THE SELF-CONCEPT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE HONORS COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
for
GRADUATION WITH HONORS

by
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MUNCIE, INDIANA
MAY, 1965
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Ann Lefcourt, faculty advisor, for the time she devoted to supervising this study. Her assistance, encouragement, and interest made the writing of this paper possible.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper was to examine and interpret research studies and current literature concerning the self-concept of the elementary school child and its effect on academic achievement. Since the realization of the individual's potential can be handicapped by his concept of self, this problem was judged worthy of consideration and study.

Academic achievement is defined as being the measured acquisition of subject matter knowledge. Academic achievement is affected by many factors such as intellectual capacity, experiential background, and emotional state. The concern here is with the child's self-concept as one of several possible factors affecting academic achievement.

The self-concept is a highly complex phenomenon composed of many facets. This fact is illustrated by the different definitions which various authors have given it. Jersild used the term "self" defined as "a composite of thoughts and feelings which constitute a person's awareness
of his individual existence, his conception of who and what he is.\textsuperscript{1} He defined "self" and also indicated that the individual perceives these characteristics as being his. Allport stated that "self" is too inclusive, and that it must be divided into a series of component parts which can be psychologically analyzed. One of the eight aspects of self which he distinguished is the self-image of phenomenal self. It was defined as the manner in which the person regards his present abilities, status, and roles.\textsuperscript{2} He clearly indicated that one of the many different factors of self is the person's perception of his own characteristics.

McCandless considered the self-concept as being the apex or culmination of all the child's personal and social experiences.\textsuperscript{3} Bodwin used "immature self-concept" to indicate that it is developmental in nature.\textsuperscript{4} Raimy gave the most


\textsuperscript{2}Gordon Allport, \textit{Becoming} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), pp. 36-56.


extensive definition of the self-concept in his doctoral dissertation. He stated:

1. The self-concept is a learned perceptual system which functions as an object in the perceptual field.
2. The self-concept not only influences behavior but is itself altered and restructured by behavior and unsatisfied needs.
3. It may have little or no relation to external reality.\(^5\)

Thus, the self-concept is acquired and developed, does influence behavior, and may or may not be accurate.

A distinction among the various types of self-concept must be made. Evaluation is a subjective process which is made in terms of the desirability of the self-concept to the individual. A whole range in degree exists, but the two extremes are used to describe self-concepts. At one extreme, the self-concept is considered to be good, high, positive, and adequate. At the other, the self-concept is termed low, poor, negative, and inadequate. The individual with a positive self-concept sees himself as being a worthy and capable person, is realistic and accurate in recognizing his faults and assets, and is able to form strong identifications with others. The opposite

characteristics describe the negative self-concept. In addition to being positive or negative, the self-concept may or may not be accurate according to others' perceptions of the person. A distinction also exists between the person's concept of himself and the ideal self he would like to be.

For the purpose of this paper, the self-concept is defined as those characteristics which the individual perceives as being accurate in describing himself. It is the individual's perception of himself—who he is, what he is capable of doing, and how he values his worth to himself and to others.

Psychologists and educators share a common interest in the nature and development of the self-concept. Jersild stated that "the concept of self provides a key to the understanding of mental health ...." Thus, the individual's perception of himself provides the basis for understanding his behavior. Psychologists' work involves the process of re-educating individuals to understand and live

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7 Jersild, p. 10.
with themselves. Educators are also concerned with helping children acquire realistic attitudes of self-acceptance. Jersild indicated that there exists a tremendous need in our educational program to help children learn to accept themselves. Evidence of this need is the increasing proportion of young people struggling to cope with the real problems they must face while burdened with defensive attitudes toward themselves. Educators need to develop some means of helping alleviate these problems through the normal school program. The particular concern of this paper was the need for educators to understand the child's perception of himself to facilitate academic achievement.

The complexity of the self-concept provides a vast range of aspects for possible consideration and study. Due to this vastness, the subject was limited to the self-concept's effect on academic achievement. The writer realizes that this paper is, at best, a limited treatment of this specific area due to the complexity of the topic and wealth of research concerning it. The attempt was made to discuss three aspects which seem pertinent to the selected area. These were the formation of the self-concept, the effect on academic achievement, and the implications for education.

CHAPTER II

THE FORMATION OF THE SELF-CONCEPT

A. The Nature of Formation

The formation of the self-concept was found to be affected by factors of its own nature. Of primary importance is the fact that "the self is acquired." A child is not born with any concept of self; this is learned through time. The self-concept is acquired and developed through the process of social interaction. The child's perception of himself is influenced by his relationships with other people. Social interaction is a continuous process; therefore, the self-concept is not static but is in a constant process of evolution. Similarly, the self-concept is not formed from any single event; it is the result of the interaction of all the forces acting upon the child. Thus, the self-concept, by virtue of its nature, is acquired and developed through

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1 Jersild, p. 16.

2 Ibid.

the process of continuous varied experiences with others. Although the formation follows a similar pattern in all cases, the actual self-concept that is developed is unique to each individual due to his particular circumstances.

The formation of the self-concept was also found to be affected by factors of child development. As the child's rational powers develop, he becomes increasingly more able to interpret the experiences which he has. Increased perception enables him to become aware of the attitudes and actions of other people toward him and to form concepts about himself in view of them. As the child matures, the process of differentiation heightens his awareness of himself as an individual and of the differences between his intent and that of others. The child becomes able to differentiate among the types of responses his behavior elicits. The development of the ability to imagine has an important influence upon the formation of the self-concept. Through the use of the imagination, the child may build a distorted or false image of self by elaborating little criticisms into serious insults and signs of hatred. The imagination can also be employed to avoid facing the reality of certain weaknesses and limitations.\(^4\)

While the development of rational powers directly

\(^4\)Jersild, pp. 16-18.
affect the formation of the self-concept, the development of physical abilities indirectly influence its formation. The child's increased ability to care for himself causes the parents to make increased demands upon him. This increased responsibility makes modifying the self-concept necessary. Additional physical abilities extend the behavior possibilities for the child. The parental reaction which this new behavior receives also influences the formation of the child's self-concept.

The exact manner in which the child's initial self-concept is acquired is difficult to determine. Ausubel theorized that the child's initial concept of self is one of omnipotence due to the fact that his needs are gratified because of his state of helplessness. The child does not yet have the rational power to understand that his needs are fulfilled because of his helplessness and not because he has willed them to be. Between the ages of two and three, a crisis occurs. The child's newly acquired abilities undermine his previous status of helplessness, and he is now able to realize that he is dependent, not omnipotent. Thus, Ausubel continued, the ego tends to be reorganized. The

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least traumatic approach is for the child to abandon his pretensions of omnipotence and to attain derived status as a satellite of his parents. To retain this role, the child internalizes the parental values and conforms to parental expectations. If the parents do not accept and value the child in this role, the child will attempt to gain primary status upon his own performance ability. His self-esteem is based upon his ability to perform.\(^6\) Although this is a theory and not proven fact, it serves to illustrate the synthesis of the factors of the self-concept and of child development in the formation of a concept of self.

B. Parental Influences

The nature of the formation of the self-concept indicates that the early experiences which a child has with other individuals are quite important in influencing his perception of himself. Gordon indicated the importance of early familial experiences:

Their original images of themselves are formed in the family circle. They develop these notions of who they are in relation to the behavior of the people around them, particularly through the ways in which their behavior is received by the adults who are important to them.\(^7\)

Thus, parental attitudes and behaviors toward the child are

\(^6\)Ibid.

\(^7\)Gordon, p. 9.
a primary influence in shaping the child's self-concept.

The child's perception of parental acceptance of him affects the child's acceptance of himself. Tatum, in a study of fourth grade children, found a statistically positive relationship between apparent parental acceptance and the way in which children regard themselves. Gordon found that favorable concepts of self are developed throughout life on the basis of warm, loving, acceptant behavior on the part of the parents. These studies indicate that the child who perceives his parents as accepting him is likely to be accepting of himself.

One study found evidence of a difference in the degree of effect of paternal and maternal acceptance. Silver investigated the relationship between parental acceptance and the level of the self-concept. He found the level of the self-concept to be significantly associated with paternal acceptance and to a lesser degree with maternal acceptance. His study is in agreement with the other studies.

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9Gordon, p. 10.

reviewed in that parental acceptance does affect the type of self-concept developed. The difference in degree of influence between paternal and maternal acceptance may have been due to the subjects studied. The study was limited to adolescent boys; therefore, a natural identification would tend to exist with the father, making his acceptance more important to the boy.

The aspect of parental rejection was investigated by Ausubel. He studied fourth and fifth grade children to determine the relationship of perceived parental rejection to various ego structure variables. No significant relationship to any variable other than disagreement with perceived parent opinions was found.11 This finding did not confirm Ausubel's hypothesis. Further, it seems inconsistent with the findings of Tatum and Gordon. No further research was found relating to rejection.

Perceived parental evaluation of the child affects the child's evaluation of his worth as an individual. Jourard found that self-appraisals will vary with a person's perception or belief concerning his parents appraisals of him. The variance of self-appraisals with real parental

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appraisals of the child was not determined. Wickerson made this conclusion based on the studies she reviewed. She stated that "an individual who believes his parents evaluate him positively is inclined towards security, negative perceptions of parents evaluation may lead to insecurity." Thus, the child's perception of himself, negative or positive, tends to be like that which he perceives his parents have of him.

The relationship of the self-concept to extrinsic and intrinsic evaluation of the child by the parents was investigated by Ausubel. Intrinsic evaluation was defined as appreciation and love of the child for his own sake. Extrinsic evaluation was characterized by excessive concern and public display of the child's accomplishments to enhance the parents' own status. Ausubel found that the extrinsically valued child conceived his capacities in more omnipotent terms, had greater evidence of goal tenacity after failure, was less execute ly independent, less able to postpone immediate hedonistic gratifications, and disagreed more


with his parents. The relationship of these variables to extrinsic evaluation was low to moderate. Intrinsic evaluation and perceptions of acceptance were found to be highly correlated.\textsuperscript{14} Ausubel's investigation indicated that the child who is intrinsically valued by his parents perceives himself as being a worthy individual. The extrinsically valued child, like his parents, tends to value his accomplishments rather than himself as a worthy person.

Parental power assertion was found to be pertinent to the development of the child's self-concept because the child infers his parents' attitudes toward him from these actions. Power assertion by parents was found to contribute to the development of hostile and defensive attitudes in the child toward himself and others. Hoffman interviewed parents and children of ten lower class and twelve middle class families to determine the effects of the use of excessive power assertion by the parent on the personality of the child. He defined power assertion techniques as those which convey to the child that he must without question change his behavior immediately. A difference between power assertion by the mother and father was found. The frequent use of power assertion by the mother contributed to the development

\textsuperscript{14}Ausubel, pp. 179-80.
of hostility, power needs, and heightened autonomy strivings which the child misplaced toward his peers. This was found true only when the child had resisted the initial assertion of power and was subsequently subjected to further power assertion by the retaliating mother. Hoffman stated that this conflict situation causes lasting effects on the child because both mother and child are highly emotionally involved in preserving their self-esteem. No direct relationship was found between the father's power assertion and the development of hostility and other variables.\textsuperscript{15}

Kagan found during interviews with 217 children in the first three grades of school that both boys and girls saw their fathers as being more dominant, punitive, and threatening than the mother.\textsuperscript{16} Hoffman's study indicated that under conditions of high emotional involvement, power assertion by the mother produces attitudes of hostility while power assertion by the father does not. No explanation for the lack of hostility resulting from the fathers' power assertion was given. In view of Kagan's findings, further


research and information concerning the fathers' use of power assertion are necessary.

The exercise of parental power assertion was found to differ in manner and degree between the middle and lower socioeconomic classes. An understanding of the differences in childrearing practices between these two classes is necessary for interpreting the effect of power assertion in each instance. Kohn found that parents of both classes based their childrearing practices on goals derived from the values they wish to incorporate into their children's behavior. The important value of the lower class was found to be respectability while that of the middle class was internalized standards of conduct. Lower class parents punished in terms of the immediate consequences of the child's actions. Middle class parents were more likely to punish in terms of the child's motives rather than the actual behavior. The lower class differentiated between appropriate conduct for boys and girls. Girls were reared to become "little ladies," and manners, neatness, and cleanliness were stressed. Girls received physical punishment for fighting and defying parental requests. Boys were less likely to be physically punished for these same offenses. The desired conduct for boys was manliness; therefore, assertive behavior was expected and condoned. The middle class did not make such a
differentiation for appropriate behavior. The goal for both sexes was to internalize principles of self-control, and conduct was judged by one criterion, the intent of the action.17

Hoffman, in a later study, found that middle class childrearing practices tend to inhibit the direct use of power assertion. When power assertion did occur, it was found to be related to the power needs of the parent. The mother's use of authoritarian methods to control the child's behavior was not considered to be direct power assertion but an attempt to preserve her self-esteem which was threatened by the non-compliance of the child. An absence of any significant relationships relating to the father's use of power assertion was found. This was explained by the fact that the father has more opportunity to express his power needs outside of the home.18 Power assertion upon the child may result from either parent's authoritarian behavior towards the other, who in turn displaces the resulting aggression


18 This also explains the lack of relationship of the father's power assertion to hostility found in Hoffman's earlier study. Supra, p. 11.
upon the child.\textsuperscript{19}

Lower class parents were found to use direct power assertion more frequently than the middle class. Hoffman found the father’s power assertion related negatively to his power needs. This was explained as being due to the traditional patriarchial family structure of the lower class in which the father asserts power because of his position rather than from a particular need. The mother's power assertion related positively to the husband's authoritarian behavior towards her. Unlike the middle class, the lower class has a one-sided marital power structure; therefore, this situation cannot be reversed as in the middle class.\textsuperscript{20}

Because his behavior is forced into compliance with parental wishes by the use of power assertion, the child may infer that he is a being of subordinate worth. As a result, the child may develop defensive and hostile attitudes toward himself and displace his aggression upon his peers.

C. School Influences

The child's school experiences were found to be


\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., pp. 882-883.
another important influence on the formation of his self-concept. Jersild stated that "the school is second only to the home as a place where the social forces which influence a child's attitudes toward himself and others are concentrated."\textsuperscript{21} School influences are important because they supplement the child's original concepts with a wide variety of new situations and values. The beneficial or detrimental effect which these experiences will have on the child in developing his estimate of his own worth, depends upon the individual child and the particular people with whom he comes in contact.\textsuperscript{22}

School was considered to be an especially strong influencing factor because it is a highly ego-involving situation. The elements of success, failure, pride, and shame are ever present. Jersild explained, "All the teacher's relationships with his pupils, the feelings he has toward them, the judgments he passes on them, the ways in which he rewards and punishes, praises and blames, acknowledges and ignores are charged with psychological meaning."\textsuperscript{23} Thus, the child's experiences at school and his relationships with

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{21}Jersild, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{22}Gordon, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{23}Jersild, pp. 7-8.
\end{flushright}
his teachers and peers have a profound psychological impact upon the shaping of his self-concept.

Teacher attitudes were found to be a major influence on the formation of the child's self-concept. Particularly important is the teacher's attitude towards himself. Information from research studies indicates that the teacher must have a positive self-concept to serve as a model to the students. Bledsoe stated that the teacher who feels inadequate regarding himself will adversely affect his pupils because their self-concepts are influenced by their contact with him.24 Jersild indicated that a teacher must endeavor to understand himself before he can successfully understand the behavior of others. He warned that unless the teacher understands his own behavior and attitudes "he will continue to see those whom he teaches through the bias and distortions of his own unrecognized needs, fears, desires, anxieties, and hostile impulses ...."25

The child's perception of the teacher's attitudes


toward him was found to correlate positively with self-estimates. Davidson conducted a study involving 203 elementary school children in the New York City Public Schools. The children's perceptions of the teacher were measured by a checklist of descriptive terms. She found that a child with a favorable self-image was likely to see his teacher's feelings toward him as favorable. 26 While this study found a positive correlation between the child's positive self-concept and perceived favorable teacher attitudes, it did not indicate whether one factor caused the other and, if so, the causing factor.

Social class was found to affect the child's perception of his teacher's attitudes toward him. Davidson found that upper and middle class children perceived teacher attitudes as being more favorable than did lower class children. The social class variable affected the perception of the teacher's attitudes regardless of the child's achievement. Conversely, achievement in school affected the child's perception of his teacher's attitudes regardless of social class position. 27 Thus, both social class and academic


achievement are important factors relating to perceived teacher attitudes.

The type of teacher attitude has a profound influence upon the development of the child's self-concept. The type of attitude the teacher has regarding the child was found to be related to the teacher's own childhood experiences. For this reason, the development of teacher attitudes is relevant to the formation of the child's self-concept.

Webster conducted a study to determine if a relationship exists between the interpersonal behaviors which teachers report they have received from their parents as children and the ways in which they behave toward their students. The aspects of inclusion (spending time with the child), control of behavior, and affection as they reportedly occurred in the teacher's childhood were related to these same aspects in the teacher's behavior towards his students. The aspect of control was found to be the most significant. Both male and female teachers were found to replicate the control behaviors of their like-sex parent at a level of considerable statistical significance. At the same time, the degree of likeness to the control behaviors of the father was greater for both sexes than to those of the mother. An interesting implication was found in that girls may be influenced to a greater extent by the behavior of the opposite-sex parent.
than are boys. Seemingly, the father's control behavior produced the more profound effect on the child regardless of sex.

The accuracy of the teacher's perception of the self-concepts of his pupils is important because it entails his ability to understand the child, to help him accept himself, and to help him achieve in school. Perkins conducted a study to investigate the accuracy of teacher perceptions. Fourth and sixth grade children were studied. He found that teacher's perceptions of children's self-concepts were positively and significantly related to the expressed self-concepts of the children. Teacher perceptions showed no significantly higher degree of accuracy than did the children's peers. Teacher's accuracy of perception was found to increase with the length of time spent observing the child, but the magnitude of increase was not significant. The sixth grade teachers were found to be more accurate in their perceptions than the fourth grade teachers. This fact was attributed to the greater stability and consistency of the self-concepts of sixth grade children. Surprisingly, those teachers who were less accepting of self and others showed

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significantly greater similarity to the children's expressed self-concepts than did teachers who were more self-accepting. This may have been caused by limitations of the methodology in determining accepting and non-accepting teachers. However, Perkins theorized that a teacher who is less accepting may develop greater empathy and insight into feelings of others because of his own heightened sensitivity in the area of interpersonal relationships. A more accepting teacher may tend to accept the children as they appear without probing too deeply. 29

Teachers vary in their attitudes toward their students and in their perceptions of their self-concepts. Research studies have noted that teachers seem to vary in both inclination and capacity to communicate favorable feelings to their students. Teachers reflect a variety of feelings toward children, some of which may be due to their own personality needs. 30 Perkins indicated that there is a need for further research to determine the causes for the differences in teachers' perceptions, sensitivity to feelings or others, ability to empathize, and ability to make valid hypotheses concerning another person's self-concept. He concluded that


30 Davidson, p. 114.
a teacher may have these skills to a greater or lesser degree "because of her unique life experiences and the meanings and integrations she has made of them." 31

The child's peer relationships were found to be an important influence in shaping his self-concept during the preadolescent years. Gordon stated that when the child reaches the preadolescent years, the importance of adults as shapers of attitudes diminishes. 32 Thus, during this stage, peer approval has a greater influence on the child than does that of parents or teachers. Adequacy in athletic skills and daring for boys and appearance and personality for girls is the prime requisite for group membership. Peer acceptance can develop and reaffirm feelings of adequacy and self-acceptance while rejection can conceivably contribute to feelings of inadequacy and negative valuation of self. 33

The relationship of the negative self-concept and peer status was studied by several investigators. Reeder found that children with low self-concepts also had low sociometric status. 34 Porterfield found that children who

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31 Perkins, p. 217.
32 Gordon, p. 15.
33 Ibid., p. 16.
have low peer status have a low sense of personal worth. ^35^ Contrary to these two studies, Garland found no significant relationship between the child's self-estimate and the extent to which they were seen by classmates as possessing desirable social characteristics. ^36^ Although the research is not conclusive, negative feelings about the self and non-acceptance by peers seem to be related.

D. Relationships to Other Factors

The review of research studies revealed relationships to certain significant factors relating to the accuracy, level, and consistency of the self-concept. These factors are age, sex, intelligence, anxiety level, social class position, and stability.

The self-concepts of older children were found to be more accurate and realistic than those of younger children. Phillips compared the self-perceptions of third grade children to those of sixth grade children. The accuracy of the self-concept was tested in terms of agreement with peer and teacher estimates and in terms of the reality of estimates


of performance on a psychomotor task. Phillips found that in general the sixth graders were consistently more accurate in their self-estimates than the third graders. The sixth graders' self-concepts were in close agreement with peer and teacher perceptions, and third graders' self-concepts were unrelated to peer and teacher perceptions. The third graders tended to overestimate their capabilities, but the sixth graders accurately estimated theirs. This study found evidence that self-perceptions at all age levels tend to be distorted more by highly ego-involving situations than by situations low in ego-involvement.\textsuperscript{37} Thus, the degree of accuracy with which a child perceives himself, according to this one study, tends to increase with age and be influenced by the type of situation.

Sex differences were found to be related to the level of the self-concept. Ausubel found that girls perceived themselves as significantly more accepted and intrinsically valued than boys. He felt that this was true, in part, because of culturally determined differences in sex roles.\textsuperscript{38} Bledsoe's study of 605 children revealed that boys had lower


\textsuperscript{38}Ausubel, p. 179.
self-concepts than did the girls, and that there was more variability in the boys' self-concepts. Also, the younger boys' self-concepts were lower than those of the older ones. Bledsoe believed that the high percentage of women teachers may have contributed to the low self-concepts of the boys because the feminine values of neatness, conformity, and docility are not ones with which the boys can easily identify.\(^{39}\) In agreement with this explanation is Davidson's finding that girls generally perceived their teacher's feelings toward them as being more favorable than did boys.\(^{40}\)

A low to moderately positive relationship was found between the level of the self-concept and intelligence. Bledsoe found that non-language intelligence had a higher relationship with the self-concepts of fourth grade boys, and that language intelligence was most clearly related to sixth grade boys. For girls, a positive correlation to intelligence existed at the fourth grade level, but no correlation existed at the sixth grade level. Bledsoe further found that a moderately positive correlation between the ideal self and intelligence for all groups except the sixth grade girls.\(^{41}\) No additional information or explanations

\(^{39}\) Bledsoe, pp. 156-171.
\(^{40}\) Davidson, p. 116.
\(^{41}\) Bledsoe, pp. 158-9.
were given. Further research appears to be necessary for interpreting the relationship of the self-concept to intelligence factors.

Anxiety and insecurity were found related to the negative self-concept. Bledsoe found that manifest anxiety was consistently related in a significantly negative way to self-concepts.\textsuperscript{42} Jourard found in a study of college students that negative self-appraisals correlated with psychological insecurity.\textsuperscript{43} Feldhusen studied high and low achievers and found evidence of better integration of the self-concept in less anxious children.\textsuperscript{44} These studies indicate that the child with a negative self-concept is likely to be anxious and insecure.

Socioeconomic class was found to be significantly related to the type of self-concept. Burchinal studied 256 rural and small town children. He found that the children of higher socioeconomic families, determined by the father's occupation and education level, showed better personality adjustment than those of the lower class. From this study,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 175.
  \item \textsuperscript{43} Jourard, pp. 364-65.
\end{itemize}
middle class children appeared to be reared in a more stable, consistent, and psychologically supportive family environment. The author indicated the significance of the fact that schools operate on middle class values. Unexpectedly, children whose fathers had the highest level of education, postgraduate study, showed the greatest indications of personality maladjustment. Burchinal theorized that this may be due to the pressures of upward social mobility. Wickerson concluded from her study that socioeconomic class appears to affect the child's achievement in school, his ambitions and those of his parents for him, and is related to his peers' and teachers' opinions about his achievement and personality. She found that the middle and upper class children rated higher in relation to these factors.

The stability of the self-concept was investigated in several studies. Silver found that stability was consistently and significantly associated with accuracy in perceiving the self as parents and peers perceive it. The stability of the self-concept was also related to the congruency

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46 Wickerson, p. 84.
between the self-concept and the way in which the child believed his parents and peers perceived him. Engle studied the stability of self-concepts over a two year period. She found that students with negative self-concepts at the time of the first test had less stable self-concepts two years later. Students with positive self-concepts increased in the degree of positiveness during the two years. The study indicated that the negative self-concepts became less stable; however, it did not indicate whether they increased in negativeness or became more positive. Perkins found that the self-concept and ideal self became increasingly and significantly congruent through time, and that this congruency was greater for girls and sixth graders in general than for boys and fourth graders. Little or no relationship was found between changes in children's self-ideal self congruency and changes in academic achievement and in acceptance by peers. These studies indicate that the self-concept is not particularly a stable phenomenon. The one variable which was found

47 Silver, pp. 166-67.
to have the greatest effect on stability is the degree of relatedness between the child's conception of himself and the perceptions of him by others which tend to reinforce his self-perception.
CHAPTER III

THE SELF-CONCEPT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A. The Relationship to Academic Achievement

The relationship of the self-concept to academic achievement was investigated. Educators have been aware of the importance of self-attitudes in relationship to academic achievement, and many research studies have been conducted concerning this problem. An interpretation of the findings of these studies was attempted.

The theory of self-consistency, developed by Prescott Lecky, was found to be pertinent in determining the relationship of the self-concept to academic achievement. Lecky believed that the maintenance of the self-concept is the prime motive of all behavior, and that self-consistency is necessary for preserving the identity of self. Lecky considered the mind to be an organized system of ideas which are consistent with one another and the individual's concept of self to be the center or nucleus of the mind. He maintained that new ideas are accepted or rejected on the basis of their consistency with this established system of ideas. He stated:
If a new idea seems to be consistent with the ideas already present in the system, and particularly with the individual's conception of himself, it is accepted and assimilated easily. If it seems to be inconsistent, however, it meets with resistance and is likely to be rejected. This resistance is a natural phenomenon; it is essential for the maintenance of individuality.\(^1\)

Jersild elaborated this concept further. He explained that an individual accepts and incorporates that which is congenial to his self-system but avoids and rejects experiences which are not. Jersild maintained that an individual will attempt to preserve his self-concept even if it is negative. He stated that the individual "is active in the maintenance of the self picture, even if by misfortune the picture is a false and unhealthy one."\(^2\)

Lecky applied his theory of self-consistency to learning difficulties. He believed that resistances to learning arise from the student's attempt to preserve his self-concept. He illustrated, "If a student shows resistance toward a certain type of material, this means that from his point of view it would be inconsistent for him to learn it."\(^3\) This idea was discussed by Jersild. He stated, "The learner perceives,

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\(^3\) Lecky, p. 103.
interprets, accepts and resists or rejects what he meets at school in the light of the self system he has within him."  

B. The Effect on Academic Achievement

Research has found that the self-concept does affect academic achievement and that the type of self-concept relates to the level of achievement. Bledsoe found that a positive correlation existed between academic achievement and the self-concept.  

Wickersham's study indicated that the type of self-concept is important because it is consistent. She concluded from her study that a child who had positive feelings about himself in regard to home and school was likely to feel positive about himself in other areas, and that a child who had a negative perception of self was likely to have negative perceptions in other areas, such as grades and general self. Fink studied the type of self-concept and level of academic achievement in pairs, achievers--non-achievers, matched for grade level, sex, and intelligence. He found that a relationship existed between the adequacy of the self-concept and the level of academic achievement. This relationship was found to exist unquestionably for boys and considerably less so for girls. Fink concluded that for

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5 Bledsoe, p. 159.
whatever reasons the psychological burden for the male is heavier than for the female. He noted that other researchers have encountered similar difficulty in finding conclusive information concerning the relationship for girls.\(^6\)

One study was found that did not find a significant statistical relationship between academic achievement and the self-concept. Guthrie hypothesized that academically efficient boys would perceive themselves positively. The findings were disappointing in that no statistically significant correlation was found between academic efficiency and positiveness. The findings were in the predicted direction.\(^7\)

The problem of low-achieving children with normal or superior intelligence has been studied by psychologists and educators. In a study of this problem, the importance of these children's self-concepts has been stressed.\(^8\) The

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negative self-concept was found to relate to underachievement.

A difference in opinion was found to exist concerning the causing factor in the relationship of the negative self-concept and underachievement. Some writers contended that failures in learning cause negative attitudes about self. Others suggested that negative feelings about self cause failures in academic achievement. Another view was expressed by Walsh. She did not attempt to determine which caused the other but tested the hypothesis that children with learning difficulties tend to see themselves as being less adequate than children who are making satisfactory progress in school.\(^9\) These opinions indicated that there is agreement that negative self-concepts and failures in academic achievement tend to occur together and disagreement concerning which factor causes the other.

Research studies indicated that underachievers tend to have negative self-concepts. Walsh studied the characteristics of underachieving children. She found that unsuccessful children had protective defense mechanisms, such as withdrawal, passivity, daydreaming, negativism, and stubbornness. She described the typical underachiever as seeing

\(^9\)Ibid.
himself as inadequate, helpless, perhaps worthless, being unable to achieve or act constructively for his own enjoyment or benefit, and having to be defensive to maintain his own integrity. ¹⁰ Thus, the characteristics of the underachiever and those of the child with a negative self-concept were found to be the same.

Research has found that children with negative self-concepts tend to be underachievers. Reeder found that children with low self-estimates achieved lower in comparison to their potential. ¹¹ Walsh investigated the differences between the self-concepts of low achieving and adequately achieving boys with superior intelligence. She inferred their self-concepts by observing their handling of boy dolls and Driscoll Playkit materials. She found that the low achievers saw themselves as being less free, felt inadequate and rejected, and were unable to express their emotions. ¹² Shaw studied the self-concepts of achieving and non-achieving children. She found that ability levels being equal negative self-attitudes were directly associated with academic underachievement. ¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 4-6.
¹¹ Reeder, p. 2472.
¹² Walsh, p. 38.
A difference was found regarding the self-concepts of male and female underachievers. Shaw found that male underachievers had more negative self-concepts and were less self-accepting than male achievers. Female underachievers did not differ from achievers in self-perception but were more negative in their perception of how others perceived them. The male underachievers' negative attitudes revolved around themselves while those of the females centered on the perceptions of others of them. The fact that female underachievers believed that others had more negative perceptions of them than did the achievers was difficult to interpret. Shaw theorized that this may reflect a greater degree of sensitivity in interpersonal relationships among female underachievers than in female achievers. ¹⁴

The negative self-concept was found to relate to specific educational disabilities. Bodwin investigated the relationship of learning disabilities to the immature (developing) self-concept. He found that the relationship of the immature self-concept was greater to reading and arithmetic disabilities than to those in any other subject. The relationship to reading disabilities was somewhat less, but not significantly, than to arithmetic disabilities. The relationship to both reading and arithmetic disabilities was

¹⁴Ibid., p. 402.
found to be greater at the third grade level than at the sixth grade level.\textsuperscript{15} This study indicated which subject areas are most likely to be affected by self-concept factors. It did not indicate which type of self-concept was related to these disabilities.

Type of self-concept was found to relate to reading disabilities. Lumpkin studied fifty fifth grade children to determine the relationship between their self-concepts and their reading achievement. He found that a variety of significant relationships existed between the self-concept and reading achievement. Over achievers in reading, determined by accuracy in oral reading, vocabulary, and comprehension, had more positive self-concepts and higher levels of adjustment. These children were also significantly higher in arithmetic, language, and work-study skills but not to the degree as in reading. Underachievers in reading had predominantly negative perceptions of self, a desire to be different from the self as seen and expressed, and had more feelings of conflict. The underachieving children also made significantly lower scores in other subject areas.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} Bodwin, pp. 1645-46.

\textsuperscript{16} Donavon Lumpkin, "The Relationship of Self-Concept to Achievement in Reading," \textit{Dissertation Abstracts}, XX (July, 1959), pp. 204-5.
study did not indicate whether achievement or non-achievement in other subjects was caused by the type of self-concept or by the child's ability or inability to read.

The effect of failure in verbal learning was found to differ between students with high and low self-acceptance. Doleys found that arbitrarily introduced failure will not prevent learning by high self-acceptance students but will prevent learning by low self-acceptance students. The low self-acceptance students were unable to learn when allowed three successes in the middle of the trials. Doleys theorized that the low self-accepting individuals were unable to accept and be motivated by rewards.17

The self-concept was found to relate to the degree of academic achievement as reported by grades. Grade average and the child's attitude about grades were found to be related to the self-concept. Bruck studied 300 students in the third, sixth, and eleventh grades. He found that a positive and significant relationship existed between self-concepts and grade point average for all three grade levels.18


His study did not indicate the relationship between the type of self-concept and the level of grade average. Wickersham compared children's self-concepts to their self-perceptions in relation to grades. She found a definite positive correspondence between general self-perceptions and those in relation to grades and report cards. Her study further indicated that a child's feelings about grades and report cards were positively related to his perceptions of himself in relation to school and home. The majority of the children in her study had positive views of themselves relating to grades. Significantly, these children were all from above average socioeconomic backgrounds.\textsuperscript{19}

Age and sex differences were found to exist in the relationship of the self-concept to grades. Bruck found significant age differences when comparing early elementary school children with senior high school students but no significant age differences between early and late elementary school pupils.\textsuperscript{20} Seemingly inconsistent with this was Wickersham's finding that the relationship of the self-concept and self-perceptions regarding grades was stronger for sixth graders than for third graders. Third graders

\textsuperscript{19} Wickersham, p. 167.

\textsuperscript{20} Bruck, p. 1646.
tended to have more positive and intensive feelings toward themselves in relation to grades. 21 Bruck found significant sex differences among early elementary children and among senior high school students but not among later elementary school students. 22 Wickersham found that the relationship of the self-concept and self-perceptions in relation to grades was stronger for third and sixth grade boys than for third and sixth grade girls. Her study revealed a further implication in that strong feelings about grades as they relate to self-perceptions were expressed by a few children with no differences between sex or age. 23 These two studies indicated that age and sex differences do relate to grades but not necessarily in all instances. The findings were inconsistent in determining the specific manner in which such differences occur.

C. The Effect of Grouping Practices

Grouping practices were found to affect the self-concept and subsequently academic achievement. Grouping practices have aroused considerable controversy among educators concerning the merits and disadvantages for

21 Wickersham, p. 167.
22 Bruck, p. 1646.
23 Wickersham, p. 167.
effectiveness of instruction. Research studies indicated that another aspect that needs to be considered is the effect that being categorized according to assessed ability to learn has on the child's self-concept and the subsequent effect which it may have on academic achievement.

Research studies indicated that ability grouping tends to have a detrimental effect on the self-concepts of children placed in the lower groups. Mann studied 120 fifth grade children grouped into four ability groupings beginning in the first grade. She administered a group questionnaire to determine how the children saw themselves in relation to ability grouping. She found that the children were acutely aware that they were grouped according to their differences in ability. The children had been instructed to refer to their particular groups by the teacher's name. Her questionnaire revealed that the children referred to their groups with evaluative and stereotyping terms. In the high group, two-thirds of the children referred to themselves as being in the high, high fifth, best or top fifth grade. In the middle group, only nine children out of fifty-four referred to themselves as being in the second highest fifth grade or C Room. In the lowest group, two-thirds of the children referred to themselves as members of the low fifth
grade, low, or lower group.24

Mann's study further indicated that grouping tends to affect the individual's sense of self-worth. Her study disclosed the reasons why the children believed they had been placed in a certain group. Their responses indicated that the high group had feelings of positiveness and adequacy about themselves, and that the low group had feelings of negativeness and inadequacy. The typical responses were, "I'm smart," "We're smarter," "I'm too dumb," and "We don't know very much."25

Mann's findings indicate that ability grouping may contribute to and enhance the child's perception of self. The negative attitudes displayed by the low group are of concern. Mann stated that because of negative attitudes such as those revealed by the low group in her study, ability grouping was abandoned in the thirties. She warned that the same mistake may be repeated in the sixties.26

Teacher attitudes toward the group were found to be important. Mann's study indicated that children's attitudes

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., p. 360.
about themselves in relation to grouping may be a reflection of the teacher's attitudes toward the group. She questioned whether the children's awareness of the level of their group could be a reflection of the teacher's attitudes which have been ingrained in the children. She further questioned if teacher rejection of the low group was reflected by attitudes toward the children and contributed to their negative feelings about themselves. She believed that there is administrative recognition of these attitudes in the practice of assigning a teacher a high group after she has had a low group for a year.\(^{27}\) Mann's assumption was supported by Thelan. He recognized the fact that teachers vary in their abilities and preferences in working with specific groups of children. He expressed the idea that grouping should be done on the basis of getting the right class for the right teacher.\(^{28}\) Thus, the teacher's preferences and abilities in teaching may contribute to their attitudes toward their group.

The effect of the transfer of pupils between ability groupings on their personalities was investigated by one study. Rudd studied two groups of ninety pupils entering a

\(^{27}\)Ibid., p. 359.

\(^{28}\)Herbert Thelan, "Grouping for Teachability," Theory Into Practice, II (February, 1963), pp. 81-89.
selective school at the age of eleven years. Both groups were divided into three ability levels. The three ability levels within the control group did not change during the two-year period of study. The pupils in the three ability levels within the experimental group were transferred between groups after each one-half year examination. Rudd found that the transfer of pupils between ability levels caused a deterioration of their personalities characterized by a decrease of confidence, determination, and interest in school work, and increased resentment and aggressiveness. He further found that emotional tensions causing this deterioration affected both the pupils transferred and those in the groups to which they were transferred. Less tension was observed when fewer children were transferred and sufficient time had elapsed for the pupils to adjust to their new groups.  


Research has indicated that due to grouping practices an unhealthy emphasis has been placed on competition for top
group placement. Luchins interviewed 190 children in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades in the New York City Public Schools. He found that a high percentage of the pupils in the bright, average, and dull classes preferred and believed that their parents would prefer them to be in the top group.\textsuperscript{30} The repercussions of such pressures for top group placement regardless of ability were discussed by Husen. He stated in a report concerning the effectiveness of ability grouping in Sweden that "children must compete intensively at the age of ten or eleven, and that this competition has unfortunate effects on mental hygiene and detrimental repercussions on teaching."\textsuperscript{31}

Competition for top group placement was found to involve status seeking on the part of the children. Luchins' study revealed that most of the bright children would not give up their class one status even if the teachers of the other classes were "better and kinder," and the lower group children would change, if given the opportunity, because of the teacher factor.\textsuperscript{32} This finding indicated that the


\textsuperscript{32}Luchins, p. 8.
emphasis on competition may tend to distort the children's value system.

Several writers indicated that the actual grouping does not produce undesirable effects but rather the attitudes which are developed toward it. Luchins stated, "We do not wish to imply that it was the homogeneous grouping per se ... highly influential were the attitudes displayed toward grouping ...."\(^{33}\) No solution was given concerning the avoidance of these attitudes.

D. The Effect of the Learning Atmosphere

The learning atmosphere of the classroom was found to affect the self-concept and academic achievement. Research studies have been conducted to determine which types of learning atmospheres are most conducive to effective learning. The self-perception of the child was found to be related to the effectiveness of learning.

Classroom climate was found to be an important factor relating to the self-concept and learning in a group situation. Perkins found that climate under which learning occurs is a major determiner of the quality and quantity of group learning. He further indicated that the feelings of the group members about themselves as well as about their leader

\(^{33}\text{Ibid.}\)
and the problem vitally influence the kinds and amounts of learning that occur. 34

Classroom climate was found to be characterized by two different types of situations, teacher-centered and group-centered learning. Research has found that certain factors which contribute to effective learning are better achieved in a group-centered rather than a teacher-centered learning situation. These same factors were found to be pertinent in relationship to the child's self-concept and learning success. Perkins compared the interactional processes of the group members in teacher-centered and group-centered learning situation. He found that the group-centered situation was more conducive to learning. He explained that the interactional processes in the teacher-centered group were characterized by self-involvement and subjectivity which interferred with learning. He further indicated that in group-centered learning more statements were used in direct relation to the learning problem while statements in the teacher-centered situation functioned to suggest, direct, criticize, or defend. Tension in individuals and in the group was found to affect the group climate and limit learning. Perkins found more evidence of tension in teacher-

centered than in group-centered learning. He further indicated that in group-centered climates, tension can be more easily reduced when it does exist.\textsuperscript{35} Thus, teacher-centered learning tends to enhance tensions and anxieties which, in turn, cause the individual to become defensive to preserve his self-esteem. Due to this, learning may be adversely affected.

The initial attitudes and relationships expressed in the classroom were found to be important. Perkins indicated that since climate is fairly stable, the initial set of feelings are crucial because they establish the climate and determine the kinds and amounts of learning that will follow. He further indicated that because group climate and group learning are interrelated and unified, a change in climate will be paralleled to a marked degree by changes in learning. He illustrated by the fact that decreases in group climate were accompanied by decreases in learning.\textsuperscript{36} Pertinent to this finding was Thelan's finding that group atmosphere can be manipulated by the teacher.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., pp. 117-19.

Thus, while the initial climate is important, changes in group climate do occur and can affect the amount of learning. Significantly, the teacher has control over such changes.

The research from Perkins' study indicated that group-centered learning is superior to teacher-centered. This finding was limited in that it came from only one study. However, McCandless found information in a review of research which supported this finding. He concluded that children learn better in "an atmosphere of democracy."\(^{38}\)

This supported the idea that group-centered and democratic atmospheres will produce more learning. However, one other study was found which added another implication. Heil found from studies conducted at Brooklyn College that the differences in teachers may be more significant than the differences in the learning situation. He defined three general types of teachers. One type was the highly self-controlling individuals who maintained a highly structured and ordered classroom atmosphere and themselves as the center of authority. Another type was the self-accepting individuals who valued creativity, divergent thinking, and originality. These teachers preferred an unstructured learning situation and even disorder. The third type was the individuals who

\(^{38}\) McCandless, p. 440.
being apprehensive and fearful possessed no drive, thought or imagination, and were not successful in maintaining any type of successful learning atmosphere. Heil's finding indicates that the effectiveness of the classroom climate is controlled by the teacher's ability to make a particular situation work.

Teacher-pupil relations were found to be significantly related to the self-concept and group learning. Perkins stated that "teacher-pupil relations are extremely significant because these shape the classroom climate." Thelan found that the teacher-pupil interaction influenced the students' feelings of anxiety and his orientation to the learning problem. Thus, the teacher-pupil relationship is important because it may enhance feelings of anxiety already present in the child to the extent that he is unable to completely apply himself to learning.

Types of teacher-pupil relationships were studied and compared by several investigators. Flanders found that teacher behavior characterized as directive, demanding, deprecating, and in general teacher supportive elicited

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40 Perkins, "Climate Influences ...," p. 119.

41 Thelan, "Experimental Research ...," p. 91.
student behaviors of hostility toward the self or the teacher, withdrawal, apathy, aggressiveness, and emotional disintegration. In comparison, he found that teacher behavior characterized as acceptant, problem oriented, evaluative, and in general student supportive elicited student behaviors of problem orientation, decreased interpersonal anxiety, and emotional readjustment. 42

The effect that the teacher-pupil relationship has on the child's self-perception was related to academic achievement. Flanders indicated that learning will be affected by teacher-pupil relationships which arouse anxiety in the child. He found that student behavior associated with interpersonal anxiety takes priority over behavior oriented toward achievement. 43 His finding indicated that the child's energy is expended in anxiety rather than being applied to learning. Davidson found that children who perceive their teacher's feelings toward them as positive had higher academic achievement. 44 Christensen studied ten fifth and ten fourth grades to determine pupil achievement

43Ibid., p. 110.
44Davidson, p. 116.
as the dependent variable of teacher warmth and permissiveness. He found that affective responses of the teacher were more important for growth in achievement than permissiveness. However, the children had the tendency to regard warmth as being permissiveness which may indicate that warm teachers are more permissive. Growth in arithmetic and vocabulary achievement were both related to warmth displayed by the teacher toward the child.  

These studies indicated that teacher behavior which is warm, accepting, and affective is correlated with academic achievement. Perkins made this recommendation on the basis of his findings. He stated that "teacher-pupil relationships should foster feelings of security and provide opportunities for developing and demonstrating adequacy and competence in areas of student interest."  

Thelan's finding was inconsistent with those of the other writers. His study did not demonstrate that school achievement is affected by the factor of teacher-pupil interaction even though the child's feelings about himself.

45 Clifford Christensen, "Relationship Between Pupil Achievement, Pupil Affect Need, Teacher Warmth, and Teacher Permissiveness," Journal of Educational Psychology, LI (June, 1960), pp. 169-73.  
46 Perkins, "Climate Influences ...", p. 118.
are affected. Thus, the research findings were not in complete agreement, but the majority of the findings indicated that academic achievement is affected by the type of teacher-pupil relationship.

\[47\] Thelan, "Experimental Research ...," p. 91.
CHAPTER IV

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

The study of the self-concept and its effect on academic achievement indicated significant implications for education. Educators need to understand the child's self-attitudes to help him achieve in school. In view of this, current educational emphases, conditions, and procedures need to be evaluated to determine their effect upon the child's self-concept and their effect upon the teacher's ability to understand the child.

The current emphases in education include the drive for academic excellence, the stress on factual subject matter such as mathematics and science, earlier grade placement of subject matter, and earlier instruction in general. These factors are not necessarily undesirable in themselves, but they do cause serious repercussions for those individuals who are unable to achieve to this degree and to withstand the increased pressures. Two implications need to be considered. First, the time devoted to factual subjects limits instruction in other areas such as the humanities
which contribute to the understanding and appreciation of human behavior. Secondly, due to this emphasis on excellence, those individuals who cannot meet these standards may infer that they are less worthwhile.

Current conditions present in the educational process may be detrimental to the child's self-concept and hinder the teacher's understanding of him. Crowded classrooms make the teacher impervious to the problems of individual children. Further since larger groups of students limit group participation, teacher-centered learning tends to develop. Thus, crowded classrooms handicap the teacher in understanding the child. The scarcity of male teachers in the elementary school impedes boys in forming appropriate sex role identifications. Conforming to feminine standards of behavior may cause problems for boys. Educators, through behavior expectations and instructional materials, impose middle class standards and values on all children regardless of their social class position. For this reason, lower class children may have difficulty in identifying with the role expectations of the school and with the characters in textbooks. Instructional materials depict idealized behavior and emotions which are not realistic to the child. Thus, these materials do not help him to identify with others or to accept and understand himself.
Efforts are being made to alleviate this problem. The Bank Street Readers, published by the Macmillan Company, present characters which depict a multiracial and multicultural society and content which is psychologically meaningful to all children.¹

Current educational procedures may have an adverse effect on the child and the teacher's ability to understand him. Programmed learning, teaching machines, and educational television are beneficial in facilitating instruction, but their misuse may have undesirable effects. When used too frequently and independently of teacher guidance, these teaching devices may create a depersonalized atmosphere in which teacher interaction with the child is limited. Thus, the teacher's opportunity to understand the child is limited. Since team teaching also limits the teacher's interaction with a particular child, it may also create a depersonalized atmosphere. Individualized instruction is beneficial due to differences in learning rate; however, too much time spent in isolation seems likely to hinder the child in identifying and interacting with others. Attitudes resulting from ability grouping adversely affect the children in the lower groups. Grading practices present further problems because

low grades reinforce the negative self-attitudes which caused them. Educators need to consider the consequences of the detrimental aspects of current procedures.

Aspects of current educational emphases, conditions, and procedures present significant implications for education. These factors may hinder the child in developing positive self-attitudes and handicap the teacher in understanding the child. Educators need to evaluate and attempt to correct these problems.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper was to examine and interpret research studies and current literature concerning the self-concept of the elementary school child and its effect on academic achievement. Academic achievement was defined as being the measured acquisition of subject matter knowledge. The self-concept was defined as those characteristics which the individual perceives as being accurate in describing himself. The positive self-concept was found to be characterized by feelings of self-worth, realistic appraisal of ability, and ability to identify with others. Due to the complexity of the subject, the paper was limited to the self-concept's effect on academic achievement.

The formation of the self-concept was found to be affected by many factors. The nature of the self-concept and the development of the child's rational and physical powers were found to affect its development. Parental influences were found to be important in shaping the self-concept. Parental acceptance correlated with the child's
self-acceptance. The findings concerning parental rejection were inconclusive. Perceived intrinsic evaluation was found to contribute to the child's sense of self-worth. Extrinsic evaluation contributed to concern with accomplishments. Parental power assertion was found to develop hostile and aggressive attitudes. Middle class parents used power assertion as a result of their own power needs. Lower class parents used direct power assertion.

School influences were found to be second in importance to those of the home and especially significant because school is a highly ego-involving situation. Teacher attitudes were found to correlate with the child's self-estimate, to be more favorable toward the middle class, and to be affected by the teacher's own childhood experiences. Teachers were found to be as accurate in assessing the self-concept as the child's peers. Teachers varied in their attitudes toward and abilities to understand the child. Peer relations were found to be significant during the pre-adolescent years. Children with negative self-concepts tended to have low sociometric status.

The self-concept was found to relate to several factors. The self-concepts of older children were more accurate and realistic. Girls perceived themselves as being more accepted and intrinsically valued than did the boys.
A moderately positive relationship was found between the positive self-concept and intelligence. Anxiety and insecurity related to the negative self-concept. Children from higher socioeconomic levels had more positive self-concepts. The self-concept was not found to be significantly stable but tends to be more stable when reinforced by the perceptions of others.

The self-concept was found to affect academic achievement. Resistance to learning was found to be caused by the child's attempt to maintain his self-image. The negative self-concept related to underachievement, but there was disagreement concerning causal factors. The negative attitudes of male underachievers revolved around themselves while those of females centered on the opinions of others. The negative self-concept related to educational disabilities in reading and arithmetic. Failure in verbal learning had a more severe effect on children with low self-acceptance. The child's self-concept was found to relate to grade average and to attitudes about grades. Age and sex differences were found in the relationship of the self-concept to grades. The findings were inconsistent in determining the exact nature of the relationship.

Grouping practices were found to affect the self-concept and academic achievement. Ability grouping had a detrimental effect on the children placed in the lower
groups. Teacher attitudes were found to increase the child's negative feelings toward himself. The transfer of pupils between groups caused a deterioration of their personalities. An unhealthy emphasis on competition for top group placement and status seeking resulted from grouping. Writers indicated that such undesirable effects are caused by the attitudes toward grouping, not the grouping itself.

The learning atmosphere was found to affect the self-concept and achievement. Classroom climate was considered important, especially the initial attitudes and relationships established. Group-centered learning was considered superior to teacher-centered, but the teacher's ability to make a situation function effectively was stressed. Demanding, deprecating, and directive teacher behavior related to hostility and aggression. Warm, acceptant, and affective behavior decreased anxiety. Learning was affected because the child's energy was expended in anxiety rather than being applied to learning.

The study of the self-concept and its effect on academic achievement indicated significant implications for education. Aspects of current educational emphases, conditions, and procedures were considered to hinder the child in developing positive self-attitudes and to handicap the teacher in understanding the child. These aspects were
the emphases on excellence, factual subject matter, and earlier instruction; the conditions of crowded classrooms, scarcity of male teachers, and imposition of middle class values; and the use of modern teaching devices, ability grouping, and grading practices.
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