SELECTED PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF

KINDERGARTEN REDSHIRTING

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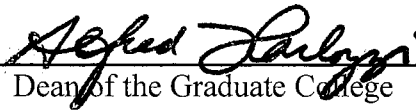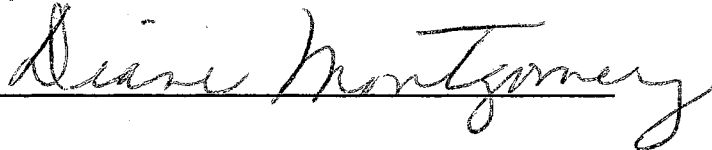the Degree of
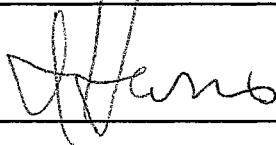DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The intent of this study was: (1) explore what factors influence parents' decisions to redshirt their kindergartner; (2) what the parents think their children will gain by delaying school placement; and (3) what parents expect they will gain by redshirting their kindergartner. Redshirted kindergartners was defined as students who are, according to Oklahoma law, eligible for kindergarten, but whose parents have held them out of school for one year. In Oklahoma, a child must be five years of age on or before September 1 to be eligible for kindergarten enrollment. Since most school districts begin classes in mid-August, a child of four years old may enter kindergarten prior to turning five on or before September 1.

Many studies (Ausubel, 1962; Gesell, 1954; Gredler, 1992; Hymes, 1958,1963; Ilg & Ames, 1965; Shepard & Smith, 1988; Washburne, 1936) have been conducted on school readiness, retention of children in school and placement of young students in developmental or transitional classes prior to first grade placement. However, research in the area of delaying school placement before entering kindergarten is somewhat limited. The decision to retain or place a child in a transitional class is influenced and recommended by educators who are working with the child in the school setting (Smith, 1989). Delaying kindergarten placement for a child is solely the parents' decision in Oklahoma. The focus

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of this study was not on the child or on the educator, but on the perception of the parents who made this decision for their children. The researcher explored the parents' personal perceptions of kindergarten redshirting to determine their motives for this decision, their reasons for delaying their child's placement and their adult developmental level at the time they made this decision.

This study used a long interview design (McCracken, 1988) to examine the different issues and motivational orientations of parents in making the decision to redshirt. Using Erik Erikson's theory as a framework for developmental stages, the Loyola Generativity Scale was administered to indicate the parent's stage of development. Parents who had recently made the decision, whose children were in kindergarten through third grade and older than their grade level peers, were invited to participate in an interview. This narrowed the focus of the study to key issues about why the decision was made. The researcher believed that if too much time passed after the decision was made, the parents would not remember or realize why they made the decision, but would focus on the results of the decision and report their feelings based on the results of the decision. The fundamental reason for making the decision to redshirt their child prior to exposure to school was the primary goal of the study.

Background of the Problem

Two dominant theories in the area of child development that have been found to influence parents' and teachers' consideration of kindergarten readiness are Piaget's Cognitive-Developmental Theory (1950) and Erikson's Stage Theory (1950). Although theories that focus on early childhood development provide the researcher with

information about where the problem of kindergarten readiness originates, this study was primarily concerned with adult development and the process of parental decision-making. Piaget and Erikson both base their theories on stages of development. Just as children pass through stages of development, these theorists view adults as having stages that determine their developmental level of maturity. These adult stages of development may impact the reason for the decisions made for their children.

Sigmund Freud was one of the first theorists to use stage theory to describe human development. Human development studies (including Erikson's) have been greatly influenced by Freud's work, especially with children (Smelser & Erikson, 1980). According to Allman and Jaffe (1972) "only Buhler and Erikson have looked at the whole life span" (p. 24). Erik Erikson's work was the primary framework for this study due to its usefulness not only in viewing childhood developmental issues, but also in examining adult issues. Erikson's eight stages of man show the complete life span and how one stage overlaps and influences the next stage.

In the areas of adult development, there are three primary theorists: Erikson, Levinson and Gould. According to Smelser and Erikson (1980), these three researchers are the most explicit in their attention to the psychological processes involved in the passage through adult life. A review of the major studies in the area of adult development was conducted as they related to this study.

Erikson's work has been criticized for focusing primarily on the development of male children and adults. There is also criticism of his lack of material on adult stages compared to his stages in childhood. These issues were discussed and considered as limitations of the study.

Theoretical Framework

Erikson's Stage Theory divides the entire life span into eight stages: Trust versus Mistrust, Autonomy versus Doubt and Shame, Initiative versus Guilt, Industry versus Inferiority, Identity versus Role Confusion, Intimacy versus Isolation, Generativity versus Stagnation, and Integrity versus Despair. Each stage is centered around a developmental concern which, if not resolved successfully during that stage, will interfere with successful resolution of the central concerns in future stages. The stages are not discreet. Each problem has its beginnings in preceding stages and continues to be a problem throughout life but, once successfully resolved, it fades into the background. The successful resolution of a stage represents an affective as opposed to a cognitive attainment. This theory is helpful in viewing emotional rather than academic readiness for kindergarten and also in the analysis of parental decision-making and maturation.

By understanding Erikson's social and emotional development theory, parents would have a good understanding of whether their child is developmentally ready to enter school. It is clear that if children are not at a certain level, it could be damaging to their psychological well being to "over-place" them in school. There seems to be much more harm to those children who are hurried (Elkind, 1981), with little or no consequences to those children who wait. Another issue brought out in Erikson's theory is the conflict with which adults may be dealing when they make the decision to send the child to school early or to delay placement. This study attempted to describe any influence of adult development stages on parents' decision-making. The adult developmental stage that is the primary focus of the young to middle aged adults is the seventh stage of generativity.

From Erikson's (1982) point of view, generativity may be expressed in bearing and raising children. Many adults find their most rewarding, as well as most frustrating, expressions of generativity in their efforts to conceive children to begin with and to feed, clothe, protect, provide for, nurture, guide, discipline, educate, advise and eventually "let go of" their own children. As noted by McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998), "There may be no more important expression of generativity than that which is directed at one's own children" (p. *xx*).

Although the concept of generativity is not limited to parenthood, the measurement of this stage provided evidence of parental maturity level shortly after they made the decision to delaying kindergarten placement. An exploration of Erikson's generativity stage of adult development and its impact on parenting and the decisions they make for their children was closely examined.

Problem Statement

According to Gesell (1982), the reason that parents redshirt their kindergartners is to provide the child with an extra year to grow developmentally. Many parents believe that delaying school placement will help their child be better prepared for school activities and academics.

There are studies, however, that suggest that parents base their decisions on adult needs rather than on the needs of the child (Elkind, 1981).

These two conflicting notions exist because parents deal with different issues when they make the decision to redshirt their kindergartners. Parents may or may not

have successfully resolved a conflicting stage in their own life which would affect their

motivation and focus on personal and family issues (Elkind, 1970).

Research Questions

Research questions that guided this study were:

1. What factors influence parents' decision to redshirt their kindergartner?

2. What do parents think their child will gain by delaying school placement?

3. What do parents expect they will gain by redshirting their kindergartner?

Research Design

This study used the qualitative approach to research, and that approach allowed

the researcher to understand the process of parents' decision to redshirt their

kindergartner. Qualitative research, by its nature, is designed to look for categories and

themes within a phenomenon. Qualitative methods helped explain how parents thought,

felt, and reacted to the decision regarding delaying kindergarten placement. The

researcher identified and categorized the reasons why selected parents made this decision

for their children. As Crabtree and Miller (1992) suggest, "qualitative methods usually

are used for identification, description and explanation" (p. 6).

The qualitative method was used to gather data for this study was the long

interview (McCracken, 1988). The researcher, as the primary instrument for collecting

and recording information, asked questions that required descriptive answers. Rubin and

Rubin (1995) state, "Qualitative interviewing is a way of finding out what others feel and

think about their worlds" (p. 1).

The Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS), developed by Dan McAdams and Ed de St. Aubin (1992), was used to provide an indication of the parents' generativity score and their adult developmental level. Due to the subjective design and interpretation of adult developmental stages, the LGS was used to help provide theoretical evidence for the maturity of the parents who were interviewed in this study.

Using a long interview form, this qualitative study provided the researcher with the information needed to explore parents' perceptions of kindergarten redshirting. The process gave insight into parents' feelings, beliefs and motivations. The procedure was patterned after the seven-part method that Kvale (1996) suggests, in that the procedures were "thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying and reporting" (p. 88).

Eleven parents were interviewed, representing six families. In the interviews, conducted in June and July of 2000, all parents answered the interview questions (Appendix A) and completed the LGS (Appendix B).

Significance of the Study

Many studies have been conducted on retention and transitional classes (Gredler, 1992). However, the area of kindergarten redshirting has not been as widely examined. Although the focus of school readiness studies is on child development, no one has explored the component of adult development related to this issue. Educators must deal with adult concerns. Adult perceptions and decision-making must be examined to understand the process of delaying school placement of kindergartners and other school placement issues.

The contribution of this study to research integrates Erikson's adult stages of development to describe any relationship between the developmental levels of parents and the impact of their generativity level as it relates to placement decisions made for their children. The contribution to theory is to provide qualitative support or rejection of Erikson's development framework with respect to the utility of this framework in explaining this particular phenomenon.

The benefit of this proposed study to practice is to provide educators with an understanding of parental expectations. Educators try to educate and serve the whole child. This should include an insight into a child's family and parents' decisions concerning school placement. Parental support is imperative for schools to be successful. In the past few years, state and federal funding has been provided to school districts for educational programs for four-year-old children, Head Start programs and other early entrance programs. Community and parental conflicts may occur if the educational systems do not examine why parents may desire to delay kindergarten placement. Examining parental issues and adult development should be a part of an educator's knowledge base.

Summary

The decision of parents to delay placement of their kindergartners may be influenced by many issues. The primary purpose of this study was to analyze the parents' stage of adult development and the relationship to decisions made for their children. The researcher used qualitative research methods and the Loyola Generativity Scale to provide

support for the study. Results of this study are beneficial to educators in their

understanding of parental expectations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter discusses the human development pioneers who provided the foundations for adult developmental theories. Researchers' works reviewed include those who developed theories based on the perception that adult developmental issues originate in childhood. Childhood development beliefs on maturation and developmental stages impact adults' views on school readiness. Theorists who view development through stages provided support for Erik Erikson's stage theory. To examine the early history of human development, key theorists Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung are discussed, and their relationship and influence to Erik Erikson are explored. The work of other adult theorists, including Levinson and Gould, were evaluated since their work provided critical theories that support stages of adult maturation and adult developmental growth. A comprehensive look at Erik Erikson's eight stages of man is also presented, since his work provided the theoretical framework for analyzing adult development in this study. Other studies involving Erikson's theory and instruments used to measure his developmental stages are discussed. Limitations and criticisms of Erikson's work is examined. Other studies involving Erikson's theory were reviewed although no studies using Erikson's theory to evaluate adult decision-making were found.

Theories of Childhood Development

To fully understand issues concerning adult development, one must consider theories about childhood development. Although most theorists have studied either adult or childhood development exclusively, Erikson (1950) and Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson and McKee (1978) suggest that adult developmental issues begin in childhood. This study is concerned with the developmental readiness of children, and with issues that occur in childhood or adulthood that impact the developmental or maturity level of the parent as they make decisions for their children.

School Readiness

The term readiness, which is defined as "ready" in The New Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language (Thatcher, 1980) is described as "prepared at the moment; fit for immediate use; causing no delay from want of preparation; not slow, backward, dull, or hesitating . . . " (p. 695). Defined in the context of schools, three different views of readiness are noted that may impact school placement decisions. They are: (1) readiness is based on chronological age; (2) readiness has an internal clock that will develop independently and automatically; and (3) readiness is determined by social and environmental conditions.

Since state laws across the nation determine entrance age for public schools, the view of readiness based on chronological age or physiological and psychosocial growth is prevalent. This supports the idea that the majority of children can enter school and progress satisfactorily at a predetermined age (Gredler, 1992).

A second view of readiness focuses on developmental growth or maturation of the child. This perspective is based on the belief that children have an internal timing mechanism that cannot be tampered with and that determines their readiness for school (Gredler, 1992). The maturational school of thought has been supported in the United States by educators such as Hymes (1958, 1963) and Washburne (1936); by pediatricians such as Gesell (1954); and, later by various psychologists such as Ilg and Ames (1965) and Donofrio (1977). Gesell established a timetable that outlines the correct ages for learning and performing various tasks in the school curriculum. According to Ausubel (1962), the Gesellain theory more adequately fits sensorimotor and neuromuscular development of the child that takes place during the prenatal and early infant periods instead of explaining readiness for kindergarten.

Gredler (1992) noted, "Currently, public schools in the United States retain 2.4 million children a year, or 6% of the total school population (Berger, 1990)" (p. 160). Shepard and Smith (1988) found that teacher beliefs about the nature of development influence both their beliefs and practices related to retention. They identified two groups: the nativists and the non-nativists. The belief referred to as nativist also may be referred to as Gesellian. The nativists believe that the child's growth is primarily a psychological unfolding of abilities. Children who are having difficulty in kindergarten or first grade need time to mature. They found that of those who held a nativist belief system, 84% were classified as high retainers or retained more than 10% of their kindergarten children. The other beliefs that Shepard and Smith (1988) identified as nonnativists, advocated some environmental intervention such as tutoring, pullout programs, specific training and

selection of materials to match the child's psychological characteristics. Nonnativists were categorized as remediationist, diagnostic-prescriptive and interactionist.

According to Smith and Shepard (1988), remediationists believe that children of legal age for kindergarten are ready for school and should be taught. The curriculum is subdivided into smaller segments, and remediation is provided in the form of tutors, pull-out programs and other adjustments.

Diagnostic-prescriptives think that inadequacies in school readiness result from a defect in one or more of the traits essential for learning such as auditory memory. The belief is that the defect can be corrected by specific, concentrated training.

The nonnativist category of interactionists hold the belief that learning is a complex interaction between the psychological characteristics of the child and the environments arranged by the teachers. Materials selected by the teacher should be based on an ongoing analysis of each child. Of those considered nonnativists, only 5% were high retainers.

David Ausubel (1962) described a third view of readiness as a particular state in the child that depends both on growth and maturation and the social experiences of the child. In the early 1930s, Arthur Gates conducted a 5-year study on mental age and reading. He determined that classroom activities, instructional methods and curriculum impact student readiness and school success. Gates (1937) challenged the findings of Morphett and Washburne (1931), who stated that a mental age of 6½ to 7 years of age was a necessary prerequisite for success in beginning reading. Gates' research emphasized what few studies had been conducted regarding the influence of environmental conditions on the success of children in first grade reading. The concept

of readiness composed of both growth and social experience was formally developed by David Ausubel (1962).

Ausubel and Sullivan (1970) stated:

> Thus, the "internal ripening" theory has been highly detrimental in its effects on pupils and teachers because of "far fetched and uncritical extrapolation of developmental generalizations that either have not been adequately validated, or which apply only to very restricted age segment of the total span of children's development. (p. 95)

As Ausubel and Sullivan (1970) explained, "many educators view a child's readiness for school in absolute terms. Educators fail to appreciate that, except for such traits as walking and grasping, the mean age of readiness can never be specified apart from relevant environmental conditions" (p. 93).

Delaying placement of children, retention and transitional classes all are administrative mechanisms used to adapt to the maturational view. Thus, the environment of the classroom and the school personnel who determine the environment and future recommendations may also impact the parents' decision to academically redshirt children prior to beginning school.

Stage Theory

In the past two decades, a major framework that has evolved and that is strongly influenced by theorists of childhood, such as Freud and Piaget, is stage theory. As in studies of earlier periods of life, when stage theory is applied to adulthood, the implicit assumption is one of a progression toward a more complex and wiser self. Most notable and influential of this school is Erik Erikson. He is also more flexible in his use of this

framework than some younger scholars who, influenced by his work, have adopted stage

theory as the paradigm for their own work (Smelser & Erikson, 1980).

As stated by Evans and Erikson (1967):

> Erikson describes a stage by using the term epigenesis. According to
> Erikson: "Epi" means upon, and "genesis" emergence, so that epigenesis
> means one item develops on top of another in space and in time. Erikson's
> stages were extended to include a hierarchy of stages and not just a
> sequence...his stages differed in duration and intensity in different
> individuals and in different cultures. (p. 20)

Supporting Erikson's notion that human development occurs by passing through

stages is Jean Piaget. Although Piaget's (1947) research only addresses stages in

childhood, each part of it contributes to a single, integrated stage theory. The most

general stages or periods are Sensori-Motor Intelligence, Preoperational Thought,

Concrete Operations, and Formal Operations. When examining these stages, it is

important to know two theoretical points. First, Piaget (1950) recognized that children

pass through the stages at different rates, so little importance is attached to the ages

associated with them. He has maintained that they pass through them in the same order.

Second, Piaget does not think that the stages are genetically determined. They simply

represent increasingly comprehensive ways of thinking.

Piaget's theory relates to redshirting in the areas of cognitive development,

teaching techniques, maturation, and early childhood experiences. Piaget claims that

cognitive development is a spontaneous process. Children develop cognitive structures

on their own. This being the case, parents and teachers cannot force children to think on

a level they have not reached. Each stage sees the elaboration of new mental abilities

which set limits and determines the character of what can be learned during that period. (Crain, 1985).

Piaget (1967) acknowledged that biological maturation plays some role in development. Piaget said that maturation alone cannot play the dominant role because rates of development depend so much upon where children live. Children who grow up in impoverished rural areas frequently develop at slow rates, because they lack intellectual stimulation. The areas of socioeconomic level and preschool experiences will both be investigated in this study. Piaget (1967) felt strongly that learning should be geared to the child's particular level. If the teacher does not do this, the lesson will sail over the child's head and seem unnatural to him. Unfortunately, many curricula ignore a child's cognitive level and begin with an adult conception of what children should know.

Influence of Freud

The major theoretical framework for this study will be based on Erik Erikson's eight stages of human development. In reviewing the literature on Erik Erikson, it is important to understand his background and relationship to Anna and Sigmund Freud. During the summer of 1927, Erik Homburger Erikson was a young artist living in his hometown of Karlsruhe, Germany and in Florence, Italy. He was unsure of his professional direction and was encouraged by his childhood friend Peter Blos to come to Vienna to draw portraits of Dorothy Burlingham's children. This led to Erikson joining the teaching staff at an experimental school established by Anna Freud and directed by Blos. He became acquainted with the colleagues of Sigmund Freud and was eventually invited to become a candidate for psychoanalytic training at the Vienna Psychoanalytic

Institute. His training analyst was Anna Freud. It was a school for children of different nationalities whose parents were undergoing analysis and who themselves were undergoing child analysis. As an artist by trade, Erikson (1950) is quoted as saying, "I have nothing to offer except a way of looking at things" (p. 359).

Erikson's formulations have their roots in Freud's work. Freud presented a model of psychosexual development that was based on drives and instincts. Erikson differed from Freud in that he avoided seeing everything as a symbol for "something else" and believed that the human mind was more than drives and instincts. Erikson emphasized a homeostatic quality of the organism rather than psychopathology.

The research of Evans and Erikson (1967) related to Freud indicates that they believed that during the first five years of life, one is confronted with a series of conflicts, which children resolve with varying degrees of success. Freud called this repetition compulsion and suggested that reflections of these early patterns of the first five years continue to be operative later in life. Thus, we would understand a good deal of a person's later life as a reflection of these successive conflict resolutions in his or her early life. Freud did not emphasize, to the same extent, development in periods after these first five years. Erikson tried to conceptualize these later periods in more detail, but developed an analysis of human's overall development in the eight stages of man.

Another developmental psychologist who studied with Freud during the second quarter of the twentieth century was Carl Gustav Jung. Jung was one of Freud's early followers. During Jung's thirties, he was a disciple of Freud and a leading member of the newly forming psychoanalytic movement. Jung eventually had conflicting thoughts

concerning Freud's theory and the importance of sexual instincts in human behavior. He

parted from Freud and ended their friendship in 1913 and developed his own theory.

Of the many intellectual differences between Jung and Freud, two are of special

relevance. First, Jung felt that Freud was too narrowly focused on childhood

development and its influence on adult problems, conflicts, and creativities. Jung forged

a conception of the entire life cycle, giving particular attention to adult development.

Second, he believed that Freud's strongly clinical orientation had led to an overemphasis

on psychopathology, and internal intrapsychic processes, to the neglect of social

institutions of religion and mythology. Jung set out to develop social psychology. He

tried to understand individual development as a product of both internal psychological

processes and exterior cultural forces (Levinson, et al., 1978). This would support the

assumption that parenting decisions may be based on internal and cultural issues.

History of Adult Development Theories

Some (Levinson, et al., 1978) view Jung as the father of the modern study of adult

development. He understood that the young adult, as part of normal development, is still

highly "caught up" in emotional involvements and conflicts of childhood and is hard-

pressed to cope with the demands of family, work and community. He believed that the

personality could not reach its full growth by age 20. He found that the next opportunity

for fundamental change starts at about age 40. Jung used the term "individuation" for the

developmental process that begins and may extend over the last half of the life cycle.

Despite Jung's numerous suggestive ideas on adult development, he did not attract

many disciples among developmentalists probably because his basic worldview and

philosophical and methodological assumptions differed from those of mainstream Western experimental and developmental psychology. This makes comparison and contrast to Jung with other adult developmental psychologists difficult.

Criticism of Jung included the view that his own unique experiences were too closely tied to his personality type. Jung's interpretation of development in the second half of life is rather sketchy and abstract. Jung's procedure is designed particularly for a leisured, cultivated, creative elite. He focused on individualization, not relationships or the world around us. He placed too much emphasis on archetypal psychology and mythology and not enough attention to the problems of individual development, but his teachings extended beyond psychology and influenced other fields, including anthropology, philosophy, and theology (Strande, 1981).

Erikson provided an historical and intellectual link between Freud and Jung. His modifications of psychoanalytic theory brought him closer to Jung, though he lacked some of the philosophical and mystical qualities that kept Jung at odds with the professional establishment. Erikson is on the boundary between humanities and the social sciences. Levinson, et al. (1978), describes Erikson as primarily a humanist, a student of life, a true observer and more than an academic scientist.

Other Adult Development Theorists

Recent scholarly works in the field of adult development include those of Roger Gould (1978), David Gutmann (1977), Daniel Levinson, et al. (1978), and Jane Loevinger (1976). Strande (1981) believes the most comprehensive theory of adult development explicated thus far is that of Levinson, et al. (1978). He also observes that Levinson's

theory does not extend past mid-life transition and middle adult and his study is limited to men. Another criticism of Levinson is his ages and stages are more of a hypothesis than a theory, which still has not been demonstrated to hold true (Strande, 1981).

As Smelser and Erikson (1980) wrote:

. . . Erikson, Gould and Levinson are most explicit in their attention to the psychological processes involved in the passage through adult life. Certain assumptions concerning the social order can be drawn from or perhaps read into the contributions of each. (p. 12)

Also, according to Smelser and Erikson (1980):

He [Levinson] develops the notion of "major life events" some of which occur as integral parts of and at expected points in the life contour and some of which are interruptions. These constitute, for Levinson, a framework within which an individual fashions his or her life structure. (p. 13)

Most of Erikson's readers and critics have tended to see his stages of adult life as expressions of autonomous psychological development. However, his own characterization of the adult phases includes reference to the fact that going through them is "essential not only for the individual cycle of life but also for the cycle of generational sequence as supported by the basic structure of societies" (Erikson & Schlein, 1987, p. 13).

This suggests a certain societal orderliness, and indeed could lead to the conclusion that the various stages of adult development are triggered by expectations imposed by one or more of the life contours. For example, the adolescent crisis of intimacy versus role refusal could be triggered by the sociological fact that during these years the adolescent is being asked to assume positions of role responsibility in the "adult" world. Similarly, the conflict between intimacy versus exclusivity is linked most closely with the familial life contour, especially the establishment of love relations as the

basis for the marital role. The conflict of generativity versus rejectivity, characteristic of

adulthood, can be read as being a psychological manifestation of the involvement in the

parental (caring) as well as the work role. In short, Erikson's psychological stages appear

to be rooted in the orderliness of the person's social and biological contours and occur

roughly in the sequence that these contours infringe on that person (Smelser & Erikson,

1980).

As Smelser and Erikson (1980) wrote:

Similarly, in Roger Gould's account of a person's progressive liberation
from childhood myths and the relationship of this liberation to life contours,
there is a sequence of new involvements, which contradicts fixed childhood
assumptions and leads ultimately to liberation from them. (p. 13)

Also, as noted by Smelser and Erikson (1980):

Most of Gould's discussions, like Erikson's focus on the psychological
dynamics, involved in these transitions of adult life. But at the same time,
Gould's scheme, like Erikson's, makes certain assumptions about an
ordered set of social involvements (especially in work and family roles)
that parallel and indeed precipitate the different phases of adult
development. (p. 14)

Gould (1978) stated:

As I later discovered, my disappointment at having to give up this rather
minor false assumption of my childhood is part of a process of shedding a
whole network of assumptions, rules, fantasies, irrationalities and rigidities
that tie us to our childhood consciousness. These networks of assumptions
allow us to believe, on a nonrational emotional level, that we've never
really left the safe world provided by omnipotent parents. The act of
taking a step into an adult life – our moving into our own new house –
exposed this, unsuspected emotional reality: a childhood consciousness
coexisted alongside our rational, adult view of reality. (p. 11)

Our unsuspected reality supports, stabilizes and interferes with our life, as

decisions for our children are based on our parents' and our own problems.

Smelser and Erikson (1980) offered:

> Erikson, Gould and Levinson stress that crisis and adaptation yield some
> kind of cumulative development. Formal comparison among the three is
> somewhat difficult, since they have made their contributions in different
> historical and theoretical contexts. In many respects, Erikson's efforts to
> epitomize the dynamics of adult development precede by at least a
> generation the new intellectual movement – which he himself inspired on
> some measure – that focuses on adult development itself and in which
> both Gould and Levinson are important figures. Erikson's interest grew as
> an integral part of his lifetime efforts, originating in psychoanalysis to
> construct a psychosocial theory of development over the entire life cycle,
> indeed of the cycle of generations. In this respect Erikson is not and did
> not aspire to be a theorist of adult development as such but rather a
> theorist of development generally, of which adult development constitutes
> one part. The work of Gould and Levinson is more focused on distinctive
> processes and stages characteristic of the adult years. There are significant
> differences among the two as well, with Gould emphasizing the major
> shifts in ego adaptations – in the direction of liberation from childhood
> fantasies – and Levinson, concentrating more on a kind of personal career
> of transition – crisis – adaptation sequences which are rooted in an
> individual's changing social situation but which nevertheless unfold with a
> developmental regularity. (p. 19)

Erikson believed that adulthood is not a plateau, but rather it is a dynamic and changing time for all adults. As individuals grow and change, they take steps away from childhood and toward adulthood. Each step has unfinished business of childhood that intrudes, which disturbs our emotions and requires psychological work or struggle (Smelser & Erikson, 1980). All notions are connected to Erikson, his stages and conflicts indicating the past impacts the present.

To grow up an adult, it seems that some leftover childhood must be mixed in; a little unfinished business from the past periodically intrudes on our adult life confusing our relationships and disturbing our sense of self. Erikson calls this unfinished business ego childhood consciousness.

Allman and Jaffe (1972) stated:

> T. Bendick (4) has added an in-depth view of the psychology of being a
> parent in her work, "Parenthood as a Developmental Phase." She notes
> that there is an emotional normative symbiosis between parent and child
> that is based on the parent's prior experience of childhood and that
> operates through the mental principle that "the introject object is merged
> with the introjected self drive experience and thereby object
> representations and self-representations are established in inseparable
> connection with each other." That is, the parent is capable of structural
> change because in the deep part of his mind, the experiences he has with
> his child are opportunities to rework intimately tied, structure-determining
> memories of his own childhood. This is all made possible by a kind of
> limited regression and emotional symbiosis on the part of the adult parent
> to the level of the developing child. This normative regression and
> blurring of self-definition is a detailed look at what Erikson called
> mutually during the stage of generativity. (p. 23)

Very few others have taken up his challenge to study the life course as a whole

and to examine it from the multiple vantage points of society, history and personality.

Many have admired Erikson but few have truly followed his example. This study is a

distinctive and worthwhile attempt to examine and interpret the adult ego stage of Erik

Erikson's work, defined as generativity.

Erikson's Influences on Human Development

With the publication of Childhood and Society in 1950, Erikson became the most

influential developmental theorist of the time and the book became one of the most

influential books of the century on personality development because it was distinctive in

that it placed childhood within an articulated framework of the life cycle and generated a

study of adult development. Erikson's developmental concepts dealt primarily with the

individual life course. Erikson emphasized the process of living, the idea of life history

rather than case history, the use of biography rather than testing as the chief research

method (Evans & Erikson, 1967). In studying a life, his first step was to view its course over many years. According to Levinson and Levinson (1996), "He then sought to explore the ways in which the life course reflected the engagement of self (psyche, personality, inner worked) and external work (society, culture, institutions, history)" (p. 16).

Erikson started with a major interest in development during the first twenty years of life. His curiosity and psychological activity carried him on into the study of adulthood. His studies of Luther in 1958 and Ghandi in 1969 led him to concentrate his attention on adult development and the developmental task of adulthood. Erikson saw the personality in its essence as always developing. This led Erikson to regard the life cycle as a continuing series of steps, each presenting possibilities for new growth, in contrast to Freud's view of adulthood as a mere unfolding of events whose direction had already been determined in childhood.

Strande (1981) discussed Erikson's unfolding of events as turning points:

> In Erikson's view, psychosocial development proceeds by "crises:" decisive turning points where a shift one way or another is unavoidable. Each successive step is then a potential crisis because of a radical change in perspective. He underscored this developmental crisis aspect by assigning double terms to each life stage, emphasizing that basic conflicts are never fully resolved but continue to recur in later life. (p. 7)

Erikson (1968) described crisis in terms of layers:

> A new life task presents a crisis whose outcome can be a successful graduation from that stage or an impairment of the life cycle that will impact future crises. Each crisis prepares the next, as one step leads to another; and each crisis lays one more cornerstone for the development of the adult personality. (p. 254)

As one proceeds through the life course, development becomes more and more complex. A restructuring of all previous identifications occurs, which often means having to fight some earlier battles over again. When a later crisis is severe, earlier crises are likely to be revived. Despite the resolution of the identity crisis in adolescence, later stresses can precipitate its renewal. To understand Erikson's eight stages of man completely, one must have knowledge of all eight stages that are present throughout the life cycle.

Eight Stages of Man

Trust Versus Mistrust – The first stage is Trust versus Mistrust. This stage is from birth to 18 months. The purpose of this stage is to experience both trust and mistrust, but to become convinced that the world is a friendly place. Basic trust might be thought of as optimism, openness to new experiences based on the anticipation that they will generally be pleasant. "…a sense of the world as a safe place to be and of people as helpful and dependable" (Elkind, 1970). Basic mistrust might be thought of as pessimism, a fearful apprehension of new experiences based on the anticipation of unpleasantness.

Basic trust and hope is a very basic human strength without which one could not stay alive and it is not something invented by theologians or philosophers. Spitz's studies show that children who give up hope may literally die because they do not get enough loving and stimulation (Evans & Erikson, 1967). The amount of trust derived from earliest infantile experience does not seem to depend on absolute quantities of food or demonstrations of love but rather on the quality of the maternal relationship.

Erikson (1980) stated:

Mothers create a sense of trust in their children by that kind of admiration
which in its quality combines sensitive care of the baby's individual needs
and a firm sense of personal trustworthiness within the trusted framework
of their community's life style. This forms the basis in the child of a sense
of identity which will later combine a sense of being "all right," of being
oneself and of becoming what other people trust one will become. (p. 64)

Erikson (1980) additionally offered:

The general state of trust, furthermore, implies not only that one must
learn to rely on the sameness and continuity of the outer providers, but
also that one may trust oneself and the capacity of one's own organs to
cope with urges; that is, able to consider oneself trustworthy enough so
that the providers will not need to be on guard or to leave. (p. 63)

Parents must not only have certain ways of guiding, "They must also be able to

represent to the child a deep, and almost somatic conviction that there is a meaning to

what they are doing" (p. 63). Children must learn to trust the decisions that their parents

make for them. Parents must create this trust by having confidence in their decisions

(Erikson, 1980).

Autonomy Versus Doubt and Shame – The second stage is Autonomy versus

Doubt and Shame. This stage is from eighteen months to three years of age. Autonomy

comes with biological maturation and the ability to do things on one's own. This is the

desire to make choices, to control one's self and one's environment. The shame and

doubt come from an awareness of social expectations and pressures. The realization is

that one is not so powerful after all, that others can control one and perform actions much

better.

Erikson (1980), explained, "Just as trust is a reflection of the parents' sturdy and realistic faith, so is the sense of autonomy a reflection of the parents' dignity as individuals" (p. 75).

The sense of autonomy, which should arise in the second stage of childhood, is developed in the child by the parents who express a sense of rightful dignity and lawful independence which give the child confidence. Much of the shame and doubt, much of the indignity and uncertainty which is aroused in the child is a consequence of the parents' frustration in marriage, in work, and in society (Erikson, 1980).

Autonomy will result from constructive resolutions of feelings of shame and doubt. Both must emerge, but the ratio should be in favor of autonomy. If you have relatively more shame than autonomy, then you feel or act inferior all your life or consistently counteract that feeling.

Evans and Erikson (1967) offered:

> The shift from the first to the second stage also marks one of the difficult human crises: for just when a child has learned to trust his mother and to trust the world, he must become self-willed and must take chances with his trust in order to see what he, as a trustworthy individual, can will. He pits his will against the will of others, even that of his protectors. (p. 19)

Evans and Erikson (1967) further stated, "Willpower would seem to be a natural outgrowth of autonomy. Only a mature person has willpower in the fullest sense, but in the early stages, something fundamental must develop. Without it, the later mature human capacity cannot develop" (p. 20).

Initiative Versus Guilt – The next stage, Initiative versus Guilt, involves ages four to six. Initiative is similar to autonomy, but with increased assertiveness. In the previous

stage the child objected to interference with his actions; now, opportunities for self-assertion are actively sought out. During this stage the child turns away from exclusive dependence on family and moves towards involvement with peers. The child begins to internalize those regulatory functions which have, up to this point, been performed by parents. The child continues to develop a sense of oneself as an independent person who must find his own place in the world. Initiative relates well to kindergarten readiness. This would involve the ability to separate from parents, participate in group time, complete independent tasks, and enjoy new relationships and experiences. The danger of this stage is developing guilt over behavior and desires associated with developing independence.

Erikson (1980) explained:

> Being firmly convinced that he is a person, the child must now find out what kind of person he is going to be. And here he hitches his wagon to nothing less than a star. He wants to be like his parents, who to him appear very powerful and very beautiful, although quite unreasonably dangerous. He "identifies with them," he plays with the idea of how it would be to be them. He is ready to visualize himself as being as big as the perambulating grownups. He begins to make comparisons and is apt to develop curiosity about differences in sizes in general, and sexual differences in particular. He tries to comprehend possible future roles, or at any rate to understand what roles are worth imitating. (p. 79)

According to Erikson (1980):

> The child thus develops the perquisites for masculine and feminine initiatives that are for the selection of social goals and perseverance in approaching them. According to Erikson the stage is all set for entrance into life, except that life must first be school life. The child here must repress or forget many of the fondest hopes and energetic wishes, while his exuberant imagination is tamed and he learns the necessary self-restraint and the necessary interest in impersonal things, even the three's. This often demands a change of personality that is sometimes too drastic for the good of the child. This change is not only a result of education but also of an inner reorientation and it is based on a biological fact (the delay of

sexual maturation) and a psychological one (the repression of childhood wishes) for those sinister oedipal wishes, in consequence of vastly increased imagination and, as it were, the intoxication of increased locomotion powers, are apt to lead to secret fantasies of terrifying proportions. The consequence is a deep sense of guilt, a strange sense for it forever seems to imply that the individual has committed crimes and deeds which were not only not committed but also would have been biologically quite impossible. (p. 82)

The child begins to create goals for which his locomotion and cognition have prepared him. The child also begins to think of being big and to identify with people whose work he can understand.

Evans and Erikson (1967) stated:

He begins to learn that he must work for things, and that even his secret wishes for omniscience and omnipotence must be attached to concrete things, or at least to things which can materialize. Paradoxically, he continues to feel guilty for his fantasies. (p. 25)

It is at this stage in which the conscience becomes firmly established.

Erikson (1980) stated:

This is the cornerstone of morality in the individual sense. But from the point of view of mental health, we must point out that if this great achievement is overburdened by all too eager adults, it can be bad for the spirit and for morality itself. Parents often do not realize why some children suddenly seem to think less of them and seem to attach themselves to teachers, to the parents of other children, or to people representing occupations which the child can grasp: firemen and policemen, gardeners, and plumbers. The point is that children do not wish to be reminded of the principal inequality with parents of the same sex. They remain identified with this same parent; but for the present they look for opportunities where transitory identification seems to promise a field of initiative without too much conflict or guilt. (p. 86)

Industry Versus Inferiority – From ages seven to eleven, the conflict becomes Industry versus Inferiority. This is a most decisive stage for ego growth. The central problem becomes finding a place in one's own peer group and feeling competent. This is

a very competitive stage, with an emphasis on proving oneself among one's peers. In our

culture, school is the field where one must prove oneself. This stage is a key issue in

kindergarten redshirting. All the other conflicts must be resolved in order to not feel

inferior or inadequate in social and academic settings. If you are smarter, bigger, and

stronger than your peers are, this stage is positive. The danger in this stage is an

excessive feeling of inferiority rather than a feeling of confidence.

Evans and Erikson (1967) suggest there is a lull during this period when the

child's sexuality must wait for puberty. The child learns the basic language and

technology of his culture. The child's inborn capacities and potentials are developed.

There is an enormous curiosity during this stage of life; a wish to learn, a wish to know.

According to Evans and Erikson (1967):

Piaget's work permits us to bring cognitive elements together with the
psychosexual ones, for obviously learning is not just suppressed or
displaced sexual curiosity; learning contains an energy of its own which
Robert White (44) subsumes as a striving for competency. (p. 27)

Erikson agreed with him in that this is a fundamental lifelong striving, but thinks

that some experiential aspects of it undergo a special crisis in the "school age." The word

industry means industriousness, being busy with something, learning to complete

something, doing a job. Success in school or the feeling of being industrious is vital to

one's self-concept.

Erikson (1980) explained:

Self-esteem, confirmed at the end of each major crisis, grows to be a
conviction that one is learning effective steps toward a tangible future, that
one is developing a defined personality within a social reality, which one
understands. The growing child must, at every step, derive a vitalizing
sense of reality from the awareness that his individual way of mastering

experience is a successful variant of the way other people around him
master experience and recognize such mastery. (p. 95)

Empty praise and condescending encouragement by parents and teachers cannot
fool children.

According to Erikson (1980):

They may have to accept artificial bolstering of their self-esteem in lieu of
something better, but accruing ego identity gains real strength only from
wholehearted and consistent recognition of real accomplishment, that is,
achievement that has meaning in their culture. (p. 95)

Identity Versus Role Confusion – Identity versus Role Confusion is the central
stage for adolescence. This is a stage of integration in which one's previous life
experiences are distilled into a sense of self, a feeling about who one is, what one wants
out of life, and where one will fit into the world as an adult. A sense of identity is
necessary before one can appropriately make the decisions required of an adult (Elkind,
1981). This is a very self-conscious stage and the adolescent is very concerned about
how he appears to others. Adults who have not resolved this stage would try to live
through their children or have their children satisfy the need to have a positive role in
society. This may affect a parent's decision to delay school entrance or accelerate the
child. The danger of this role is building a self-concept on the expectations of others.

Erikson's theory indicated that identity develops through all earlier stages; it
begins when the child first recognizes his mother and first feels recognized by her, when
her voice tells him he is somebody with a name, and he is good. The child then begins to
feel that he is somebody, he is an individual. The child has to go through many stages
before he reaches the adolescent identity crisis. These stages revive why he has been

punished and why he feels guilty about his failures in competency and goodness. Identity means an integration of all previous identifications and self-images, including the negative ones. The more a culture gives free choices and decisions as to which one is going to be, the more open conflict is aroused.

Erikson (1980) thought that our democracy should "...present the adolescent with ideals which could be shared by youths of many backgrounds and which emphasized autonomy in the form of independence and initiative in the form of enterprise" (p. 99). He suggested these promises are not easy to fulfill in increasingly complex and centralized systems of economic and political organizational systems.

Erikson (1980) stated:

This is hard on many young Americans because their upbringing, and, therefore, the development of a healthy personality, depends on a certain degree of choice, a certain hope for an individual chance, and a certain conviction in freedom of self-determination. In a culture once pervaded with the value of the self-made man, a special danger ensues from the idea of a synthetic personality, as if you are what you can appear to be, or as if you are what you can buy. (p. 100)

Evans and Erikson (1967) suggested that since Erikson was an immigrant to this country, he felt that the problems of identity hold a central position in the disturbance we encounter today in American society. Immigrants gave up old national identities for the sake of a new country and its tremendous industrial development. In the United States, there is a continual shifting and moving of the population socially and geographically.

Evans and Erikson (1967) explained:

It is not only the first generation of Americans who face the problems of change, for they at least knew where they came from and why they came. For the following generations, apparently the problem of identity becomes an even more central and disturbing one. This is the country of changes; it is obsessed with change. (p. 29)

Evans and Erikson (1967) stated:

As August Aichorn has taught us, in working with late adolescents, it is not enough to interpret to them what went wrong in their past history. There is too much change for them to grasp. The present is too powerful for much retrospection. They often use that kind of interpretation to develop a florid ideology of illness, and actually become quite proud of their neuroses. Everything becomes someone else's fault and trust in one's power of taking responsibility for oneself may be undermined. It amounts to a massive social rationalization mechanism. The poverty-stricken person says, "I'm not responsible for my poverty. It's society's fault." The delinquent says, "It's my mother's fault." This use of biological and social deterministic concepts may have led us backward rather than forward in many ways. (p. 31)

As noted by Evans and Erikson (1967), Erikson stated:

I would go further and claim that we have almost an instinct for fidelity meaning that when you reach a certain age you can and must learn to be faithful to some ideological view. Speaking psychiatrically, without the development of a capacity for fidelity, the individual will either have what we call a weak ego, or look for a deviant group to be faithful to. (p. 30)

This problem is evident today in our culture with the growing popularity of gangs and cults. Adolescents are vulnerable to fake ideas, as they can put an enormous amount of energy and loyalty in the disposal of any convincing system (Evans & Erikson, 1967).

Intimacy Versus Isolation – Early adulthood involves Intimacy versus Isolation conflict. This stage focuses upon relationships with other people. Real intimacy is only possible once a reasonable sense of identity has been established. If a person is unable to form an intimate relationship, he or she experiences isolation. If it is resolved favorably, it results in the capacity to love.

The condition of a true twoness involves first becoming oneself. Erikson's intimacy is described as relationships, such as friendship, love, sexual intimacy, even

intimacy with oneself, one's inner resources, the range of one's excitements and commitments.

As noted by Evans and Erikson (1967), Erikson stated:

Intimacy is really the ability to fuse one's identity with somebody else without fear that he is going to lose something himself. It is this development of intimacy that makes marriage possible as a chosen bond. When this has not developed, marriage is meaningless. (p. 48)

Further, as offered by Evans and Erikson (1967), Erikson also provided:

This is consistent with findings of the sociologists that marriages between young people characteristically are not as stable as are marriages between older persons. Many young people marry in order to find their identity in and through another person, but this is difficult where the very choice of partner was made to resolve severe unconscious conflict. (p. 49)

The potential for the development of ego strength comes out of the successful completion of all the earlier developmental process.

Generativity Versus Stagnation – Once two people have established some measure of intimacy, their interests begin to expand beyond just the two of them. They become concerned with raising children. They enter the stage of Generativity versus Stagnation in adulthood. Generativity is a broad term, which refers not only to the creation and care for children, but the production of things and ideas through work and the capacity for selfless giving of oneself. When generativity is lacking, the result is stagnation, self-absorption, and impoverishment of the personality (Evans & Erikson, 1967).

Stagnation is continuation of the self-consciousness which characterizes the identity resolution in adolescence and the inability to love or care about others (Elkind,

1981). Parents who become self-absorbed care more for their own needs rather than the needs of their child.

Erikson (1980) believed that "adult man is so constituted as to need to be needed lest he suffer the mental deformation of self-absorption in which he becomes his own infant and pet" (p. 103). At this stage, one should begin to take one's place in society and to help in the development and perfection of whatever it produces. Levinson and Levinson (1996) determined that a key issue in this stage is one's relationship to the generation of younger adults.

> In Ortega's terms, generativity is a major task of the dominant generation, which has the responsibility for educating the youth generation and fostering the development of the initiation generation so that they will, in time, be ready to succeed and perhaps exceed their seniors. (Levinson & Levinson, 1996, p. 17).

Teaching is a good example of generativity and illustrates the way in which the life stages interlock within a total life cycle. It connects the adult, the child and the culture.

According to Erikson (1980):

> Generativity is primarily the interest in establishing and guiding the next generation, although there are people who, from misfortune or because of special and genuine gifts in other directions, do not apply this drive to offspring but to other forms of altruistic concern and of creativity, which may absorb their kind of parental responsibility. The principal is that this is a stage of growth of the healthy personality and that where such enrichment fails, regression from generativity and obsessive need for pseudo intimacy takes place. Individuals who do not develop generativity often begin to indulge themselves as if they were their own one and only child. The mere fact of having or even wanting children does not itself attest to generativity; in fact the majority of young parents seen in child-guidance work suffer, it seems, from the retardation of or inability to develop this stage. The reasons are often in faulty identifications with parents, in excessive self-love based on a too strenuously self-made personality and lack of trust. (p. 103)

McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998) further described generativity as:

Adults become concerned about the next generation; reinforced by a belief in the species, they translate their concern into generative commitments, which in turn lead to generative acts of creating, maintaining and offering up. The full expression of generativity integrates inner desires, cultural demands, concern for the next generation, belief in the species, generative commitment, generative action, and the narration of adult lives around the individual and societal goal of providing for the survival, well-being, and development of human life into succeeding generations. (p. 37)

Integrity Versus Despair – The last stage is Integrity versus Despair, which takes place in the mature adult. Integrity is the ultimate satisfaction with one's self, manifested in the absence of a fear of death. Despair expresses the feeling that the time is now short, too short to create a more meaningful life. Only he who in some way has taken care of things and people and has adapted himself to the triumphs and disappointments of being, only he has integrity and wisdom. According to Erikson (1980), wisdom is the embodiment of all eight stages.

Erikson (1980) expressed that it is the acceptance of one's own and only life cycle and of the people who have become significant to it as something that had to be.

Integrity allows a new different love of one's parents and an acceptance that one's life is one's own responsibility. There is a sense of comradeship with people of distant times and of different pursuits. This awareness of all the various life styles which have given meaning to human striving helps the individual understand and defend the dignity of his own lifestyle against all physical and economic threats.

Despair expresses the feeling that there is not time to attempt to start another life and to try out alternate roads to integrity. Such a despair is often hidden behind a show of disgust or a chronic contemptuous displeasure with particular institutions and particular

people. This disgust and a displeasure only signify the individual's contempt of himself (Evans & Erikson, 1967).

<div align="center">Other Studies Involving Erikson</div>

According to Popenoe (1994), one of the first books to provide empirical support for Erikson's work is How Fathers Care for the Next Generation: A Four Decade Study by John Snarey (1993). This book, based on the work of Erik Erikson, is a longitudinal study of a portion of the sample from the famous cross-sectional study of delinquent boys that was begun by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck in the 1940s. The Gluecks made a comparison between 500 delinquent boys and a matched control group of 500 non-delinquent boys from lower- and working-class families in the Boston area. Snarey compared the men who were highly involved with their children to those who were not highly involved with their children.

This study provides empirical support for the eight-stage model or personality development, which involves the experience and resolution of crisis at each stage. The primary focus of the book is generativity versus stagnation. The study uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches. Longitudinal data are interspersed with ones that tell the story in qualitative terms, based on interviews with a father-son or father-daughter pair. The study is limited by including only intact, white, mostly Catholic families and first-born children. According to Popenoe (1994), the correlations are relatively weak, as it is difficult to measure fathering behaviors.

Rosenthal, Gurney and Moore (1981) report on an inventory for examining the first six of Erikson's psychosocial stages. The Erikson Psychosocial Stage Inventory

(EPSI) is a self-report questionnaire, developed to provide useful measure for researchers

interested in development of early adolescence and in mapping changes as a function of

life events. Development of the inventory arose from the need for a measure for

Erikson's psychosocial stages. The EPSI has six subscales based on the first six Erikson

stages. Each subtest has 12 items, half of which reflect successful and half of which

reflect unsuccessful resolutions of the crisis of the stage. A 5-point Likert scale is used to

score the results. A suggestion in the research is to expand the scale to include the two

adult stages.

> According to Rosenthal, Gurney, and Moore (1981),
>
> Erikson's theoretical propositions have had wide influences on
> understanding and further theorizing in areas of child development,
> adolescence, adulthood and aging. Child-rearing, educational and clinical
> practice have also been influenced by Erikson's stage model. But little
> research has been done on many aspects of Erikson's theory. One reason
> for this scarcity has been the difficulties in operationalizing and measuring
> his theoretical constructs, which are often complex, vague and
> overlapping, but meaningful in that they encapsulate to some essence of
> human experience. (p. 534)

Several studies using Erikson's theory to determine identity, intimacy and

generativity have been utilized. In reviewing the literature on Erikson's theory and

research of human development, the researcher found the studies tend to be limited to a

specific issue or time of development and thus a specific developmental stage.

Another example of a study focusing on a specific developmental issue is

Heights' (1997) research. This study presents the argument that the adolescent mother's

parenting is at risk if she has not had the opportunity to achieve her role identity. This

was analyzed by using demographic questionnaires, the Index of Self Esteem (Hudson,

1982) and the Adult-Adolescent Inventory (Bavolek, 1984). In this study, by determining

self-esteem as an indicator for the developmental stage of role identity, the researchers

could utilize role identity as a prerequisite to achieving generativity.

According to McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992):

> Osche and Plug (1986) reported a 10-item self-report scale for generativity
> embedded in a large personality inventory purporting to assess each of
> Erikson's first seven stages. A similar measure has been developed by
> Hawley (1985), embedded in an assessment of all eight Eriksonian stages.
> Neither of these two short scales was designed with attention to problems
> of discriminant and convergent validity. Thus, in both cases, scores on
> generativity are highly correlated with scores on many other stage scales in
> their measures – scales that purportedly measure very different constructs.
> Neither scale has been used in a systematic program of research on
> generativity designed to validate the measure and the construct. (p. 1004)

In the Christiansen and Palkovitz study (1998), relationships among fathers'

involvement in childcare, identity, intimacy and generativity were examined to determine

which variables best predict variation in fathers' levels of generativity. Instruments used

in this study were the Parental Childcare Index (Radin, 1990), the Modified Erikson

Psychosocial Stage Inventory (MEPSI) (Kline Leidy & Darling-Fisher, 1995), the

Inventory of Psychosocial Balance (IPB) and the Role of the Father Questionnaire

(Palkovitz, 1984). The MEPSI builds on the Erikson Psychosocial Stage Inventory, by

Rosenthal, Gurney and Moore (1981), which was designed to measure Erikson's first six

stages. The IPB is designed to measure the eight developmental stages of Erikson's

theory. It consists of 120 items that yields eight scores (one for each stage) and uses a

five-point Likert-type response format. It has been used with active, older adults from

ages 59 to 82 (Domino & Affonso, 1990). Other subtests were used and results were

reported by computing t-tests and conducting regression analyses. In this study, parental

identity, psychosocial intimacy and psychosocial identity were the best predictions of fathers' levels of generativity.

Another instrument used to measure Erikson's stage of identity is the Test of Identity by Miguel Molla, which is an inventory of 110 items. This instrument evaluates levels of conscious feelings (Mautner, 1999). Although the test has been devised to condense, ina questionnaire, the phrases regarding the essential characteristics that define every stage of Erikson's epigenetic cycle, it was designed for adolescents and youth. Adolescent characteristics that are projected to adult stages on this instrument are sexual polarization, leadership and followership, and ideological commitment.

Most studies reviewed used a combination of instruments that were correlated to examine a particular developmental issue. The researcher found limited information on studies that have examined Erikson's work using solely qualitative methods. One qualitative method of measuring generativity is through self-narratives and life stories constructed by individuals. These autobiographical accounts reveal generative themes through coding. Dan McAdams suggest that using narrative life stories is a challenge due to the commitment from subjects. McAdams and de St.Aubin (1992) developed the Loyola Generativity Scale by using an intensive interview study of 40 highly generative adults. Generative concern and action were evaluated.

In a study of generativity and authoritarianism by Peterson, Smirles and Wentworth (1997), the instrument such as The Big Five Inventory by John, Donahue and Kentle (1991) was used to examine personality traits while the Loyola Generativity Scale by McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) was used to examine generativity.

Marks, Koepke, and Bradley, (1994) used the <u>Loyola Generativity Scale</u> (LGS) to assess the relationship between pet attachment and generativity among young adults. This study utilized a questionnaire, demographic questions, and the <u>Pet Attachment Survey</u> (PAS). Questionnaire results were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficients, t tests and two-tailed tests of significance. The results of the study suggested that nurturance may link to pet attachment and generativity.

The <u>Loyola Generativity Scale</u> is discussed in the methodology section of this research, as it was selected to provide support for determining generativity among the adult interviewed in this study.

McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998) stated:

> Although there is a growing literature on the correlates of generativity, particularly in midlife adults (Cole & Stewart, 1996; DeHaan & MacDermid, in press; Heilbrun, & Gillespie, in press; MacDermid & Crouter, 1994; MacDermid, McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams, Ruetzel, & Foley, 1986; Peterson & Klohnen, 1995; Peterson & Stewart, 1993, 1996; Snarey, Son, Kuehne, Hauser, & Vaillant, 1987; Vaillant, 1977; Vaillant & Milofsky, 1980; Van de Water & McAdams, 1989), there are relatively few empirical studies that address the possibility of a "course" of generativity in adulthood. Three kinds of studies could provide useful evidence: cross-sectional comparison of adults of different ages, case studies following a single individual over an extended period of adulthood, and longitudinal studies following entire samples over an extended period that assess generativity at several points. Studies that also address the presence or absence of other stage-related concerns...are particularly pertinent to addressing the questions of simultaneity and sequence in stage preoccupations. (p. 79)

According to McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998), "Our research on generativity is, nonetheless, still in its infancy. As the field matures, the theoretical model we offer could potentially stimulate many different kinds of empirical inquiries" (p. 37).

Criticisms of Erikson

Throughout the review of Erikson's many works on adult development, the

researcher has noted frequent critics. Analyses of these criticisms lend credence to this

study in that it provides the researcher with an alternative view of Erikson's works to

consider as an integral part of the study.

One of the criticisms of Erikson's work is that his adult stages of development

were not as comprehensive as his stages of childhood.

Among the critics are Gould (1978), who wrote:

Erikson's description of the life phase is very brief (i.e., the last three
stages). He encourages others to flesh them out with detailed
investigations and description. When we compare these skeletal sections
in adulthood with his fuller previous sections on childhood we find vivid
evidence that adulthood is a topic of neglect. (p. 23)

Others (Allman & Jaffe, 1972) stated, "Erikson becomes quite sweeping and

thematic in his approach to adulthood after identity crisis..." (p. 24).

Levinson and Levinson (1996), wrote:

Criticisms of Erikson include his view of the adult years, roughly from
ages twenty to sixty, and of the two ego stages within them. These provide
a valuable starting point for the study of adult development, but much
more is needed. The problem of segments of the life cycle is not Erikson's
alone; it is a fundamental issue that has generally been ignored or blurred.
Most textbooks on human development devote sixty percent or more of
their pages to childhood, twenty percent or less to adulthood and about
twenty percent to old age. (p. 17)

The critics of Erikson's work have also argued that Erikson's stages of identity

and intimacy do not address the experiences of women accurately. Evans and Erikson

(1967) reported Erikson as stating the same of Freud, in that "My feeling is that Freud's

general judgement of the identity of women was probably the weakest part of this theory" (p. 43).

As noted by Allman and Jaffe (1972), Erikson further stated:

I would think that what we need is a hierarchy of differences. For example, I think that in problems of individuality and selfhood, a man and a woman are much more alike than in anything else, though, of course, never the same, for individuality is tied to a body...There are aspects of the body in which women are basically so different from men that the feminine ego has a very specific task to perform in integrating body, role and individuality. (p. 43)

Levinson and Levinson (1996) stated:

Findings indicate women go through the same sequence of eras as men, and at the same ages. There is, in short, a single human life cycle through which all our lives evolve, with a myriad of variations related to gender, class, race, culture, historical epoch, specific circumstances and genetics. (p. 47)

Elisabeth Horst (1995) stated:

It is easy to write a feminist critique of psychological or sociological work written 40, 30 or even 25 years ago. Our views and values about sex roles have changed so radically and so rapidly that it is easy to find references to "appropriate" gender-related behavior that sound outdated and offensive to people today. (p. 1)

She indicated it is more difficult to write a feminist critique that is accurate and fair in its treatment of the original text. One must focus comments on the essence of the text rather than it superficial features. Researchers (e.g., Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Marcia, 1980; Orlofsky, 1993) generally agree that women approach these developmental tasks somewhat differently from the way men do. They also generally agree that the differences have to do with the importance of relationships in the lives of women. Some writers (e.g., Gilligan, 1982) call for a reworking of Erikson's developmental chart, because they believe 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.

A number of writers have critiqued the work of Erik Erikson from a feminist point of view. Some of these critiques grapple with the essence of his theory more constructively than others. One particular focal point of this feminist commentary has been the developmental tasks of identity and intimacy, which Erikson locates in adolescence and young adulthood. Gilligan (1982) summarized Erikson's treatment of women's identity development as if it were unashamedly portraying women as inferior, weak, and hopelessly dependent on men.

As Gilligan (1982) wrote:

> For the female, Erikson says, the sequence is a bit different. She holds her identity in abeyance as she prepares to attract the man by whose name she will be known, by whose status she will be defined, the man who will rescue her from emptiness and loneliness by filling "the inner space." (p. 12)

Gilligan did not fault Erikson for portraying women as more concerned with relatedness than men. She criticized him for his lack of emphasis on the distinctiveness of women's experience. She argued that Erikson's stage theory reflects the experience of men to the exclusion of women, that Erikson's stages emphasize "separateness, with the result that development itself comes to be identified with separation and attachments appear to be development impediments" (Chickering, 1969, pp. 12-13). Women's development, according to Gilligan, relies more on connections with others on relatedness rather than separateness. She claimed that for women, who come to know themselves through their relationships with others, the identity and intimacy tasks are fused.

Other authors have agreed with Gilligan's (1982) assessment that Erikson's theory does not adequately address the experience of women. Douvan and Adelson (1966) conducted a national study of adolescents and concluded that identity formation differs substantially between boys and girls. They argue that women develop their identities through, not as a prerequisite to, the development of intimacy. As provided by Douvan and Adelson (1966), "The content of being a lawyer is fairly specified; much of the content of being a wife and mother will depend on whom one marries and so must wait to be filled at some later date" (p. 20). Douvan and Adelson (1966) did not share Gilligan's (1982) feminist critique of our society since their research was conducted in the early 1960s, but they did agree with her claim that Erikson's ordering of the stages of identity does not describe the experience of women (Horst, 1995).

Hodgson and Fischer (1979) faulted Erikson for his lack of attention to sex differences. Like Gilligan (1982), they pointed out that Erikson never addressed the issue of how the sex differences he talked about might alter his developmental theory. Their brief summary of Erikson's treatment of women's identity development implies that Erikson sees women as more passive and less assertive and independent than men: "The male adolescent tests out 'who he is' by what he can accomplish according to objective yardsticks in traditional competitive pursuits, while the adolescent girl defines her identity with whom she will share her life" (Hodgson & Fischer, 1979, p. 39).

Morgan and Farber (1982) summarized Erikson's treatment of women's identity development as stating that women must have a partner to form an identity. The consensus among these writers is that Erikson's model does not address the experience of women accurately. They have agreed with Erikson's observation that relationships

influence women's identity formation; but more writers criticized Erikson for portraying women as dependent and passive (Horst, 1995).

Like many psychologists of his time, Erikson focused the majority of his attention on the masculine version of human experience. Writers like Gilligan (1982) have helped us recognize the damage done by the process of making women's experiences invisible.

As Horst (1995) wrote:

As Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson and Rosenkranz (1972) documented, traits of a healthy male become traits of a healthy adult and traits of a healthy female become traits of an unhealthy adult. In this sense, simply by his omission, Erikson contributed to the devaluing and potential pathologizing of women's experience. (p. 3)

Horst (1995) found that Erikson does not in fact accept at face value all its overtone of male dominance and female submission. Rather, Erikson gently opposes this social pattern by urging young women eager to submerge their identities in marriage to consider another perspective.

Erikson (1982) stated, "Epigenetically speaking, of course, nobody can quite 'know' who he or she 'is' until promising partners in work and love have been encounter and tested" (p. 721). "Erikson portrayed women as different, but not deviant or inferior" (Horst, 1995, p. 4). It is just as dangerous to underemphasize sex differences as it is to overemphasize them.

In criticizing Erikson for emphasizing the immutability of sex differences, authors like Morgan and Farber (1982) and Janeway (1971) have pointed out the danger inherent in what Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1990) called alpha bias. Erikson's work falls into the category of one that emphasizes rather than ignores differences. He ran the risk of overlooking or obscuring important ways in which women and men do not differ.

Erikson's critics also state that the identity-intimacy progression does not work for women the way it does for men, that in women these stages are reversed or fused. Gilligan (1982) argued that the epigenetic chart as it stands confuses development, up to young adulthood, with separation, thus obscuring the relational world of women.

Hamachek (1990) identified Erikson's concept of young adult development as unique among developmental theories because of its relational focus.

Hamachek (1990) wrote:

Whereas theorists like Gould focused on young adults' roles and responsibilities, Levinson on exploring possibilities for adult living and developing a stable life structure, and Vaillant on career consolidation, Erikson concentrated on interpersonal/intrapsychic issues like intimacy and feelings of isolation. Erikson's discussions about these stages tended to focus on the importance of people fusing, bonding, coming together, formatting relationships. (p. 680)

Horst (1995) stated that Erikson's epigenetic chart does not ignore relationships entirely and in fact emphasizes interpersonal issues where other theories do not. Erikson never intended identity and intimacy to represent the polar opposites of separateness and connection. Balancing the tension between separateness and connection is the essence of the intimacy task. She goes further by stating that "Researchers need to rediscover the relational components already present in Erikson's work and expand them as necessary so that the paradigm includes the experience of women" (p. 11).

<div align="center">Summary</div>

A review of the literature related to this study provides a comprehensive look at key theorists who laid the foundation for theories of adult development, as well as an overview of school readiness issues and how they relate to parents' decisions to redshirt

their kindergartners. In analyzing the origin of Erik Erikson's work, the influence of

Sigmund Freud was discussed. Other theorists who examined the human development

life cycle were reviewed. Erikson was one of the few theorists who studied the entire life

cycle, and his works appear most applicable to the framework of this study. In reviewing

the other research that included Erikson's theory, instruments and surveys were discussed

as various studies have attempted to measure and define human developmental stages.

Through the review of other studies, support was provided for the researcher to use a

combination of long interview and Likert-type scale to measure the stage of generativity.

An examination of criticisms included concerns of Erikson's work because it was focused

primarily on men and his discussions of adult stages were not as lengthy as his stages of

childhood development. Through a comprehensive look at the eight stages of man and an

evaluative analysis of Erikson's critics, the strengths and weaknesses of his research was

presented.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

The first chapter explained that the purpose of this study was to examine parents'

perception of kindergarten redshirting. The second chapter provided a review of relevant

literature and research on the history of adult development and Erik Erikson's eight stages

of man.

The study attempted to determine how these adult developmental stages impact

parenting decisions. Levinson, et al., (1978), Erikson (1982) and others describe life as a

series of stages linked to specific ages and occurring in sequence. Each age/stage has its

developmental tasks, patterns of stability, transition to the next stage, and recur

throughout life (Kerka, 1992). Erikson's stages provide a framework that examines adult

developmental struggles that are devoted to the accomplishment of a primary task. Those

who have progressed through the developmental conflicts and resolved each stage may

have different reasons to redshirt their kindergartner than those parents who have not

successfully resolved conflicts and reached the developmental stage of generativity.

A major criticism of prevailing theories is that they are based on male

experiences. The review also discussed criticisms of Erikson's work. Carol Gilligan's

work is often cited (Eastmond, 1991, Forrest & Mikolaitis, 1986) for pointing out the lack

of women's perspectives in developmental models, including Erikson's. According to

Gilligan (1982), such models often define maturation as separation and individualization.

However, social interactions and personal relationships more closely characterize

women's lives and attachment is vital to women's development. Horst (1995) stated,

> Erikson's theory does not ignore the significance of relationships
> throughout life; it weaves interpersonal and interpersonal themes through
> each stage. The theory as it stands is not incompatible with, and not
> incapable of encompassing, the concerning raised by these critics. (p. 10)

Although Erikson's theory has been criticized, the researcher selected Erikson's

framework because of its unique relational focus.

Qualitative Research

McCracken (1988) stated:

> The quantitative goal is to isolate and define categories as precisely as
> possible before the study is undertaken, and then to determine, again with
> great precision, the relationship between them. The qualitative goal, on
> the other hand, is often to isolate and define categories during the process
> of research. The qualitative investigator expects the nature and definition
> of analytic categories to change in the course of a project. (p. 16)

Qualitative methods were used to determine the how, what, when, where, who and

why. The long interview design was utilized to determine how the parents made their

decision to delay placement of their child in school for a year. According to Fraenkel &

Wallen (1993), qualitative data give detailed, thick description; inquiry in depth; direct

quotations capturing people's personal perspectives and experiences. Erikson's stages of

adult development were the lens in which to determine what, when and why the decision

to redshirt was made. Through the process of data collection, the where was structured

to include parents in a particular school district.

Rationale for the Method

The intent of this study was to provide a holistic view of parents' developmental level and the reasons they made the decision to hold their child out of school prior to kindergarten. Qualitative methods seek to understand phenomena in their entirety in order to develop a complete understanding of a person, program or situation. One of those methods is qualitative interviewing, both an academic and a practical tool. "It allows us to share the world of others to find what is going on, why people do what they do, and how they understand their worlds. With such knowledge, you can help solve a variety of problems" (Rubin & Rubin, p. 5).

This study focused on the process rather than the outcome of the parents' decision to redshirt their kindergartners.

Research Questions

Research questions that guided this study were:

1.   What factors influenced parents' decision to redshirt their kindergartner?

2.   What do parents think their child will gain by delaying school placement?

3.   What do parents expect they will gain by redshirting their kindergartner?

Long interview was the qualitative method for obtaining the data. According to McCracken (1988), the long interview is one of the most powerful methods used in the qualitative research. The researcher was the primary instrument for collecting and recording information through conducting a long interview with selected parents. The interviewer asked questions that required descriptive answers. A scale to measure

generativity was also used as another method in which to view the parent's development

level. One of the most commonly used self-reporting questionnaires is the Loyola

Generativity Scale (LGS) used by researchers at the Foley Center (McAdams & de St.

Aubin, 1992). McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) described the construction and

validation of the LGS in two large samples of adults and one sample of college students.

McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) explained:

> In one sample, LGS scores of men who were fathers were significantly
> higher than the scores of men who had never had children. In a survey of
> over 350 randomly chosen parents of children attending public and private
> schools in a large midwestern city, Nakagawa (1991) found that LGS
> scores significantly predicted parents' involvement in the education of
> their children, even after demographic factors such as family income and
> parental education were controlled. Parents scoring high on generative
> concern, as assessed on the LGS, were more likely to attend parent-teacher
> meetings, volunteer to work in the schools, help in fund raising, work on
> school committees, and so on, compared with parents scoring low on
> generative concern. By contrast, psychological measures locus of control
> and self-esteem were unrelated to parental involvement. (p. 222)

The LGS instrument has 20 items and instructs the participants to use a 4-point

rating scale ranging from *the statement never applies to you (0)* to *the statement applies*

to you very often (3) to respond to the statements.

By using the Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS) to compare the average adults'

generativity to the participants of this study, maturity levels were revealed.

From Erikson's point of view, the stage of generativity may be expressed in

bearing and raising children, in that parents are actively involved in providing for the next

generation as epitomized in their own offspring. Not all parents are especially generative,

Erikson maintained, and generativity is by no means limited to the domain of parenthood

(McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). The stage of generativity would be the primary stage of conflict among the target group of participants.

Jarvis (1992) suggested that although Erikson has had a major theoretical impact on the discipline of psychology in clinical, developmental and personality domains, his work has received relatively little empirical attention. The empirical investigation of generativity construct is particularly challenging because the range of activities, products and endeavors can be so all encompassing.

Quantitative and qualitative researchers are challenged by the effort to measure and explore human behavior and development. In an attempt to validate and triangulate the study, several instruments that measure and assess individual differences in adult development were reviewed.

Data Collection

Description of Site and Setting

The school district is in a suburban community with a population of 75,000, located within a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area of nearly one million people. As reported by the local economic development authority in February of 2000, the average household income is $64,245, and 40% of the adults in the community have a college degree, while the state's average household income is $41,197, and approximately 17% of the adults statewide have a college degree.

It has been reported that affluent parents tend to hold out their summer-born children more often than do low socioeconomic status parents (Meisels, 1992). If so, the

community that was selected is considered to be well above the state average in both income and educational level. According to the state's Office of Accountability (1999), approximately 12% of the district's students qualify for federal free and reduced lunch program, while the state average, as reported by the State Department of Education, is 46.4%.

The school district has a student population of 16,800 students enrolled in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Recent ethnic surveys reveal a Caucasian population of 87%, with minorities representing 13% of the student population in 2000. Data from the National Household Education Survey (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997) indicated that surveyed parents reported that children who had delayed kindergarten entrance one year were most likely white (73%) and male (64%). It has been suggested (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993) that the researcher should select a setting that enhances the opportunity to study the problem. The school district and community selected provide a setting that fits the profile of an area and culture more likely to embrace the idea of kindergarten redshirting.

There are no four-year-old or full-day kindergarten programs offered by the public school district in the selected community during the 1999-2000 school year, but there are several pre-school and private schools that provide early childhood educational services. The largest 32 high schools in Oklahoma qualify to be in Class 6A, which is based on each high school's average daily attendance in grades 9 through 12. The school district in this study has three Class 6A high schools that offer competitive athletic and extracurricular activities and a wide variety of advanced placement courses for its students. The school district reports that eighty-five percent of its 1,200 high school

graduates attend college, and over eleven million dollars in academic and athletic scholarships were awarded to graduating seniors in 1999.

<u>Selection of Respondents</u>

The researcher gained the approval from the school district central office administration to contact teachers in the district to identify potential participants in the study. The district administration approved the researcher to use the staff at three separate sites. The researcher randomly contracted three kindergarten teachers at three different schools by telephone. After arranging a meeting with the three teachers, the study was described and the teachers were asked to identify possible participants. The study criteria included couples who had been living with and parenting the redshirted child since birth, who were both willing to be interviewed, and who had made the decision within the last four years to delay placement of their child. These criteria assured that parents focus on the decision making process of redshirting rather than the results or product of the decision. There was an initial concern from the teachers of obtaining an adequate number of available participants. Identified families were contacted by telephone and asked to participate in the study. (See oral solicitation in Appendix C). Only two of the eight families contacted elected not to participate. One family did not think that they had the time and the other was not comfortable participating in the study. The goal of finding at least five families to interview was achieved.

After gaining a commitment from six of the selected families, arrangements for an interview were made. Eleven of the selected parents (six fathers and five mothers) agreed to be interviewed, while one mother elected not to participate.

Those participating in the interviews are shown in Table I.

TABLE I

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Names (pseudonyms)	Ages	Occupations
Dr. & Mrs. White	55/52	Dentist, School Psychologist
Mr. & Mrs. Brown	36/35	Engineer, Nurse Practitioner
Mr. & Mrs. Knol	43/44	Engineer, Preschool Teacher
Mr. & Dr. James	38/37	Engineer, Elementary Principal
Mr. & Mrs. Roberts	40/38	Engineer, Preschool Administrator
Mr. Taylor	41	School Administrator

Prior to conducting the interviews, consent forms (Appendix D), background information sheets (Appendix E) and the LGS (Appendix B) were mailed to the participants to be completed. Each participant completed these documents and brought them to their scheduled interviews.

Four of the families participating (Brown, Knol, Roberts and Taylor) had sons entering second grade and had made the decision to redshirt in the past three years. One family (James) had made the decision to redshirt their daughter for the current school year and were not going to start her in kindergarten in the fall. One couple (White) had redshirted their 22-year old son sixteen years ago. This couple was the first to be interviewed prior to knowing if other parents who fit the criteria would be willing to be

interviewed. Every effort was made with this couple to focus retrospectively on that time in their life rather than on their current feelings. Due to the content and themes of this family's interview, the researcher believes it should be included in the study as it could provide useful and relevant information.

The parent's ages ranged from 33 to 40 when their redshirted child was 4 years of age. At the time of the child's birth, the parents' ages ranged from 29 to 36. Levinson, et al., (1978) considered ages 25 to 39 as young adulthood and 40 to 59 as midlife. All parents were American citizens and Caucasian.

Families were selected with similar backgrounds in an effort to control influential variables within the respondent group such as socioeconomic levels, educational background of parents, and family dynamics. Families were included that were representative of the community identified as having a high occurrence of redshirted kindergartners. The parents who were interviewed were highly educated. Of the five mothers that were interviewed, four (Mrs. White, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Knol and Mrs. Roberts) held master's degrees and one (Dr. James) had obtained a doctoral degree. Two of the fathers (Mr. Brown and Mr. Taylor) held master's degrees and one (Mr. Knol) held two bachelor's degrees. The children's birth months ranged from late May to August. All would be considered summer birthdays, and all the children had attended private or church-sponsored preschool prior to entering public school kindergarten. According to the parents, all of the children had average to above average intelligence and none of the children had been placed in special education classes or were diagnosed with any disabilities or long term illnesses.

All the parents were in their first marriage, and all but one couple were the biological parents of the children. The family that had delayed placement sixteen years previously also held the uniqueness of having adopted their son at birth.

The researcher attempted to select respondents based on both parents' willingness to be interviewed. An noted in the review of literature, one of the criticisms of Erik Erikson's research was a number of writers argued that Erikson's stages of identity and intimacy do not address the experiences of women accurately. To compare Erikson's stages to parents' developmental stages, the fathers in all six selected families were interviewed. Only one interview was conducted of a father without his wife participating.

Parents were interviewed either in their home or at the researcher's office. The goal of conducting the interview was to find a comfortable, quiet location. Confidentiality of participants was respected and actual names were not used in the study.

Interviews

Fetterman describes interviewing as the most important data collection technique a qualitative research possesses (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). An atmosphere of trust, cooperation and mutual respect was established order for the researcher to obtain accurate information. The researcher tried to clearly define all vocabulary and jargon so as to avoid confusion and for clarity. Observations of body language were made during the interviews additional insight into the parents' perceptions, feelings and attitudes on the subject of kindergarten redshirting. The interviews were conducted in an unobtrusive, nondirective manner, but they were structured. All questions, which were open-ended format, were asked in the same order. Each interview started and ended with the same

format. Each participant was allowed to stop the interview at any time or not participate in the interview. No interviews were stopped, although some respondents gave brief answers. Two of the fathers talked at length after the tape was stopped, and notes were taken. The interviews contained preliminary questions as well as grand-tour questions for exploratory and unstructured responses. The respondent was allowed to tell his or her own story in his or her own terms.

The interviews were tape recorded with the respondents' knowledge. Grand-tour questions (Appendix A) were open-ended to gain information about the parents' perceptions of their own stages of development and their personal expectations and perceptions for holding out their child. Probing questions were also asked during the interviews. These were used to keep the interview congruent with the research questions. The interviewer reviewed and discussed with the interviewee any information that was not clear prior to and during the interview. Each participant for was thanked the time spent on the project.

Tape recordings were transcribed verbatim as the interviews were recorded on tape. A third party transcribed the tapes to ensure biases were not presented in the transcription. The transcriber was hired and paid and interviews were transcribed using pseudonymns. The tapes were placed under lock and key in the researcher's office. After reading the transcriptions, telephone calls were made to some of the respondents to clarify the transcriptions.

To ensure credibility, the researcher offered member checks with the respondents. All respondents were sent transcripts of the taped sessions, in the event they needed to correct or change any answers. Although one respondent was concerned about the

grammatical errors and sentence structure she used during the interview, no changes were made through member checks.

<center>Data Analysis</center>

Using a long interview form, the researcher was provided with the information needed to explore parents' perceptions of kindergarten redshirting. The transcripts received from the interviews gave a detailed description of how, when and why these parents made this decision. The researcher identified key words, phrases and ideas from the interviews that provided insight into the parents' reasons and influences for redshirting their child. Analyzing the data involved scoring the LGS and separating, sorting and structuring the data from the long interviews into categories and commonalities.

All of the interviews were coded by line, highlighted by category, and subcategories were noted in the margins. Several themes were combined and compared: the mother and father in one family, all of the father's and all of the mother's interviews, and all individual responses to each questions asked.

The answers to the long interview questions were placed in identifying units to develop categories. According to Polkinghorne (1991), "qualitative methods are especially useful in the generation of categories for understanding human phenomena and the investigation of the interpretation and meaning that people give to events they experience" (p. 112). These categories were analyzed to determine connections and patterns. These patterns gave an indication of the maturity and motivation of the parents.

Major themes and interrelationships between the categories were reviewed and related to Erikson's stages of development.

<u>Score of LGS</u>

Each parent completed a Loyola Generativity Scale (Appendix B) prior to participating in the interview. The respondents answered each of the twenty questions on the LGS with a "0," "1," "2," or "3," using the following instructions: *Mark "0" if the statement <u>never</u> applies to you; mark "1" if the statement <u>occasionally</u> or <u>seldom</u> applies to you; mark "2" if the statement applies to you <u>fairly often</u>; and mark "3" if the statement applies to you <u>very often</u> or <u>nearly always</u>.*

The respondents' Loyola Generativity Scales were then scored, by totaling the numerical value of the respondents' answers of "0," "1," "2," or "3" for all of the twenty items except 2, 5, 9, 13, 14 and 15. On these items, if the respondent answered "0," "1," "2," or "3," a reverse numerical value of 3, 2, 1, or 0 was used and then added to the score of the other questions to obtain a total score. This total score was then compared to the average score of 39 to 40 (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992), to determine if the adults in this study were generative, which provided additional support to the data acquired through the long interviews .

Researcher Bias

The researcher has a personal interest in this study due to experiences in her professional career. She was a teacher of learning disabled children for five years, an elementary counselor for five years and an elementary administrator for four years and

has had experience testing and screening children for kindergarten readiness. She also has experience as a coordinator of counselors, director of human resources and associate superintendent. As a special education teacher, she dealt with the issue of middle school students who were two years older than their peers because they had been held out of school, placed in transitional classes or retained. Even though the students were older, they were still struggling academically. As an elementary principal and counselor, she was directly involved with advising parents whether to start or delay kindergarten placement for their child. The researcher's strongest relationship to the study is that she delayed kindergarten placement for one of her three sons. Rubin and Rubin (1995) stated, "The researcher's feeling about some subjects might be so intense that hearing certain examples or narratives would be difficult" (p. 54). Although the researcher cannot deny her own attitudes and beliefs, every effort was made to interview individuals who did not know her personally of professionally. Her observations over the past nineteen years in education have led to some researcher bias and assumptions, such as:

1. Redshirting will not change biological and emotional weaknesses as well as personality traits.

2. Fathers make this decision based on competition and sports.

3. Communities set expectations for families to redshirt. Upper middle class and affluent families redshirt because they want their children to have an advantage emotionally, physically, and academically.

The researcher did not share information about her professional and personal experiences nor her biases during the interview process.

Trustworthiness Criteria

The parameters of the setting, population, theoretical framework and the interactions from the respondents in the study give adequate credibility to the study. The researcher debriefed and clarified with each respondent. This was done throughout the interview session and at the end of the session. When necessary, the researcher called the participants to clarify the transcription. Also utilized were member checks, which Crabtree and Miller (1992) referred to as "the recycling of analysis back to the key informants" (p. 86). All participants were given copies of the transcribed interviews and asked to check and verify all recorded information.

By using the long interview process, the Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS) and the parameters that were established, other interested parties who design similar research studies can decide whether or not to transfer their findings to another study. Triangulation, which according to Crabtree and Miller (1992), is an essential check for the research, was included in the design of the study. Multiple sources of data were taken from the six families interviewed and multiple methods were used, including the long interview, the LGS and observations. The researcher made every effort to step into the mind of the other person to see and experience the world as he or she has.

Dependability cannot be assured due to changes in the world. Kindergarten entrance is established by law and is based on a student's birth date. This variable has not and should not change in future years. Changes in the nuclear families, both parents working outside the home and career mobility, impact the dynamics of families and

communities. These changes may be revealed as a variable in why parents' make this decision as their perceptions and development levels are examined.

The interpretations are confirmable. By acknowledging the researchers' biases and the ability to track the respondents' answers, the study has confirmability.

Summary

A qualitative study was conducted by interviewing parents who have decided to delay kindergarten placement of their child for one year. The researcher attempted to determine the parents' reasons for making this decision. The researcher used the long interview method and the Loyola Generativity Scale to view this phenomenon through the lens of Erikson's adult developmental stage of generativity.

The researcher interviewed parents who were in their first marriage and had similar backgrounds. Through recorded interviews, observations, member checks and examination of limitations and problems, the researcher analyzed the data by extensively coding the interviews and scoring the LGS data to determine how, what, when, where, who and why a parent made the decision to redshirt their child prior to starting school.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The previous chapters presented the purpose of the study, discussed the pertinent

and related literature, and described the methodology that was used in the study. This

chapter discusses the analysis of the data in relationship to the research questions and

common themes, anomalies and findings.

This chapter discusses parents' perceptions of kindergarten redshirting.

Information obtained from the parents in the study, how the parents in this study scored

on the Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS) and Erikson's framework in relation to the

parents' responses to a long interview is presented. The long interview consisted of eight

questions concerning parents' decision to redshirt their child (Appendix A). The LGS is

a self-report scale of generative concern that exhibits good internal consistency and retest

reliability and shows strong positive associations with reports of actual generative acts

(e.g. teach a skill) and themes of generativity in narrative accounts of important

autobiographical episodes (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992).

Generativity is Erikson's seventh stage of development. The review of literature

states generativity is a broad term, which refers not only to the creation and care for

children, but the production of things and ideas through work and the capacity for selfless

giving of oneself. When generativity is lacking, the result is stagnation, self-absorption,

and impoverishment of the personality (Evans & Erikson, 1967). Levinson and Levinson (1996) determined that a key issue in this stage is one's relationship to the generation of younger individuals. Generativity is the primary stage of young to middle aged adults.

The common themes that emerged from the researcher's interviews with the eleven young to middle-aged parents will also be discussed.

Research Question One

What Factors Influence Parents' Decision to Redshirt Their

Kindergartner?

Contradictory Influences

There were several theories (i.e., current issues such as child's size and birth date, and future issues such as junior high, high school, driving, and sports) in which parents contradicted their influences with some indicating particular characteristics as a reason to redshirt, while others stated these same characteristics should not be considered as a reason to redshirt.

One parent (Mr. Taylor) stated size should be a consideration with his comment, "he's small," while another parent (Mrs. White) indicated that size should not be a factor, by stating, "You shouldn't keep a child back because they're very, very tiny. You don't just look at size." Dr. James indicated a concern about being too big, stating, "If they're really a large child . . . that can be hard for them later on."

Other contradictory statements related to birthdates, with support for consideration of birthdates noted in comments by five of the parents. "He has a late

summer birthday," and "of course their age, like if they have a late birthday" (Dr. White); "it's very important for the kids that have late birthdays," (Mrs. Brown); "if it's for the right reason, and those would be immaturity because of a late birthday," "I think just the age factor," and "a late May baby," (Mr. Taylor); "she is somewhat young for her age group because of her birth date" and "she's young," (Mr. James).

> He was right on the borderline and the only reason that he was eligible for kindergarten when he was was because his due date was after the cut-off date and the doctor decided to induce and have him born earlier. So I figure it was not my son's choice to be born when he was and he shouldn't be punished for his whole life because of this decision. (Mr. Brown)

And "I think it's real important for these kids that aren't quite ready yet, especially with the late birthdays," (Mrs. Brown). However, one parent (Mrs. White) offered an opposing point of view, with, "You just don't even look at it's a summer birthday – that's not a reason, either."

Contradictory statements related to future issues included the following comments by three parents. Mr. James offered, "beneficial to her . . . when she gets into the junior high years and high school years where maturity probably plays a much more important role," "to help the progress for later down the road," and "for her well-being . . . in her junior and senior high years," as reasons to redshirt. Mrs. Roberts agreed, in stating,

> It was the best decision . . . whatever consequences or situations we found ourselves in down the road with a child who's a sophomore and sixteen, those were just issues we would just kind of deal with as we went along because once we made the decision it was the right decision.

Mr. Knol, however, offered, "there was never a looking down the road . . . none of these at the time were factors in our decision to hold him back."

While none of the mothers commented on sports, four fathers offered contradictory statements regarding the issue of sports. As a reason to consider sports in the decision, Dr. White stated,

> He likes sports and I really also felt like although this would probably be the lamest excuse to redshirt a child, I felt like if he was going to excel socially and sports-wise, I really saw the benefit then to redshirt him.

Mr. James felt similarly, in offering, "I've always believed it's very important to be as much of an inclusive-type individual as you can, being involved with athletes," and "to lead the team as oppose to possibly just being part of the team." However, Mr. Knol disagreed, stating, "There was no consideration put in his being redshirted for athletic reasons . . . but that was never a consideration in our decision to hold him back that first year." Mr. Taylor agreed, stating, "I have a problem if it's held back because of parents holding him back for athletics so they'll be larger or older with their peers and give them a competitive advantage."

Readiness

From the long interviews, several categories and subcategories emerged indicating that parents were influenced by their perception of their children, especially in the area of readiness. A category entitled readiness was created due to the frequent use of this term.

Comments offered by parents relating to their child's readiness included the following: "It really depends on the child and that child's readiness," (Mrs. White); "It should be when he or she is ready to perform," (Dr. White); "whether or not they're ready to take on the task," (Mr. James); "he was not ready," (Mrs. Roberts); "or a student who's not ready, either emotionally or cognitively, for whatever factor," (Mr. Taylor); "I felt like

our child was just emotionally not . . . socially, I guess, would be a better word, not ready for kindergarten," (Mr. Roberts); "I didn't feel he was just quite ready," (Dr. White); "he was not ready to go into a kindergarten-type program," (Mr. Knol); and "he was really not ready at all," (Mrs. Knol).

David Ausubel (1962) describes readiness as a particular state in the child that depends on both growth and maturation and social experiences. Parents were very focused on all prerequisite issues essential for entering kindergarten. The areas that were discussed at length were the individual needs of the child, academics skills, attention span, social skills, emotional development, maturity, and avoiding retention or transitional classes.

Issues mentioned less frequently were separation from parents, as noted in these comments: "wasn't ready to make the break to get away from the house," (Mr. Knol); "ready to be moving out, away from a parent or a caregiver," (Mrs. Roberts); and "how comfortable they felt being away from mom and dad," (Mr. Roberts). Also mentioned less frequently was motivation or interest: "daughter is happy and carefree and is just happy to be alive and she's just not interested in those things right now," (Dr. James); and "didn't show any interest in coloring . . . didn't seem to have a desire to do those things," (Mr. Brown). And, struggling or being the last to finish was also commented on, with, "if he was always trying to push and struggle, he's got a miserable existence," (Dr. White); "didn't want him to have to struggle during those first few years of school," (Mrs. Brown); and "knew that he would really struggle...a lot of hardships along the way," (Mrs. Knol).

Intelligence

Two of the families (White and Taylor) indicated that their child was very highly intelligent but not ready in other areas. Comments concerning this issue included:

> He was able to do all the academic things and I didn't want him to be delayed in those areas but I felt that, overall, the things that we were looking at with the social and emotional were far greater than what the chances were that he would be stunted intellectually. (Mrs. White)

"I knew he was going to be very intelligent and I wanted to give him every advantage we could because, typically, children that are very intelligent do have some difficulties sometimes with interaction with other children" (Mrs. White).

> I felt he was way ahead of the game. In academics, he was. But I realized, too, that from a social point of view, he would have been very young and it would have held him back . . . one of the brighter students, more excelled in his reading, his mathematics skills . . . always a little more immature, reaction more childish . . . immature activity, immature socialization skills . . . (Dr. White)

And, "Cognitively, he's always been two or three years above his age in his reading, so it was mainly just maturity and size" (Mr. Taylor).

School Environment

School environment emerged as a theme under the category of reasons for redshirting. Comments concerning this issues were recorded as: "I think it depends upon the child . . . whether or not they're ready to take on the task that we in education are requiring of them at this time." (Dr. James) "In our situation, we looked at . . . was our son ready to . . . first of all, I think a lot of it depends on the kindergarten environment that the child is going into." (Mrs. Roberts) "Hopefully, we just give her the best

opportunity to develop and feel confident and comfortable in the environment that she's in" (Dr. James).

The final quote is very revealing, as it was a response from the mother who is school psychologist for the district (Mrs. White). She stated,

> We're almost to the point at this stage in education where we never tell a parent that it might be a good idea to give a child . . . to just have time to grow and develop. We're telling them to always send them on, that the teacher has to meet everyone's needs, and that just isn't true. We really know that while that's philosophically a wonderful thing to say that a kindergarten teacher can meet all of these children's needs, twenty-two of them in one classroom, we don't have the moms helping like we used to, we don't have a lot of aides or even people that can come in and give those other children that are a little slower in development . . .

These parents are aware that there are expectations and conditions in the environment that the child must be ready to adjust to rather than the environment adjusting to their needs. Gredler (1992) stated, "In one study in Ohio county (Hodapp, 1986) a large proportion of parents of older children have either kept their children out of school an extra year or placed them in pre-kindergarten programs" (p. 17). The reason, according to Gredler, "is to ensure that the child is 'ready' to negotiate what is obviously perceived as a hazardous passage to completion of kindergarten and first grade" (p.17).

Wives' Influences

When asked the probing question of "Who influenced the decision?" all of the fathers indicated that their wives had influenced the decision. Comments regarding this issue included: "my wife first brought it to my attention," "my wife, thank goodness . . . she has a background in education which really brought this to bear . . . I still would not have had any clue as to redshirting had my wife not...brought it to my attention,"

(Dr. White); "mostly my wife," (Mr. Brown); "my wife was very influential in making that decision . . . she has a background in education . . . she brought it to my attention . . . I saw what she was talking about," (Mr. Knol); "obviously with my wife's background and experience and knowledge in education, I've relied pretty much upon her opinion on things," (Mr. James); "probably more than anyone, my wife . . . but she pointed out some things that, once it was pointed out, I had to agree," (Mr. Roberts); and "having a wife who's an elementary teacher . . . my wife and I, but primarily it was her call," (Mr. Taylor). It is interesting to note that the one father who indicated it was more of a mutual decision (Mr. Taylor), had been a teacher, and is currently a school administrator. Four of the mothers (Mrs. White, Mrs. Knol, Dr. James, and Mrs. Roberts) said "myself," with one saying "own experience." (Mrs. White)

Educators

It was very clear from the interviews that there was an influence of educators in the decision-making process. In the review of the literature, teaching is discussed as a good example of generativity and illustrates the way in which the life stages interlock with a total life cycle (Erikson, 1980). All of the women but one (Mrs. Brown) had degrees in education and had some classroom experience. The one mother who was not an educator (Mrs. Brown) indicated that her parents, who were both educators, influenced her decision, in stating, "probably my parents . . . they're both educators and they brought up the idea." Other people mentioned as having influenced the parents' decision to redshirt were family (Dr. White, Mr. and Mrs. Brown, Mr. Taylor), pre-school teacher (Mr. Brown, Mrs. Roberts), brothers (Mr. Brown), sisters (Mr. Brown), and a friend at

work (Mrs. Roberts). From the long interviews, two questions covered this area of

inquiry. What and who influenced your decision gave insight into the developmental

level of the parents.

The decision to redshirt was primarily made by the women in each case. In the

review of literature, one of the criticisms of the work of Erik Erikson indicates that he did

not address the developmental issues of women. Gilligan (1982) summarized Erikson's

treatment of women's identity development as if it were unashamedly portraying women

as inferior, weak, and hopelessly dependent on men:

> For the female, Erikson says, the sequence is a bit different. She holds her
> identity in abeyance as she prepares to attract the man by whose name she
> will be known, by whose status she will be defined, the man who will
> rescue her from emptiness and loneliness by filling "the inner space."
> (1982, p. 12)

This may be the case of certain issues, but not on the issue of kindergarten redshirting.

For the parents that were interviewed in this research, the mothers took the lead and

encouraged the fathers to take notice of the concerns and weaknesses they had observed

in their children.

LGS

Other influences have to do with developmental level of adults. Generativity is

the primary stage of young to middle age adults. The parents in this study ranged from

age 33 to 41 when their child that was redshirted at approximately five years of age.

On the Loyola Generativity Scale, the participants' scores ranged from 36 (Mr. Roberts)

to 59 (Mrs. White). The average adult generative score on the LGS is between 39 and 40.

Only one father (Mr. Roberts) did not score in the average generative range, and the

women scored higher than the men did. The women's average score was 48.8 with individual scores of 59 (Mrs. White), 52 (Mrs. Knol), 46 (Mrs. Brown), 46 (Mrs. Roberts), and 41 (Dr. James), while the men's average score was 42.2 with individual scores of 49 (Mr. Taylor), 45 (Dr. White), 44 (Mr. Knol), 40 (Mr. James), 39 (Mr. Brown) and 36 (Mr. Roberts). Older participants did not appear to score consistently higher on the LGS, although the oldest female obtained the highest score of those interviewed.

McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) found that:

The LGS showed relatively high correlations with two other short scales of global generativity (Hawley, 1986; Ochse & Plug, 1986) and minimal association with social desirability in a sample of 149 adults (obtained through various volunteer methods) and 165 college students. The authors reported alpha coefficients of .83 and .84, indicating high internal consistency for the LGS, and a test-retest correlation of .73 over a span of 3 weeks for a second adult sample of 79 subjects. Relations between generative concern and age were not robust, however, revealing a modest positive association in one adult sample but not in another. Among men, fathers scored significantly higher on generative concern than nonfathers, but maternal status among women was not associated with generative concern. (p. 223)

Further explanation of the LGS by McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) includes:

Assessed with a 20-item self-report inventory, generative concern refers to individual differences in the extent to which an adult expresses a conscious concern for or preoccupation with having a positive and enduring impact on the next generation. The items on the LGS tap into a concern for passing on knowledge or teaching skills to others, especially those in the next generation; a concern for making significant contributions for the betterment of one's community; a concern for being creative and productive; a concern for assuming responsibility for others; and a concern for having a lasting impact, being remembered for a long time, or leaving an enduring legacy. The LGS is a test of self-perceptions assessing how strong one believes one's own generative concerns to be. (p. 227)

The LGS items (Appendix B) cover many of the most salient ideas in the theoretical literature on generativity. At least four of the items directly concern passing on knowledge, skills, and so on to others, especially to the next generation (items 1, 3, 12 and 19). Four concern making significant contributions for the betterment of one's community, neighborhood, and so on (items 5, 15, 18 and 20). At least six items concern doing things that will be remembered for a long time, will have a lasting impact, and will leave an enduring legacy (items 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, and 14). Two items emphasize being creative and productive (items 7 and 17), and four items underscore caring for and taking responsibility for other people (items 2, 9, 11, and 16).

Research Question Two

What Do Parents Think Their Child Will Gain by Delaying School Placement?

Some parents wanted their child to fit in or be equal to others, with comments such as "an emotional equal," or "a better fit," (Mr. Taylor), "fit in," (Mrs. Knol), or "be on target," (Mrs. Roberts). Other parents' comments involved comparing their child to others, such as "not up to where children that we had observed in his same age group were" (Mrs. Roberts), and "wasn't performing at the same level as the other kids" (Mr. Brown).

Self-Esteem/Confidence

Themes for this question indicated one primary area concerning self-esteem and confidence. They shared that their child "did not have any confidence" (Mrs. Knol) as a reason to wait to start school or that they wanted to "give them a boost of confidence" (Mrs. Roberts) by providing them an extra advantage. Other comments regarding this area were: "I didn't want to ruin his self-confidence because he wasn't performing at the same level as the other kids . . . improved self-confidence," (Mr. Brown);

> Much more of an opportunity to develop where she needed to be and to feel confident . . . to allow her the self-confidence to step in . . . I expected to gain, hopefully, that level of self-confidence and self-esteem . . . best opportunity to develop and feel confident . . . more confident little girl."
> (Mr. James)

"The best gift you can give . . . a good self-esteem and a good building block," (Dr. White); "I expected, really for him to gain more confidence in himself . . . that his confidence would grow," (Mrs. White); "that it would increase his self-confidence," (Mrs. Brown); and, "a child that approached kindergarten in a more confident manner," (Mrs. Roberts).

Leader/Opportunity

The category of wanting more was apparent in the subcategories of being a leader rather than a follower and having success, benefits and opportunities from an extra year of development. This was evident in the parents' comments: "they're going to be more successful in the classroom," (Mrs. Roberts); "I wanted to give him every advantage," (Mrs. White); "I hoped to give him that feeling of success . . . able to do many things and

excel," (Dr. White); "he would learn a little more quickly," (Mrs. Brown); "that he would

do better in school…he would be more able to do his work," (Mrs. Knol); and "allow her

the best opportunity to progress," (Mr. James).

Other comments such as "more beneficial to her overall development," (Mr.

James); "have the opportunity," (Mrs. White); "gain a child who would benefit from

kindergarten," (Mr. Knol); "always feel like he needed to be the follower rather than the

leader," (Mrs. White); "being very much of a follower," (Mrs. White); "I just saw that he

wasn't a leader, not at all a leader," (Mrs. Knol); "lead the team as opposed to possibly

just being a part of the team," (Mr. James); and "why would you always want your child

to be the caboose when he has the opportunity to be the engine," (Dr. White) support

these thoughts.

Research Question Three

What Do Parents Expect They Will Gain by Redshirting Their

Kindergartner?

In reviewing the adult development stages of Erickson, the literature states issues

unresolved will impact other stages. Developmental issues such as identity might cause a

parent to want to live through their child. The results of LGS indicated this is not the

case for the selected population. With one exception, all the parents scored in the average

generativity range, which will be discussed later. The parents were focused on their

children and answered the question as to what their child would gain.

Two categories were created to report the expressions of the parents' thoughts on what they expected to gain from redshirting, which were "positive comments" and "a gift to give." One set of parents (Knol) felt by making this decision they had a happier child, as noted in their comment, "I believe he's an extremely happy little boy," (Mr. Knol). They were passionate about making the decision and their comments indicating this was "a gift" (Dr. White) are as follows: "if you can't decide, just give them the gift of another year," (Mrs. Roberts); "definitely was a gift given to our son," (Mrs. Roberts); "greatest gift you can give a child is a gift of success," (Dr. White); "best gift you can give your child is a good education," (Dr. White); and, " to help her," (Mr. James).

Other positive comments validating their decisions were: "I am very pleased that we chose redshirting," (Dr. White); "it's a good thing," (Mr. Brown); "that was the correct choice . . . I had no question that we were doing the right thing . . . it has been an extremely positive experience in my son's life," (Mr. Knol); "overall, I have a very positive feeling about redshirting . . . I know it's a positive thing to do for her," (Mr. James); "it's been a positive experience for our son . . . it was the right choice," (Mrs. Roberts); "I saw that it had a very happy ending, very happy," (Mrs. White); and "he is doing far beyond my imagination" (Mrs. Knol).

According to McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998) "Highly generative adults feel that they have something valuable to give to society and that they are able to do good things for other people" (p. 484). This reinforces the notion that kindergarten redshirting is something parents can do that is a good thing for their children and it is a gift that parents can give their children.

In reviewing general differences between the fathers and mothers, a discussion of their perceptions is included.

<u>Fathers' Perceptions</u>

The fathers indicated that they were not very much aware of the concept of kindergarten redshirting initially, stating, "A new concept to me . . . when first brought up to me it was a little abrasive," (Dr. White); "I had never really thought about it," (Mr. James); "would not have had any clue as to redshirting," (Dr. White); ". . . and then the standard tests . . . I don't remember what it's called," (Mr. Roberts); and "I don't know a whole lot about kindergarten," (Mr. Brown).

Once the decision to redshirt had been made, the fathers indicated full support. They all felt it was the right decision, with comments such as "total supporter of redshirting . . . it was the right thing to do," (Dr. White); "I don't have any problem with kindergarten redshirting for the right reason" (Mr. Taylor); and "we were doing the right thing," (Mr. Knol).

However, the fathers did seemed concerned about their child's attention span, stating, "Those are the big things I was looking for – attention span and able to follow directions," (Mr. Brown); "I think his attention span," (Mr. Knol); "has a little bit of difficulty staying on task, I would say for sure . . . I've noticed that around the house," (Mr. James); and "I think that school has not only a social aspect but it also has an attention aspect to it and consideration needs to be given to both these criteria before you determine whether your child is ready" (Mr. Brown).

Mothers' Perceptions

Women (mothers) appeared to be more generative than men (fathers) in that they scored higher on the LGS. Erikson (1968) suggested that "motherhood is a central aspect of women's identity, though he made no parallel claim about fatherhood for men" (pp. 290-291). It is then conceivable to Erikson that generativity could emerge for a woman before she established her identity. For women, intimacy and parenthood (and therefore generativity) may actually predate identity formation.

Other areas that the women seemed to focus on more than the fathers were the issue of retention and transitional classes, such as developmental first grade. This was evident as noted in comments such as "I believe it is best to do that, just as it states, prior to them entering school rather than retaining them later" (Dr. James), and "another reason would have been that he might have had to go into what is called D-1 (Developmental 1st/transition class)" (Mrs. Knol). One father (Mr. Taylor) who is an educator offered "it's a lot more difficult to make that decision in first and second grade to hold a student back than it is prior to getting into kindergarten . . . that way, there wouldn't be any stigma attached." Mrs. Roberts stated she felt it would be best to hold the child out earlier "and not take the chance . . . not go through the Developmental 1st experience," while Dr. James stated "I did research on Developmental 1st grade and I really feel strongly that it's much better to do it prior to them coming in." Since the fathers were not as aware of readiness issues, they probably were not concerned about retention issues as well. Shepard and Smith (1988) indicated that teachers who believe that a child needs a year to mature they support retention as a policy. They further suggested that teachers

often indicate that retention does not negatively influence the child's attitude or self-concept. Although the mothers' comments supported redshirting, they did not support retention or development placement for their own children as a primary option.

The mothers indicated a concern about areas of skills and academics, and seemed to have more specific issues that were of concern with their children. Comments indicating this were, "fine motor . . . ability to problem solve...least amount of coordination," (Mrs. White); "understanding of their colors," (Mrs. Brown); "he didn't have any areas of strength at that time . . . his written work, his fine motor was really not even there at all," (Mrs. Knol); "academic skills, like fine motor skills . . . what kind of skills he possessed...fine motor skills, that was a real issue," (Mrs. Roberts). Further, Dr. James, the mother of the only daughter in the interview group, was more concerned about her daughter's emotional development, offering, "I think it depends upon the child and their emotional status . . . how they are emotionally . . . basically for her emotionally – for her to feel more secure in herself and her abilities."

Anomalies

Only one parent (Mr. Brown) indicated the thought that a child should be ready to perform at minimum level for kindergarten to enter. One father (Dr. White) felt there should be a seminar for parents to make parents aware of kindergarten redshirting, stating he would not have known about it unless his wife had presented the idea to him. One parent (Dr. James) referred to their child's birth order. The children's birth order that were included in this study were oldest child (White), two middle children (James, Roberts), one second child, who was also the youngest (Taylor), one third child, who was

also the youngest (Knol) and one only child (Brown). Only one parent (Mr. Roberts)

mentioned better grades.

One father (Mr. Roberts) did not score in the average LGS range for generativity.

He scored a 36, which is three to four points below the average score of 39–40. There

were several unique statements in his interview, such as answering the statement,

"Describe your feelings about kindergarten redshirting." Mr. Roberts' response was:

> And I think if the kid is far enough along in one area and a little behind in
> the other, probably not a good idea, but if significantly far behind in one of
> the areas, then maybe it's a good idea to redshirt and the child will just be
> ahead in the other area and that's what he'll just have to live with. I think
> the negative effects of being too far behind in the other area could detract
> from . . . you know if the child isn't socially getting along in kindergarten,
> even if they're very smart, in my opinion they're probably not going to do
> very good academically, either.

The statement that "he'll just have to live it" does not indicate generativity. This

is not similar to other responses on any of the questions asked to the other participants.

Parts of the statement indicate an understanding of readiness but it not clear as to his

thoughts on the issue.

Another response of Mr. Roberts to the question "Why was it important for you to

delay placement one year?" was as follows:

> I felt like if kindergarten was too negative of an experience, that it might
> take more than one grade to overcome that. So I was just afraid that in
> second and third grade he's still trying to get over negative feelings about
> school in general.

Comparing this to the other two questions give one insight into Mr. Roberts'

feelings and concerns, as noted. In response to the statement, "Describe your experiences

in school." he responded:

Well, I don't think that I did all that well in kindergarten, so that probably played a factor. I went to two different kindergartens so I never felt like I really had a chance to get to know the teacher or the other kids in either of my two semesters. I think I did okay in first grade. I think I felt pretty comfortable. You're probably not looking for a grade by grade report. I also went to two first grades and I think my second first grade teacher for the second semester was, for me anyway, was real personable and made me feel like I was a good student, whether I was or not (and I think I was). But I think that really saved me because third grade was not very good for me and if I hadn't had at least one positive experience prior to that, I think it might have gone downhill for me, even though I was doing fairly well academically.

In answer to the questions, "What would you have changed about your school experiences?" Mr. Roberts offered:

Well, if I was king for a day and could change anything, I guess in third grade particular and maybe a little bit in second and fourth grades, but mainly in third grade, a teacher that made me feel like I had something to offer to the class, that I was an important part of the class.

Snarey (1993) speculated that childhood modeling and the reworking of early experience in adulthood are instrumental in the making of the generative father. Possible explanations here appear to be almost limitless, ranging from those invoking temperament and infant attachment to those examining parenting styles, experiences in school and other determinants involving families, neighborhoods, churches and other institutions.

Other issues that were different in Mr. Roberts' responses were included in the background information sheet. He did not fill in his current position or past work experience, and indicated his parents worked for the USAF. The researcher had to work around his job schedule in order to interview him, and his wife indicated on the telephone he was out of town two weeks at a time and would be in the day of our interview. He did indicate he held a degree in industrial engineering.

Possible conflicts could involve industry versus inferiority due to early school experiences, or intimacy versus isolation due to work schedule and travel. Other assumptions would be impossible to suggest without more information. McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) stated, "Adult lives are less orderly and predictable than stage models suggest, although adults typically seek to impose order on their lives by constructing life stories that integrate the reconstructed past, perceived present, and anticipated future" (p. 485).

Erikson's Stages of Development

Although the stages of Erikson were not useful in clearly determining any unresolved issues in the respondents' development due to generativity level, they did have an awareness of the importance of developmental stages and focused these concerns on their children. There is a definite overlapping of issues and stages in certain areas.

Trust Versus Mistrust – This stage is essential to the development of the child in that he must trust that his parents will care for him and make the right choices (redshirting) for him in the community or environment that he lives (school). By doing this, the parents prepare that child to be "all right" and able to become what they trust he will become (expectations).

In the review, trust was described by Erikson (1980):

Mothers create a sense of trust in their children by that kind of admiration which in its quality combines sensitive care of the baby's individual needs and a firm sense of personal trustworthiness within the trusted framework of their community's life style. This forms the basis in the child of a sense of identity which will later combine a sense of being "all right," of being oneself and of becoming what other people trust one will become. (p. 64)

This statement is at the core of the parents concern of individual needs. Three of the parents in this study did seem to have a sense of the individual needs of their children as recorded in the following comments: "look at each individual child, as an individual," (Dr. James); and it depends upon the child, how each child functions," (Dr. James). Mrs. White offered these comments:

> Kindergarten redshirting . . . I think is very individual. It really depends on the child and that child's readiness and his needs because, for some children, it would truly be the appropriate action, the most suitable thing, you know, for them to have that year and for other children it absolutely would not be – it's not needed, so it depends on the child.

Mrs. White also stated "...looking at each child – uniquely, separately, individually . . . you have to look at that child and what his needs are and what his development and maturity is at that point."

Autonomy Versus Doubt and Shame – This is the desire to make choices and the ability to do things on one's own. As stated in the review of literature, Evans and Erikson (1967) suggest:

> The shift from the first to the second stage also marks one of the difficult human crises: for just when a child has learned to trust his mother and to trust the world, he must become self-willed and must take chances with his trust in order to see what he, as a trustworthy individual, can will. He pits his will against the will of others, even that of his protectors. (p. 19)

Separation from parent is an issue in this stage. The following comments were made that indicate a concern for this conflict:

> I believe my son was socially not ready to go into kindergarten and I also believe that he wasn't ready to make the break to get away from the house and go to kindergarten, even though it was for just a half a day. (Mr. Knol)

"You need to look at . . . are they ready to be moving out, away from a parent or caregiver for that amount of time." (Mrs. Roberts) These families indicated this was an issue when considering redshirting. Other issues mentioned were "adaptive needs" (Mrs. White), "Able to take care of self" (Mrs. White) "find the bathroom" (Mrs. White) "dress themselves" (Mr. Roberts), "And trying new things, he just wasn't capable of trying new things." (Mrs. Knol) In the review of literature, Erikson (1982) indicated if a child has relatively more shame than autonomy, then they feel or act inferior their entire life or consistently counteract that feeling. This directs the researcher to review the parents' concern for confidence that was very evident in the interviews.

Initiative Versus Guilt – Self-esteem and confidence, as previously discussed, was a critical issue mentioned by several parents (Mrs. White, Mr. and Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Knol, Mr. James, and Mrs. Roberts), which would be the developmental stage the preschooler would be dealing with at the time for redshirting and would remain with them through their life. During this stage, the child turns away from exclusive dependence on family and moves toward involvement with peers. Respondents noted that their preschooler "has a lack of confidence" (Mrs. Knol) and they made the decision to redshirt in order to "gain" (Mrs. White, Mrs. Knol, Mr. James), "allow" (Mr. Knol, Mr. James) "improve" (Mr. Brown), "grow" (Dr. and Mrs. White, Mr. Knol), "increase" (Mrs. Brown), "boost" (Mrs. Roberts), "feel" (Dr. and Mrs. White, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Knol, Mr. and Dr. James, Mr. and. Mrs. Roberts), "develop" (Mrs. White, Mr. and Dr. James, Mrs. Roberts), or be "happier, more confident" (Dr. James).

Erikson (1980) reveals "the stage is all set for entrance into life, except that life must first be school" (p. 82).

<u>Industry Versus Inferiority</u> – This is the primary concern for parents who are aware of developmental needs. Industry versus Inferiority focuses on the elementary age child from the approximate ages of seven to eleven. This is a very competitive stage, with an emphasis on proving oneself among one's peers. In our culture, school is the field where one must prove oneself.

One mother's comments indicate she (Mrs. White) has an understanding of the importance of industry by stating: " I expected, really for him to gain more confidence in himself, for him to have the opportunity to do the development and to grow so that his own abilities would develop and his confidence would be true."

In the review of literature it was noted that empty praise and condescending encouragement by parents and teachers cannot fool children.

According to Smelser and Erikson (1980):

They may have to accept artificial bolstering of their self-esteem in lieu of something better, but accruing ego identity gains real strength only from wholehearted and consistent recognition of real accomplishment, that is, achievement that has meaning in their culture. (p. 95)

Statements concerning struggle indicate the parents have an understanding of this important issue in school. Those comments, from the previous section on readiness, were: "if he was always trying to push and struggle, he's got a miserable existence," (Dr. White); and, "didn't want him to have to struggle during those first few years of school," (Mrs. Brown). As one father (Dr. White) stated of his own experience, "And so, looking back, I could have seen a real advantage in having been held back, starting out

school, and not always feel like I was always playing catch-up." A mother (Dr. James) stated, "I was probably one of the youngest in my class and I think as I look back, that was probably harder on me than I realized."

All the statements which indicate a focus on readiness, social skills, academic skills, maturity, attention span, being equal, fitting in, avoiding stigma and being successful appear to the researcher as a concern by the parents of the central problem of this stage of finding a place in one's own peer group and of feeling competent.

Identity Versus Role Confusion – Categories indicating leader and sports appeared to be an issue for parents who are aware of the future stage of identity conflict for their children. Although parents had contradictory views on these issues, for some it was a focus. One parent (Dr. White) expressed the desire for his son to be someone by stating: "What we were able to give (him) was that ability to be the engine instead of the caboose." Another father (Mr. James) stated, "allow her to play that role as the leader or an integral part of that team" and "to lead the team as opposed to possibly just being part of the team." He viewed it as "for her well-being . . . in her junior and senior years" (Mr. James), while another (Dr. White) said, "I feel like (we needed to redshirt) if he was going to excel . . . sports-wise."

Intimacy Versus Isolation – The research did not feel any implications were made that parents were concerned about this issue. This is possible due to their young age and the focus on their early development. All of the parents had been married for at least eight years and were in their first marriage. The researcher assumed that the conflict of intimacy versus isolation had been successfully resolved. The only exception might be

the father (Mr. Roberts) who did not score in the generative range on the LGS. No effort

was made to evaluate this issue other than what was achieved through the interviews and

background information that was obtained.

Generativity Versus Stagnation – From the review of literature, generativity is

described by McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998) as,

> Adults become concerned about the next generation; reinforced by a belief
> in the species, they translate their concern into generative commitments,
> which in turn lead to generative acts of creating, maintaining and offering
> up. The full expression of generativity integrates inner desires, cultural
> demands, concern for the next generation, belief in the species, generative
> commitment, generative action, and the narration of adult lives around the
> individual and societal goal of providing for the survival, well-being, and
> development of human life into succeeding generations. (p. 37)

LGS scores, along with the parents' comments such as, "we'd like to see it as a

non-selfish way of being the best parent we can" (Mr. James) and "I knew he was going

to be very intelligent and I wanted to give him every advantage," (Mrs. White) present the

researcher with the impression that the parents considered the act of redshirting as a

generative act.

When asked "What did you expect to gain?" the generative statements were: "I

expected to gain a child who would benefit from kindergarten, who would be both

intellectually and socially ready to go into kindergarten and take full advantage of what

was offered at the kindergarten level," (Mr. Knol); "A happier more confident little girl,"

(Dr. James); and "I believe he is an extremely happy little boy" (Mr. Knol). The act of or

the perception of providing their child with an advantage or happiness may have

enhanced generative levels in the adults.

According to McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998), the strong connection between generativity and well-being, they argued, reflects the fact that generativity is fundamental to feeling good about oneself in adulthood and for judging one's life as worthwhile and meaningful.

Integrity Versus Despair – This stage was not applicable to age groups when reviewing parents in this study or their children. Results of the generative acts by the parents should develop into integrity in old age. As the literature by Smelser and Erikson (1980) revealed, only he who in some way has taken care of things and people and has adapted himself to the triumphs and disappointments of being, only he has integrity and wisdom. And wisdom is the embodiment of all eight stages.

Summary

The main categories that emerged from the analysis of the data were contradicting differences such as size, birthdate, future issues and sports. Other categories were readiness, intelligence, school environment, wives' influences, and educators.

The LGS indicated that all but one parent scored in the average range. This led to the findings supported by the review of literature that generative parents had a strong desire for their child to fit in, have self-confidence and be a leader. In return, these parents' generativity made them feel "redshirting" was a positive act and a gift they gave their child.

Fathers' and mothers' perceptions were discussed. Fathers focused on making the right decision and attention span, while mothers identified specific skills. The fathers

were not as aware of the issue of kindergarten redshirting, and it is unclear if this was due to their gender role or occupation. All of the mothers (except one) have education backgrounds and experiences and were very aware of school classroom expectations and required academic or developmental skills.

The anomalies were primarily with one father whose score was below the generative range on the LGS. He also expressed some negative feelings about his own school experiences.

Erikson's eight stages of development were not useful in the analysis of unresolved issues. This was partly due to the level of generativity of the parents indicating previous issues had been resolved. The perceptions of these generative parents of kindergarten redshirting suggested an awareness of critical issues and development stages that their children would need to successfully resolve as they proceeded through the developmental stages and entered school. Findings indicated that through the LGS and the data achieved in the long interviews, the parents made this decision based on what they thought was best for their child.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This qualitative study was designed to explore selected parents' perceptions on kindergarten redshirting. This study proposed that parents' developmental levels may impact their reasons for delaying school placement for their child. Elkind (1981) suggested that parents might base their decision on adult needs rather than on the needs of the child. Parents may or may not have successfully resolved a conflicting stage in their own life which would affect their motivation and focus on personal and family issues (Elkind, 1970). By using qualitative methods, the developmental levels of the parents in this study were examined. The study also proposed that an understanding of what influences parents' decision-making could be useful to educators and in determining the existence of a relationship between the developmental levels of parents as it relates to the placement decisions made for their children.

Chapter I presented the introduction and background of the study. Many studies (Ausubel, 1962; Gesell, 1954; Gredler, 1992; Hymes, 1958,1963; Ilg & Ames, 1965; Shepard & Smith, 1988; Washburne, 1936) have been conducted on school readiness, retention of children in school and placement of young students in developmental or transitional classes prior to first grade placement. However, research in the area of delaying school placement before entering kindergarten is somewhat limited. The

decision to retain or place a child in a transitional class is influenced and recommended by educators who are working with the child in the school setting (Smith, 1989). Delaying kindergarten placement for a child is solely the parents' decision. The focus of this study was not on the child or on the educator, but on the perceptions of the parents who made this decision for their children.

A relevant and in-depth review of related literature was presented in Chapter II. The review of literature helped reveal the origins and influences of Erik Erikson's work. Other research on adult development and issues of childhood development related to this study were presented in the review. Studies and instruments used to evaluate Erikson's theory were reviewed and criticisms of Erikson's work were discussed.

Chapter III presented the methodology used in the study. Qualitative approach to research was presented, along with the rationale for the study. The <u>Loyola Generativity Scale</u> (LGS) was utilized to support evidence of generativity discovered in the long interview process. Selection of sites, selection of respondents, method of data collection, procedures for analyzing data, researcher bias, and trustworthiness criteria of the study were also presented.

The analysis of data was presented in Chapter IV. The research was guided by the following questions:

1. What factors influenced parents' decision to redshirt their kindergartner?

2. What do parents think their student will gain by delaying school placement?

3. What do parents expect they will gain by redshirting their kindergartner?

Research data from the 11 individuals interviewed, representing six families used in this study, provided the following conclusions.

Factors that influenced parents' decisions were readiness issues, social and developmental maturity of the children, expectations of the school environment, and the mothers and their backgrounds in education. In the literature, it is clear that educators support the maturation school of thought, which is that a child's internal clock will develop independently and automatically. This belief indicates that all children need is time to mature.

The level of generative concern of the parents, as indicated by their scores on the LGS, appears to have had an influence in their decision-making. As discussed in the review of literature in resolving the adult developmental stage of generativity, generative parents have a strong desire to care for the next generation by helping them succeed. All the respondents had a level of generativity, except for one father. Overall, the mothers scored higher on the generativity scale than the fathers and the mothers influenced the fathers' decision, as stated by all six of the families.

Educators appeared to indirectly or directly influence the decision to redshirt. All but one of the mothers had an educational background or had experience in education. The one mother who did not have an educational background or experience indicated that her parents, who were both educators, influenced her decision. Various other reasons were presented for parents making the decision to redshirt their child.

Responses to the interview questions indicated that the parents thought their children would gain confidence and good self-esteem by being redshirted. This would, in turn, give their children the opportunity to be successful and be a leader. The parents also

felt that their children would gain a sense of well-being and happiness. They felt they were giving a gift to their child.

Data analyses also revealed that Erikson's theory was not useful as a framework for analyzing different developmental maturity levels of the parents, since all but one parent appeared to have developed to the level of generativity. Through the qualitative process, the researcher discovered that generativity became the primary focus of the study rather than the different levels of development.

As McCracken (1988) states:

The quantitative goal is to isolate and define categories as precisely as possible before the study is undertaken, and then to determine, again with great precision, the relationship between them. The qualitative goal, on the other hand, is often to isolate and define categories during the process of research. The qualitative investigator expects the nature and definition of analytic categories to change in the course of a project. (p. 16)

Chapter V presented conclusions obtained from the research gathered, the implications, and the recommendations for further research.

Conclusions

The research of this study and analysis of the data provide the following conclusions: (1) With the exception of one parent, the parents in this study who redshirted their kindergartners had achieved a level of generative concern; (2) the parents in this study viewed redshirting as a benefit for their child; (3) the mothers in this study had achieved a higher level of generative concern than three of the six fathers; (4) mothers influenced their husbands in making this decision; (5) educators influenced the decision

to redshirt; and (6) it could not be determined from this study if parents who are at different developmental levels redshirt their children for different reasons.

Regarding the first conclusion on the generativity of the parents in this study, the researcher explored the parents' personal perceptions of kindergarten redshirting, determined their motives, their reasons for delaying their child's placement and determined their adult developmental level at the time they made this decision by utilizing the LGS. The results of this study indicated that 10 out of the 11 parents interviewed had demonstrated successful resolution of the developmental issue of generativity.

The average normative score for generative concern for adults on the LGS is between 39 and 40. The father who did not score at this level scored a 36 on the LGS, while all other parents scored between 39 and 59.

McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) explain:

> Nakagawa (1991) found that LGS scores significantly predicted parents' involvement in the education of their children, even after demographic factors such as family income and parental education were controlled. Parents scoring high on generative concern, as assessed on the LGS, were more likely to attend parent-teacher meetings, volunteer to work in the schools, help in fund raising, work on school committees, and so on, compared with parents scoring low on generative concern. By contrast, psychological measures locus of control and self-esteem were unrelated to parental involvement. (p. 222)

The comments from the long interviews with the parents also support this conclusion regarding generativity, in that they wanted what was best for their children. The parents' comments reinforced the fact that they wanted their children to be "happy," "successful" and "ready to perform." They did not want their children to "struggle" or to be "uncomfortable separating from their parents."

According to Gesell (1982), the reason that parents redshirt their kindergartners is to provide the child with an extra year to grow developmentally and to help their child be better prepared for school activities and academics. Even though two families indicated that their children were highly intelligent and academically ready for school, they felt it was in their children's best interest to redshirt their kindergartner due to the children's maturity level and developmental issues.

According to Kotre (1984), generativity is the "desire to invest one's substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self . . . rather a gift to succeeding generations" (p. 10). In the eyes of the parents, they saw redshirting their child as a gift. This was indicated by their comments, such as this was "a gift" (Dr. White); "if you can't decide, just give them the gift of another year," (Mrs. Roberts); "definitely was a gift given to our son," (Mrs. Roberts); "greatest gift you can give a child is a gift of success," (Dr. White); and, "the best gift you can give your child is a good education," (Dr. White).

Other reasons for redshirting that related to the review of literature included concerns regarding Erikson's theory as to trust, autonomy, initiative, and industry. Although the stages of Erikson were not useful in clearly determining any unresolved issues in their development due to the generativity level of ten of the parents, they did have an awareness of the importance of developmental stages and focused these concerns on their children.

The second conclusion that can be derived from this study is that parents viewed kindergarten redshirting as a benefit. They shared that a reason to redshirt their child was that they wanted to "give them a boost of confidence" (Mrs. Roberts) by providing them an extra advantage. Other comments regarding this were: "the best gift you can give . . . a

good self-esteem and a good building block," (Dr. White); "I expected, really for him to gain more confidence in himself . . . that his confidence would grow," (Mrs. White); and, "a child that approached kindergarten in a more confident manner," (Mrs. Roberts).

Other parents' comments related to benefits included: "they're going to be more successful in the classroom," (Mrs. Roberts); "I wanted to give him every advantage," (Mrs. White); "I hoped to give him that feeling of success . . . able to do many things and excel," (Dr. White); "he would learn a little more quickly," (Mrs. Brown); "that he would do better in school . . . he would be more able to do his work," (Mrs. Knol); and "allow her the best opportunity to progress," (Mr. James).

Other comments such as "more beneficial to her overall development," (Mr. James); "gain a child who would benefit from kindergarten," (Mr. Knol); and "why would you always want your child to be the caboose when he has the opportunity to be the engine," (Dr. White) support these thoughts.

One set of parents (Knol) felt by making this decision they had a happier child, as noted in their comment, "I believe he's an extremely happy little boy," (Mr. Knol). Other positive comments validating their decisions were: "I am very pleased that we chose redshirting," (Dr. White); "it's a good thing," (Mr. Brown); "that was the correct choice...I had no question that we were doing the right thing . . . it has been an extremely positive experience in my son's life," (Mr. Knol); "overall, I have a very positive feeling about redshirting . . . I know it's a positive thing to do for her," (Mr. James); "it's been a positive experience for our son . . . it was the right choice," (Mrs. Roberts); "I saw that it had a very happy ending, very happy," (Mrs. White); and "he is doing far beyond my imagination," (Mrs. Knol).

The third conclusion noted in this study was that mothers had achieved a higher level of generative concern than three of the six fathers. The mothers in this study scored an overall average normative socre of 48.8 on the LGS, while the fathers in this study scored an overall average normative score of 42.2. McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) conducted a study on analyzing the assessment of generativity which indicated a slight tendency for women to score higher than men on the LGS and for scores to slightly increase with age, but their second study provided no support for these trends and they caution against making claims concerning gender and age related to the LGS.

As stated in the review of literature, Erikson (1968) suggested that "motherhood is a central aspect of women's identity, though he made no parallel claim about fatherhood for men," (pp. 290-291). The mothers appeared to be the experts on their children. They were more aware of their children's weaknesses and areas of academic abilities, which suggests that motherhood was an important role in their identity.

The conclusion regarding the generativity level of the mothers in this study is directly related to the fourth and fifth conclusions, which are the influences that both mothers and educators had on the decision to redshirt their children. The mothers felt that redshirting their child would eliminate their concerns about retention and developmental first programs as well as the classroom environment. Gredler (1992) suggest that children are held out, "to ensure that the child is 'ready' to negotiate what is obviously perceived as a hazardous passage to completion of kindergarten and first grade" (p.17). The mothers seemed to be aware of the expectations of the classroom environment, and also indicated that specific academic skills were more of a concern than did the fathers. It was obvious that the mothers' educational experiences impacted their decision to redshirt

their children. Shepard and Smith (1988) found that teachers' beliefs about the nature of development influence both their beliefs and practices related to retention.

The researcher determined that background similarities among the participants may have an influence on their decision to redshirt. The information that the researcher reviewed indicated that parents of higher socioeconomic level and educational level have a higher occurrence of kindergarten redshirting (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997). The community and the participants in this study fit this characteristic of parents who redshirt.

Families with similar background information were selected in an effort to control influential variables within the respondent group such as socioeconomic levels, educational background of parents, and family dynamics. All parents were American citizens and Caucasian. The families interviewed were highly educated. Of the five mothers that were interviewed, four held master's degrees and one had obtained a doctoral degree. Occupations included part-time school psychologist, nurse practitioner, elementary principal, preschool director and homemaker/substitute teacher. The homemaker had previously worked as a director of an infant crisis service and home-school coordinator. Of the fathers interviewed, four were degreed engineers, one was a dentist and one was a school administrator. All the fathers had bachelor's degrees, two fathers had master's degrees, one held two bachelor's degrees and one had a medical degree.

The sixth conclusion noted in this study was that it could not be determined if adults who are dealing with different developmental issues or who have not successfully resolved a conflicting stage in their own life would redshirt their child for different

reasons than those who had achieved a level of generative concern. One father in the study did not score at or above the average adult level of generative concern, and the results of his interview suggested negative feelings and unresolved issues from his own early school experience. His wife had some influence on his decision to redshirt his son and his reasons for redshirting were similar to the other parents. However, he was more concerned than the other parents about the negative impact of school on children if they were not ready to start. Consequently, the data from this study did not provide enough information to thoroughly examine this phenomenon.

<div align="center">Implications for Research, Theory, and Practice</div>

The generative parents in this study were very concerned for the well-being of their children. McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998) state that generativity is the concern for and commitment to promoting the next generation, through parenting, teaching, mentoring and generating products and outcomes that aim to benefit youth and foster the development and well-being of individuals.

What the parents intended to gain and what they wanted their children to gain were one in the same. They wanted their children to be successful and benefit from the extra year given to them by redshirting. It can be implied, then, that redshirting itself could be considered a generative act. McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998) stated "Adults become concerned about the next generation; reinforced by a belief in the species, they translate their concern into generative commitments, which in turn lead to generative acts of creating, maintaining and offering up" (p. 37).

It is also apparent that parents benefitted by helping their children. Snarey (1993) stated:

> Seeing life, marriage, and parenting through the lens of generativity links child development and child well-being with adult development and adult well-being; active parental care of children that increases children's well-being simultaneously serves to increase the parents' growth and well-being. (p. 450)

Thus, if kindergarten redshirting is viewed as beneficial to the outcomes of youth, the parents who make this decision to redshirt receive the benefits of well-being themselves. We recognize that a successful, happy child is a way for parents to feel happy and be successful themselves.

As noted by McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998):

> The most extensive examination of the interviews on generativity was completed by McAdams, Diamond, de St. Aubin and Mansfield (1997). The authors found that, although each life-story interview provided a unique account of a life in time, the life stories constructed by the highly generative adults as a group differed in significant ways from the stories constructed by their less generative peers. The differences began in accounts of childhood. The highly generative adults were significantly more likely to identify a way in which they were singled out in childhood with a special advantage. (p. 31)

It is apparent that these developmental issues become cyclic as the generative parents give their children the gift of a year and, in a way, single them out with a special childhood advantage. As noted in Chapter IV, the parents were somehow aware of Erikson's developmental stages of trust, autonomy, initiative, industry and identity issues as they discussed the various developmental concerns for their children. The researcher suggests that generative parents help their children resolve critical stages of development and prepare them to move into adulthood with fewer unresolved conflicts.

From the review of literature, Erikson (1968) stated:

A new life task presents a crisis whose outcome can be a successful graduation from that stage or an impairment of the life cycle that will impact future crises. Each crisis prepares the next, as one step leads to another; and each crisis lays one more cornerstone for the development of the adult personality. (p. 254)

It is clear that there are implications from this study that making beneficial decisions for one's child helps the child and also helps the parents. Communities need to implement ways in which adults can contribute to the next generation.

As educators, we need to work with parents and find ways to help them benefit their children, which in turn can help the parents themselves. As people realize their potential as a valuable resource to children, this can, when imparted to others, maintain and improve the quality of society so that children and adults can benefit. By having parent volunteers serve as resources and contribute in the classroom, we all will benefit.

Erikson (1982) further suggested for parents, an ethical commitment to care for their children and a relational bond to nurture their children's development become significant parts of the path to healthy adulthood. Parental failure to develop generativity can lead to both a pervading sense of stagnation and self-absorption for the parent and difficult developmental challenges for children. This lack of development, in turn, can lead to issues of low self-esteem, conflict and dissatisfaction.

Other implications for educators would be to include fathers in educational decisions and experiences. Schools need to continue to involve all parents in the child's educational experience and educate them on developmental issues.

Educators also need to be aware that they create a learning environment that is developmentally appropriate. We need to look at school environments and issues of influence by educators. As Ausubel and Sullivan (1970) explained, "many educators

view a child's readiness for school in absolute terms. Educators fail to appreciate that, except for such traits as walking and grasping, the mean age of readiness can never be specified apart from relevant environmental conditions" (p. 93).

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the relevant literature reviewed, the data obtained, and the conclusions, findings and implications of this study, it would be appropriate to recommend three further studies in the area of adult development and decision-making. These recommendations are:

1. A study should be conducted using other adult development theories to evaluate parents' decision-making. Erikson's stages require narrative or empirical support in order to be useful to researchers. The use of other measures of maturity and a more comprehensive means to review adult development would also be appropriate.

The findings of this study indicate that focusing on only one stage of development does not do justice to Erikson's theoretical formulation, which clearly implies that resolution of the core conflicts of earlier developmental stages can be influenced in part by crises characteristic of a later developmental period. A research instrument which enables such changes to be mapped over a range of developmental stages is useful for the researchers interested in life-span developmental stages (Rosenthal, Gurney & Moore, 1981).

2. A study should be conducted with different populations, such as non-educators, persons with educational levels somewhat less than those in this

study, persons who are in a lower socioeconomic category than those in this study, and the inclusion of parents from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Generalizations are limited in this study by the similar backgrounds of parents who volunteered to participate.

3. A study should be conducted which focuses only on generativity. According to McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998), researchers have been able to determine the personal cost of generativity. They further indicate that the positive empirical association between measures of generativity and of well-being is not so strong as to rule out the possibility that excessive generativity comes at a price.

Summary

This chapter has presented the conclusion, implications and recommendations that have grown out of this study on parents' perceptions of kindergarten redshirting. An analysis of the data revealed the following commonalties: (1) parents felt their child would benefit from waiting an extra year to attend school; (2) parents were concerned about a variety of readiness issues; (3) all the wives' influenced their husbands in making the decision; (4) all but one wife had an educational background; and (5) the LGS indicated that all but one parent scored in the average range of generativity.

The research of this study and analysis of the data provide support for the following conclusions: (1) with the exception of one parent, the parents in this study who redshirted their kindergartners had achieved a level of generative concern; (2) the parents in this study viewed redshirting as a benefit for their child; (3) the mothers in this study

had achieved a higher level of generative concern than the fathers; (4) all of the mothers influenced their husbands in making this decision; (5) educators influenced the decision to redshirt; and (6) it could not be determined from this study if parents who are at different developmental levels redshirt their children for different reasons.

Erikson's eight stages of development were not useful in the analysis of unresolved issues. This was partly due to the level of generativity of the parents in this study, indicating previous issues had been resolved. The perceptions of these generative parents of kindergarten redshirting suggested an awareness of critical issues and developmental stages that their children would need to successfully resolve as they proceeded through the developmental stages and entered school.

The implications have added the importance of parents having generative concern for their children. The decision of parents to delay placement of their kindergartners may be considered a generative act. Communities and schools need to find ways to involve adults as resources to young people. Educators should also include fathers in all their students' educational decisions and concerns, and create classrooms that are developmentally appropriate for all students. The primary purpose of this study was to analyze the parents' stage of adult development and the relationship to decisions made for their children.

The common theme throughout the data and research is that parents make this decision to benefit their children. In turn, this decision benefits them as a generative act.

These parents had achieved a level of generativity and that appeared to have an impact on why they held their child out of school for a year. It could not be determined

from this study if parents who are not achieved a level of generativity would redshirt their

kindergartner for same reasons.

This study supports the problem statement that parents' developmental levels may

impact their decision to redshirt their kindergarten. This study focused on selected

parents' perceptions of kindergarten redshirting.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe your feelings about kindergarten redshirting.

2. What characteristics should parents consider when deciding to redshirt their kindergartner?

3. Who influenced your decision to redshirt your kindergartner?

4. What characteristics about your child did you consider?

5. Why was it important for you to delay placement of your child for one year?

6. What did you expect to gain by redshirting your kindergartner?

7. Describe your experiences in school.

8. What would you have changed about your school experience?

APPENDIX B

LOYOLA GENERATIVITY SCALE (LGS)

Instructions: For each of the following statements, please indicate how often the statement applies to you, by marking either a "0," "1," "2," or "3" in the space in front.

Mark "0" if the statement never applies to you.

Mark "1" if the statement only occasionally or seldom applies to you.

Mark "2" if the statement applies to you fairly often.

Mark "3" if the statement applies to you very often or nearly always.

____ 1. I try to pass along the knowledge I have gained through my experiences.

____ 2. I do not feel that other people need me.

____ 3. I think I would like the work of a teacher.

____ 4. I feel as though I have made a difference to many people.

____ 5. I do not volunteer to work for a charity.

____ 6. I have made and created things that have had an impact on other people.

____ 7. I try to be creative in most things that I do.

____ 8. I think that I will be remembered for a long time after I die.

____ 9. I believe that society cannot be responsible for providing food and shelter for all homeless people.

____ 10. Others would say that I have made unique contributions to society.

____ 11. If I were unable to have children of my own, I would like to adopt children.

____ 12. I have important skills that I try to teach others.

____ 13. I feel that I have done nothing that will survive after I die.

____ 14. In general, my actions do not have a positive effect on other people.

____ 15. I feel as though I have done nothing of worth to contribute to others.

___ 16. I have made many commitments to many different kinds of people, groups and

activities in my life.

___ 17. Other people say that I am a productive person.

___ 18. I have a responsibility to improve the neighborhood in which I live.

___ 19. People come to me for advice.

___ 20. I feel as though my contributions will exist after I die.

APPENDIX C

ORAL SOLICITATION

My name is Linda Chance and I am a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University. I am writing a dissertation investigating the perceptions of parents who delay placement of their kindergartner in public schools. This research will present a holistic picture of how parents process the decision to hold their child out of kindergarten.

I need your help to document how this decision is made. I want to be as accurate as possible and include as many viewpoints as possible.

Each participant will be asked to engage in an interview session. All interviews will be tape recorded, transcribed and analyzed. All audiotapes will be destroyed after transcription. Pseudonyms will be used after transcription as well. I, as researcher, will have the only copy of the real names with the pseudonyms. Your identity will be protected with complete anonymity. You do not have to answer any question that you choose not to answer. You may also stop the interview at any time.

I am available to meet with you at any time most convenient to you, including evenings and weekends. Please provide me with a time and date that is most convenient for you. I will give you an information sheet with my work phone number, home phone number, and address. Feel free to contact me for any additional information. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, hereby authorize or direct Linda Chance and Dr. Nan Restine to perform the following treatment or procedure:

Procedure – The individual indicated will be interviewed about his/her perception of kindergarten redshirting. The individual has the right to choose not to answer any question at any time during the interview. After the interview has been transcribed, the interviewee has the right to examine the transcription to make any clarification, if they so choose. The responses, in conjunction with the documents, will be used to present the perceptions of the participants.

Duration – The interviewee will determine the length of the interview. Most interviews should not last more than one hour.

Confidentiality – Pseudonyms will be used in the final document. Only the researcher will have access to the actual names of the participants. Tape-recorded interviews will be transcribed, destroyed by taping over the interviews, and then discarded. Any information deemed unacceptable to the interviewee for permanent documentation will be omitted.

Possible Discomfort – Although no questions of a personal or intrusive nature are intended, some questions may cause discomfort; therefore, the respondent may discontinue such questions/answers at any time.

Possible Benefits – Kindergarten redshirting takes place quite commonly in our public schools. Research concerning the perceptions of parents who delay placement could provide educators with an understanding of parental expectations.

This is done as part of an investigation entitled "Parents' Perception of Kindergarten Redshirting." The purpose is to use a qualitative method of gaining information regarding the perception of the above respondents to have a more clearer understanding of this phenomenon.

I understand that participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the project director. I may contact Linda Chance at (405)

340-2818 or Dr. Nan Restine at (405) 744-3883. I may also contact Sharon Bacher, IRB

Executive Secretary, 305 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, 74078, (405)

744-5700.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign in freely and voluntarily. A

copy has been provided for me.

Date:_____   Time:_____ (a.m./p.m.)

Signed: _____

I certify that I have personally included all elements in this form for the subject to read

before requesting the subject to sign.

Signed: _____ Project Director/Researcher

APPENDIX E

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

INTERVIEW # _____   DATE_____

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW_____

TIME: Start_____ End_____   TAPE # _____ Begin _____ End _____

TRANSCRIBED BY _____   DATE_____

****

RESPONDENT / INTERVIEWEE_____

GENDER M   F   AGE_____   DATE OF BIRTH_____ BIRTH ORDER _____

MARITAL STATUS _____   NUMBER OF MARRIAGES _____

AGE OF SPOUSE_____   OCCUPATION OF SPOUSE_____

PARENTS' OCCUPATION(S) _____

PRESENT OCCUPATION _____   HOW LONG_____

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE   LOCATION   HOW LONG

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____

PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION / EDUCATION:

COLLEGE / UNIV.   LOCATION   DEGREE / AREA   DATES

_____   _____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____   _____

WERE YOU EVER HELD BACK IN SCHOOL?   YES   NO

CHILDREN	GENDER	AGE	PARENTS' AGE AT BIRTH	PRESCHOOL EXPERIENCE	YEAR HELD BACK	SPECIAL CLASSES
_____	M F	_____	_____	YES NO	_____	YES NO
_____	M F	_____	_____	YES NO	_____	YES NO
_____	M F	_____	_____	YES NO	_____	YES NO
_____	M F	_____	_____	YES NO	_____	YES NO

APPENDIX F

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL FORM

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 5/9/01

Date : Tuesday, May 09, 2000   IRB Application No: ED00268

Proposal Title: PARENT'S PERCEPTION OF KINDERGARTEN REDSHIRTING

Principal
Investigator(s) :

Linda Chance   Nan Restine
238 Willard Hall   245 Willard
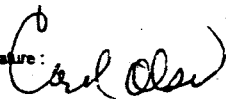Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) : Approved

Please change on the consent form IRB contact person to Sharon Bacher, 203 Whitehurst, 405-744-5700

Signature :

_____   Tuesday, May 09, 2000
Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance   Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the
research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be
notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt
projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

VITA

Linda Warren Chance

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: SELECTED PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF KINDERGARTEN
REDSHIRTING

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Edmond Memorial High School, Edmond, Oklahoma
in May 1977; received Bachelor of Science degree in Special Education –
Learning Disabilities and a Master of Education degree in Counseling
Psychology from University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma in
May 1981 and May 1985, respectively. Completed the requirements for
the Doctor of Education degree with a major in Educational
Administration from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in
December 2000.

Experience: Learning disabilities teacher, Moon Middle School, Oklahoma City,
Oklahoma, 1981-1982; Learning disabilities teacher, Sequoyah Middle
School, 1982-1986; Elementary counselor, Sunset Elementary, 1986-1987;
Elementary counselor, Northern Hills Elementary, 1988-1991;
Coordinator of elementary counselors, Special Services, 1987-1989;
Middle School counselor, Sequoyah Middle School, 1991-1993; Assistant
Principal, Washington Irving Elementary; 1993-1994; Elementary
Principal, Russell Dougherty Elementary, 1994-1997; Director of Human
Resources, Edmond Public Schools, 1997-1999; Associate Superintendent
of Personnel and Public Information, Edmond Public Schools, 1999-
present.

Professional Organizations: Oklahoma Association of School Administrators,
Delta Kappa Gamma, Rotary Club International, Edmond Area Chamber
of Commerce.