that would normally (as reflected in the hearing tests) be included in an individual's self attitude.

Hearing girls exhibited a few of the same patterns that

their classmates showed. Name (16), sex-female or girl (9), age (8), and grade in school (5), or student position (5), ranked about the same as the hearing boys. Contrastingly, references to religion numbered (11); (Christian;7, religious; 1, specific denomination; 1, loves God; 1), friends (7), and family (?),-sister; (3) headed the list of popular self attitudes for this group. Although boys were mentioned only once, in love, lover, or love someone was indicated by four respondents.

Animals were important to three girls; more specifically, horses (1) and dogs (1) were listed. One girl that listed race also recorded two nationalities (American, Irish).

On another level, the girls appeared concerned about their self feelings and "others" feelings towards them as well as their "feelings about certain others:" For example, responses such as "I enjoy being myself and not someone else"; " am a person who thinks I am as good as anyone else"; "I am happy"; "I am loved by someone,(loves someone, special to others, in love") indicate that these hearing girls are highly aware of their relationships to other(s). Another common theme that appeared through quite a few tests centers around mention of favorable and unfavorable responses in terms of self behavior towards other people. "I am nice"; "I am easy to get along with,(fun, mean, not much self confidence, helper, nice") are phrases that reflect these girls are concerned about this aspect

of social relations. Similarly, mention was made in several instances of self characteristics, traits; physical, mental and personal. "I am fat, (smart, fairly good athlete, stupid, cute") typify the kinds of responses that suggests this direction of self attitudes in terms of "others."

The following are typical illustrations of the manner in which the hearing girls responded to the question "Who Am I?"

I am (name)
 I am (sex)
 I am (age)
 I am a Christian
 I am a student at Christiansburg High School
 I am a sister to my brother or some other mention of family
 I am fun
 I am loved by someone
 I am an athlete
 I am pretty nice to others

The group of eleven deaf girls had no extreme cases comparable to the three deaf boys who failed to provide sensical answers to the self test. Ten of the girls listed their name; all in the first response. All ten who included their age did so on the first six lines. Similarly, the entire group that mentioned their sex; nine did so on the second line, one on the first and one on the ninth. Another widely popular response (9) concerned their hearing disability.

Seven girls listed their grade in school; (4) specifically mentioned VSDB, (3) offered student status of some sort and (3) listed elementary division classification. Much more frequent in the deaf girls self (as compared to the deaf boys) were the references made to individual physical traits.

Hair color (7), eye color (6), height and weight (5) typify the sort of answers that were common to this experimental group. Race was only listed twice, as was friend, birthplace, and home residence. No mention was made of family or kin relationships in this group.

The kinds of answers that were frequent in the deaf boys tests were far less common in the deaf girls statements. For example, "I am sorry" was listed only one time, as was "I am fine."

Typical examples of the responses that were offered by this group of adolescents include:

I am (name)
 I am (sex)
 I am (green or hazel eyes)
 I am VSDB (their school)
 I am book
 I am 91 weight
 I am ride
 I am fine. How are You?
 I am happy party.

Such excerpts as have been listed from the hearing and the deaf self repertoires should clearly indicate that qualitative differences do exist in the self attitudes of these groups. As is obvious from this analysis, the experimental and control groups share very few answers on their self tests. Name, sex, and age, of course, were included in most of the "Who Am I" tests.

There are, however, some comments that may be made around the kinds and types of self responses as well as about the form

in which they were expressed. First of all, one kind of response offered by the hearing boys and girls tends to name likes and dislikes (e.g., "I like sports, fun, I don't like to fight"). Beliefs, hobbies and interests comprise another major trend that the hearing responses tend to follow (e.g., "I believe in freedom, I collect stamps, I am interested in school, girls"). Activities such as "I am a reader, (go bowling, active in sports, good singer)" are also often listed by the hearing adolescents. Moreover, evaluations of selves in terms of activities ("good in sports, good student, doing well in my subjects") as well as in terms of physical, mental, and/or personality characteristics ("plump, not fat, fairly intelligent, dumb in math, pretty mean when I want to be, fairly popular"), are prevalent in the body of hearing responses.

Contrastingly, the self attitudes offered by the deaf adolescents tend to express moods and feelings ("sad, happy, sorry, fine"). Another most popular feature about the answers of the deaf children concentrated on physical attributes that are readily seen (visual cues such as "hazel eyes, short hair, height, brown hair"). This particular trend, however, was overwhelmingly characteristic of the deaf females as only three deaf males (out of seven) referred to their bodily features as compared to nine (out of ten) females. It is interesting to note that the form in which the deaf revealed their self body descriptions is quite unlike the manner in which the

hearing adolescents referred to this aspect of their selves. Rather than saying I have brown hair or I have hazel eyes, the deaf would answer "I am freckles" or "I am 100 weight." Perhaps this aspect of their self is more than just a language habit or linguistic pattern. It may be that this group may not be able to experience or comprehend a total self body image in terms of all its interrelated component parts. Thus, each feature is conveyed as being one with the entire person rather than as being one of the components that combine with other physical attributes to make up the whole self.

It should be mentioned again that even though a teacher was present, the subjects seemed to be extremely uneasy about the new experience. This disruption was especially pronounced in this first test; perhaps due to the novelty of the testing situation as well as the manner in which this particular test offered a more advantageous opportunity than the other tests for the students to share their written responses. Several times, even before the test was started, many children practiced finger spelling to communicate with each other about what to write on the test. When the tester called attention to this, the teacher explained to the deaf group 1) that the exercise was not to be evaluated; 2) the importance of individual responses; and, 3) the futility of cheating (sharing or borrowing ideas). Nevertheless, the students remained anxious eyeballing papers and continuous sign language was noticed throughout.

The "Who Am I" data were also examined in the light of a categorical scheme proposed by Chad Gordon (1968). The categories are organized into major areas which include the a) basic elements of social identity (e.g. ascribed characteristics), b) abstract allegiances and connections typically too private or abstract to serve as distinct social identities, c) particular interests and activities, and d) Systemic senses of self - these designed to tap the sense of relatively specific self representations (e.g. sense of moral worth, sense of self determination, etc.,).

The task here was simply to see to what extent the responses of the deaf and hearing groups differed when categorized in terms of these major areas. The most dramatic differences occur in the two major areas that are most abstract and that generally require a particular sophistication of self development before they are realized or made manifest; abstract identifications, and systemic senses of self.

The following tables give the percentages of those responding to the question "Who Am I?" in terms of these categories, broken down by sex.

I. Abstract Identifications: These dimensions include categories that are usually too private or abstract to serve as distinct social identities.

	DG	HG	DB	HB
A. Existential, Individuating: me, individual, human being, generally the denial of a cat.	7	43.7	10	20

	DG	HG	DB	HB
B. Membership in Abstract Cat. a person, a teenager, almost always exclusively cat. by def.	9.9	43.7	10	26.6
C. Ideological and Belief Refer. a Christian, not prejudiced, etc. somewhat more frequently cat.	--	62.5	--	26.6

By comparison with their hearing counterparts, it can be seen that the responses of the deaf, regardless of sex, are substantially lacking in "abstract" references to themselves. In other words, the absence of such responses would seem to support the contention that the deaf are not fully aware of themselves in terms of these abstractions, and it is in this sense that we have been speaking of an "impoverished self" being associated with the deaf.

II. Four Systemic Senses of Self: These are designed to tap the meaning of relatively specific self representations. The action theory is extended to order some of the person's subjective experience-the individual's interpretation of his standing with regard to that "system problem."

	DG	HG	DB	HB
A. Sense of moral worth: Pattern Maintenance at the Person Level; a sinner, bad, honest, in terms of society's norms and values, preponderantly attributive.	18.2	25	30	53.3
B. Sense of Self Determination: Goal Attainment at the Person Level; ambitious to select own goals, to pursue own lines of action, am going to get ahead, almost always attributive.	--	37.5	50	66

	DG	HG	DB	HB
C. Sense of Unity: Integration at the Personal Level; primarily internal, ambivalent, in harmony, predominately attributive.	--	50	--	--
D. Sense of Competence: Adaptation at the Personal Level; generalized capacity feeling of efficacy, intelligent, skillful, low in ability, primarily attributive.	54.5	56.2	30	66

When the data are categorized on the basis of these systemic senses of self, the deaf generally show a paucity of such self-references. But again, these are relatively complex or abstract self conceptualizations implying a reflexive ability (i.e. the subject being able to treat himself as an object) beyond the capacity of the deaf-given the very fact of deafness. The inability to hear one's own voice and words precludes the opportunity to fully respond to oneself as an object, and likewise to entertain abstract conceptions of oneself. Seen in this light, the data here strongly suggest that support should be given the Meadian propositions that have guided the investigation from the outset.

Perhaps an interesting note which will help illuminate the basic thesis running throughout this work lies in the following table which simply notes the percentage of uncodable responses found in each of the groups. Again, this is in response to the question "Who Am I?"

III. Uncodable Responses: Those that are not sensical, e.g. President of the U.S., a flower, etc., usually categorical if decipherable at all.

DG	HG	DB	HB
45.4	--	50	6.6

In this manner, again, we see the deaf displaying a fundamental lack of understanding of the commonly agreed upon meanings associated with the situation at hand.

Analysis of the open ended questionnaires will further point out the nature of differences in their self expressions.

Open Ended Questionnaire

Analysis of the open ended questionnaires discloses certain patterns that exist and separate the hearing group from the non hearing group. Content analysis, of course, will be employed to deal with the exploratory nature of this instrument. It would seem that the best way to approach this is to present the data and allow the differences to speak for themselves.

The most blatant examples of atypical self development associated with the deaf are expressed in the following remarks made by two deaf boys: "I am pretty, I am girlfriend," "Hi-girls and boys school, Mr. Weolke come?" Another boy simply recopied fragments of the directions in haphazard order in the space provided for his paragraph. Other deaf students contributed more of what appears to be nonsensical information:

You are a sad?
 How are You?
 You are big headed boy...

Still others numbered their fragmented responses:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 4. I will got exam | 6. You are pretty girl. |
| 9. My hair cut | 3. Seven will go to voc
this morning. |
| 7. Boy heard to girl runaway. | |
| 8. Faye to see girl pretty. | |
| 5. What is English? | |

Two deaf boys who sat close to each other offered identical beginnings to their paragraphs and similar responses in the remainder of their papers. One of the boys interrupted his paper with "Hi, David _____!" (The other boy's name).

One of the most striking patterns found throughout these subjective responses is captured in such comments as the following:

I went to the Healy Hall to see a movie...We went to the town Saturday...I went to downtown... I bought candy...Linda and I went to Sunday School... I will go to the movie next Wednesday...Our boys went to Gallaudet College...Some of the girls and boys played together swing Saturday...

Comments written in this style suggest a story telling account of those involved. That is to say, the mention of various activities centers around the event itself as if these adolescents relate and/or fail to separate their account of their situation and how they saw others from their idea of "self." This trend of narrating past, present and future experiences appears throughout the deaf adolescents responses to "The Person You Are." Since the directions specifically suggested the subject to "Write only about your-

self" and reminded that "It is not necessary to write all about your past life in the paper..." it would seem that this handicapped group lacks the capacity to refer to their "self" as distinct from others or apart from an experience realm of perception. Involvement in the social world, then, is expressed in terms of the deaf adolescents activities as well as his perceptions of others from an observer or indirect position. Perhaps this view does not extend beyond the descriptive stage to the point where the deaf child has been able to experience himself from the standpoint of others as an object. Consistent remarks such as these, then, suggest that the deaf adolescents relate their personal behavior patterns in terms of the external physical world. It would seem also that the deaf adolescents define their "selves" in terms of their capacity to place their image in relation to such concrete visions and/or active participation that would serve as points of reference.

Other striking differences exist when comparing the open ended questionnaires. It would seem that the best way to illustrate this is to present the data and allow the differences to speak for themselves. The following are examples of open ended paragraphs from each of the groups.

I. Typical Hearing Paragraphs:

The person I am is one that is unique. This is because I am myself-an individual. I love to read. When I am reading I am able to escape to a totally different. For the most part, I am sometimes too sympathetic. This is because my emotions run away with me a lot.

I am a funny person full of laughs and laughter. I am nice to my friends and enemies alike although at times it is rough. I love to skate, play sports and other things. I collect stamps and have too many to count. I love to play in the snow, and have snowball fights. I have a dog who I love dearly.

I am just plain and simple, just as anyone else. I am a person and I'd like to think that someday I'll play an important part in the world today. I'd like to help or at least try to do something about the pollution, and the drug taking today.

I'm the person who likes to ride horses and the person who likes to watch good looking girls and help helpless animals. I like to fish, camp, hunt, ride and climb. I like to race horses and motorcycles and dunebuggies. I like dances, parties, cookouts, and playing football, baseball and swimming. I like to ride bikes...

I am a person who I believe is fairly good in sports. I can roller skate good. My person likes girls very much. I like to have a good time and laugh alot...My person gets mixed up and confused an awful lot. I like to use extremely large words and sometimes I even know what I am talking about but my family thinks I sound dumb.

I am a person of worries much of the time. I get along with other people alright I guess. I like girls and parties and junk like that. I like music and like to play it. Sports are really good too.

The manner in which these hearing adolescents responded, then, is evident from the above excerpts. It is obvious that such paragraphs might have been written by normal (hearing) subjects about their "selves." The type of paragraph that the deaf students wrote, however, is quite unlike those written by the hearing students.

II. Typical Deaf Paragraphs:

Some of the boys played a basketball game Saturday morning. My side won 67-66. Keith, Mike, David, Darol and I love all to sports. I watched a movie Sunday night. I saw Double Man." It was very good.

I have six brothers but my brother was dead. His name was Danny Lowe and he was deaf. I have two deaf brothers. I was mean to the boys. When I am going home and I was happy. I will learn to how to cooking and I can't cook.

...I clean clothes with clothes hanger. I always write a letter to mother. I went into my room. I clean my room. I let play with six girls. I played baseball. I am tired. I am hot. I went to my house. I felt cool my room.

...Boys and girls played to the park. Some boys and I played a basketball. We went a downtown Saturday. We watched cartoons TV on Saturday morning... We will get to exam on Wednesday. I hope Roll Honor. girls pretty...

...Boys and girls went to the movie Saturday. We was good. Some of the boys like sport on T.V... Kaye Buel is handsome and pretty. She was here... She write a test now.

...I have some much know about the star but most, I don't know how to watch the star at night. Now, this afternoon, our 7th grade class will learn about Human Body. Last month, we learned how to sound waves and vibrations. We were finished to learn it no more.

You are big headed boy. I think you will grow up handsome boy. I like much race swimming pool, basketball and track.

We went to the Washington, D.C. last Saturday. I like hard work home. I will come go to home Friday at 5:30...We went to the Healy Hall Sunday night. Boys said 3 girl runaway...

It is obvious from the above excerpts that the tone of the deaf expressions of self is entirely different from that of hearing responses. The context or method of presentation

illustrated in the above paragraphs supports certain trends that may be outlined in terms of response style of the two groups.

The hearing children responded with personal accomplishments that marked or helped define them as individuals. The non hearing children, however, spoke in terms of group or group experience arranged in a less abstract and less distinct manner. References to others given by these two groups of adolescents differ in that the deaf group mention usually took the form of one or two specific people when they were attempting to get a thought across about their selves (i.e. "...I have a boyfriend...My friends name is..."). Remarks made by the hearing group, on the other hand, referred to a group of others or other people in general: "I like girls...Other people like me..." "I love others..." This pattern supports Mead's interpretation of the development of self and the 'generalized other.' That is to say, the less developed self concept of the deaf group would be obvious in the manner in which the deaf adolescents mention a number of discrete objects as they refer to an 'other.' The hearing group, however, not only assumes the roles of the other individually but further organizes them into a 'generalized other' from which he can experience and define himself.

The self questionnaires submitted by the hearing group of adolescents exhibit certain patterns quite unlike those

found in the non hearing set. Inspection of these self paragraphs also brings attention to the tendency of this group to treat themselves differently in terms of experiences than the non hearing groups speak of themselves. Remarks such as "I am a person who enjoys excitement..." "I am a person who likes to do things for others...because I am myself,...and an individual..." illustrate the manner in which these respondents tell about their selves in terms of their past experiences. The non hearing group tends to advance their past experiences in a descriptive form that seemingly illustrates active behavior and specific instances to define themselves from the standpoint of these activities.

The inability of the deaf to observe themselves as identity that is separate from the group is shown in these three generalizations derived from their responses: 1) the absence of "being" verbs, 2) writing in third person instead of first person, and 3) dealing with themselves as a succession of group endeavors instead of centering their responses upon an abstract theme, as did the hearing children.

One final trend appeared to be consistently evident in the set of self questionnaires from the two groups. Where the hearing individual wrote of himself in paragraphs that tended to flow and remain coherent, the non hearing adolescent frequently went off into tangent thoughts that seemed totally unrelated to his train of thought.

Conclusion

The process of developing a "normal" self concept is vitally dependent upon the individual's ability or inability to acquire sensory stimuli and internalize this into a meaningful and operative relationship with himself and his environment. Should this process be thwarted, as in the case with the deaf, the individual's self conceptualization will be "impoverished." This is graphically illustrated in studies conducted on non hearing adolescents in relating their self concept to those of hearing adolescents of the same age.

The data revealed that the inability to hear and so to verbally stimulate oneself results in the development and the expression of a less than fully reflexive self consciousness. The "impoverished" self displayed by the deaf adolescents seemed to stem from their inability to verbally stimulate their "selves" and "others" and to respond to themselves as social objects.

In the "Who Am I" test, for example, non hearing adolescents were substantially lacking in "abstract" references to themselves. In other words, the absence of such responses would seem to support the contention that the deaf are not fully aware of themselves in terms of these abstractions, and it is in this sense that the deaf self concept is "impoverished."

The open ended questionnaire analyzed in this report also substantiates this theory in that most responses were offered

in a story telling fashion that suggests that the deaf adolescents relate their "selves" in terms of the external physical world. Their "selves" then, were expressed in terms of their capacity to place their image in relation to such concrete visions and/or active participations that would serve as points of reference. Other responses were nonsensical, erratic and confused. Moreover, the individual was rarely removed from his concept of group identity.

It is clear then, from the data presented, that the problem of the non hearing adolescent in perceiving himself as an individual with unique and separate traits, and incorporating himself into a useful societal role, is frighteningly real. Studies should be made so that such handicapped adolescents will be more clearly understood. Only then can the dynamics underlying the development and the expression of "self" defined as social object, operating in terms of the meanings accorded to him from others, as well as himself, be understood.

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APPENDIX A

Two Forms of the Self Concept Test

There are fifteen numbered blanks on the page below. Please write fifteen answers to the simple question "Who Am I?" in the blanks. Just give fifteen answers to this question. Answer as if you were giving the answers to yourself, not to somebody else. Write the answers in the order that you think of them. Don't worry about importance in your answers. Go along fairly fast. You have twenty minutes to complete this test. An example: I am John White.

WHO AM I?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

"THE PERSON YOU ARE"

In the space below, please write a brief paper to show "The Person You Are." In this paper about yourself, you may want to include such things as what, who, and why that would tell about the way you feel you are. Please write exactly what comes to your mind but remember that it is not necessary to write about all your past life in the paper. You will have twenty minutes. Write only about yourself. Do the best you can. Don't worry about correct English. We just want your ideas.

VITA

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Karen Ellen Hallberg

THE EFFECTS OF HEARING
ON THE
DEVELOPMENT AND THE EXPRESSION OF THE SELF CONCEPT

by

Karen Ellen Hallberg

(ABSTRACT)

Proponents of Meadian self theory maintain that language is the critical mechanism that allows the self to emerge processually through symbolic interaction. Because of the role of hearing in language development, one who is deaf and cannot hear the spoken language is not able to stimulate himself and others with the sounds that make meaningful communication possible. The major aim of the present study was to determine the impact of the inability to hear on the development and the expression of the self concept in twenty hearing and twenty non hearing adolescents in Virginia.

An exploratory study of the self through the use of the "Who Am I" test, an open ended test entitled "The Person You Are" and an adaptation of Gordon's self configuration scheme to the "Who Am I" test served as measures to the problem at hand.

The data revealed that the inability to hear and so to verbally stimulate oneself results in the development and the expression of a less than fully reflexive self consciousness. The "impoverished" self displayed by the deaf adolescents seemed to stem from their inability to verbally stimulate their "selves" and "others" and to respond to themselves and others as social objects.