

**THE RELATIONAL ASPECTS OF A SCHOOL, A MUSIC
PROGRAM, AND AT-RISK STUDENT SELF-ESTEEM:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

By

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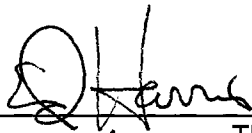
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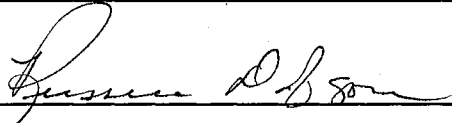
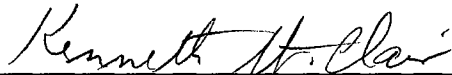
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The primary purpose of this study was to examine a school's attempts to raise the self-esteem of its students, and to specifically examine the role that participation in a select musical group has in these attempts. It is my hope that the data collected, analyzed, and interpreted in this study, plus additional information contained within, will be helpful not only to educators, but to all those who care about the welfare of our children.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

We live in an age when to be young and to be indifferent can no longer be synonymous. We must prepare for the coming hour. The claims of the future are represented by suffering millions and the Youth of a Nation are the trustees of Posterity.

Benjamin Disraeli
Sybil

Of the 40 million school-aged children in the United States, one-third are at risk of dropping out, failing, or being victimized by drugs, crime, teenage pregnancy, or chronic unemployment. The suicide rate among young people has tripled in the last 25 years, and in one typical year, 1,500,000 young people are arrested for juvenile crimes. Each day, approximately 1,540 babies are born to teenage girls, and researchers believe that 6 out of 110 students cannot understand what they read in the newspaper (Sartain, 1990). Thirteen million children in America live below the poverty line (Glenn, 1992).

Home has become ". . . the most unequal opportunity environment in American education" (Conrath, 1988, p. 39). A drastic decline in the commitment of parents to children has resulted in students who have little or no guidance or direction in their lives in the traditional meaning of the terms. These children have a sense of incompleteness rather than a sense of self-competence. Because of the lack of parental commitment, it has increasingly become the responsibility of the schools to educate students, not only academically, but also socially, emotionally, and physically. For these children, the school has become a place where they hope no one will insult them, put them down, attack them, or lower their self-esteem (Conrath, 1988).

At-risk students are characterized by frequent failure that leads to anxiety in avoiding unsuccessful experiences. McPartland and Slavin (1990, p. 19) found: "For many students, school failure and personal problems are a part of a general syndrome of low self-esteem and poor general coping skills where one negative event in or out of school leads to others."

These students are caught in a vicious cycle and, unless there is intervention to change the course, their loss in self-esteem and confidence makes them feel helpless. A lowered self-esteem in learning becomes debilitating because, "Motivation to pursue a goal is determined by the expectancy one has of attaining that goal and the value one places on attaining it" (Sartain, 1990, p. 12). They quickly give up on themselves as learners; they regard knowledge acquisition as something out of their control (Conrath, 1988). Those who do not drop out of school are usually classified as underachievers. They commonly fail parts of school and do not really engage in the school's academics or extracurricular programs (Edwards, 1989).

As human beings, students have an innate self-worth motive; that is, the need to maintain self-respect and a positive image (Sartain, 1990). When a student experiences success and is able, along with other students, to acknowledge that success, self-esteem is enhanced (Duerkson & Darrow, 1991). Reciprocally, if one feels that one cannot attain a goal, it becomes easy to rationalize the valuelessness of an educational endeavor. Schools are charged with the responsibility of providing strategies aimed at preventing learning discouragement and defeat (Conrath, 1988).

This study provides insight into one school's attempt to create an environment conducive to self-esteem enhancement for its at-risk elementary students through a specific component of a general music curriculum. The methodology used involved a holistic approach to provide a complete description of the relationship among the various components, individual and group, and the impact of these relationships

through the music curriculum on the self-esteem of the students. The researcher in this study was also the music instructor at the school.

Statement of the Problem

It is clear that since 1960 the well-being of young people in this country has declined, with a growing proportion of them behaving in ways that are harmful to themselves and society. The texture of life in the United States has changed rapidly and profoundly, and educators must adjust to the consequences of these changes, for the needs of young people are not being met satisfactorily (Glenn, 1991). Those who are dependent, underdeveloped, uncompetitive, and unreactive to market forces place society at risk of becoming a Third World (Pellican, 1987).

Studies have shown that, in comparison to others, at-risk students have lower self-concepts and lower feelings of self-worth (Sartain, 1990). A lack of self-esteem left unattended causes students to experience failure at school, thus making learning a situation to be avoided (Schuler, 1992). Duerkson and Darrow (1991, p. 48) asked the question, "How does school become a place where the individual develops self-esteem and recognizes the good feelings that result--this increases the probability that these students will continue to attend school?"

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine one school's attempts to raise the self-esteem of at-risk students. The study includes a thorough examination of one particular aspect of the school: The role that participation in a select musical group has in the building of self-esteem.

Research Questions

The research questions establish boundaries on what is to be studied. They are interrelated and allow the development and exploration of theories that emerge from the data:

1. What are the characteristics of the learning environment of this school?
2. What does this public school do to create a supportive learning environment that builds positive self-esteem in at-risk students?
3. What roles do the faculty, parents, and students play in this process?
4. How does the integration of music into the elementary curriculum help at-risk students avoid problems of frustration, alienations, and self-doubt?
5. How does participation in a musical group help at-risk students develop the sense of self-as-learner and their abilities to relate that to personal interests and goals?

Assumptions

"If the school becomes a place where the individual develops self-esteem and recognizes the good feelings that result, the probability that these students will continue to attend school should increase" (Duerkson & Darrow, 1991, p. 48).

Significance of the Study

Much of the previous research related to nonmusical outcomes of music education has been unconvincing, due to inadequacies in the experimental designs and, ". . . to the incomplete and equivocal descriptions of the experiments themselves" (Wolff, 1978, p. 21). This study adds to the body of knowledge by using qualitative research to provide a better understanding of the dynamics of a specific educational program. The thick description is a holistic account of the integrated aspects of a music program. The knowledge gained by this study provides relevant material to educators that may be integrated into other educational programs.

Definitions

The following definitions will promote a better understanding of this study:

At-Risk Students:

Children of school age who, because of one or more factors in a syndrome of disadvantageous traits, behaviors, and circumstances, are in danger of being unsuccessful in schools and/or in danger of becoming enmeshed in personally debilitating social, emotional, physical, or economic difficulties currently or in the near future (Sartain, 1990, p. 6).

Disadvantaged Children:

(A)ny individual regardless of race, nationality, color, or creed who for some reason has not developed his capacities to the point of being able to live a satisfying and effective life and of making a contribution to the society in which he finds himself (McQuagge, 1967, p. 28).

According to Pellican (1987), many at-risk students would have been identified as "disadvantaged" or minority during the 1960's. Due to racial and ethnic sensitivity, as well as a recognition that alienation transcends socioeconomic status, today these youngsters are referred to with a different terminology. For the purpose of this literature review, "disadvantaged" and "at-risk" are synonymous, based upon the similarities of the definitions and the time period of the research and literature.

Self-Esteem: "The evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself . . . is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward himself (Coopersmith, 1967, pp. 4-5).

According to Fine (1967):

The ideas of 'self-concept' and 'self-image' are so close that in this context we can use them interchangeably, defining them as the person one thinks himself to be, basing his view on the attitudes toward his own personality, body, characteristics, role in life, capabilities, potentialities, and opportunities (p. 151).

Gaston (1968) stated that synonyms for self-esteem are self-actualization, self-confidence, gratification, pride of accomplishments, competency, self-sufficiency, self-satisfaction, and self-security. Based upon these assumptions, for the purpose of this study, these terms will be considered synonymous.

General Music Curriculum: Instruction in music for grades first through fifth encompassing music and its constituent parts (melody, rhythm, timbre, form) by involving the students in the basic musical processes of performing, creating, and analyzing. Activities include singing, playing instruments, rhythmic movement, creating and reading as part of the performing process, and listening as the activity associated with analyzing (Hoffer, 1983).

Definitions for the following terms are taken from Lincoln and Guba (1985):

Trustworthiness: The data and interpretations of the study are worthy of confidence based on four major components: credibility (truth value), transferability (applicability), dependability (consistency), and confirmability (neutrality).

Credibility: The truth of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects.

Transferability: The extent to which comparison of the thick descriptive data that is time and context bound can be made to other possible contexts.

Dependability: The assurance that the findings of an inquiry can be repeated if the inquiry was replicated with the same or similar subjects in the same or similar context.

Confirmability: The findings of the inquiry are determined by the subjects and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the inquirer.

Definitions for the following terms are taken from Merriam (1988):

Descriptive Case Study: One that presents a detailed account of the phenomenon under study.

Naturalistic Inquiry: A type of research that assumes multiple realities, is exploratory and inductive, and emphasizes processes. The researcher observes what is occurring in a natural setting.

Triangulation: Using multiple investigations, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings.

Thick Description: The complete literal description of the incident or entity being investigated.

Contents of the Dissertation

This study is divided into six major units or chapters. Chapter I contains an introduction, a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions, operational definitions, assumptions, and limitations. Chapter II contains a review of the literature, and Chapters III contains the methodology and procedures. Chapter IV contains the case study report of the program under investigation, and Chapter V contains an analysis and interpretation of the case study. Chapter VI contains the limitations, conclusions, implications, and the researcher's reflections on the process and outcomes of the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Human beings in civilized society are capable of achieving success in almost every endeavor . . . and yet are culpable for their failure to avoid inglorious waste in large numbers of human resources (Brickman & Lehrer, 1972, p. vii).

A positive self-esteem is crucial to the development of a child into a thriving, productive adult. The role of the school in this developmental process is becoming greater; therefore, the role of the school in self-esteem enhancement has become greater. Underachievement and behavioral problems in the school are symptoms of the low self-image that prevails among many at-risk children.

This literature review provides: (1) a background on the causes of low self-esteem in at-risk children, (2) the characteristics and importance of positive self-esteem in human development, (3) the relationship of self-esteem and school achievement, and (4) music's role in developing positive self-esteem.

Origins of Low Self-Esteem In At-Risk Children

At-risk children suffer from a disoriented concept of self that results from the cumulative effect of a poor environment, low measures of intellect and achievement, and personality disorders that may occur from these circumstances (Cheyney, 1967).

Nurcombe (1976) described these circumstances as:

In a family, self-esteem is developed when parents accept the child, set clearly defined limits, transmit consistent values and allow the child latitude with those limits. In an overcrowded home, with a mother who is often overwhelmed by economic, health, and emotional problems, all too often in the absence of a male parent, these prerequisites are unlikely to be available. Parental acceptance of the child may be inconsistent;

limits may vary with parental moods; and it is likely that there are no achieving role-models. In short, environmental circumstances prevent such children from realizing their social potential in directions, favorable to good school adjustment (p. 57).

A home that gives limited experiences to the infant tends to limit his self-concept (Crow, Murray, & Smythe, 1966). At-risk children have had little experience of receiving approval for success in a task (Black, 1966). They expect failure, and to expect it is to assure themselves of experiencing it incessantly; therefore, they view themselves in negative and critical ways. The potential as both a person and as a learner is denigrated (Passow, 1970). The feelings of worthlessness and self-denigration are often so ingrained in at-risk children that to overcome them is difficult (Levy, 1966).

At-risk children grow up believing that they are unable, unliked, unwanted, unacceptable, undignified, and unworthy (Combs, 1967). These beliefs lead to feelings of helplessness, inadequacy, and unworthiness (Morese, 1985). Studies show that the environment of at-risk children lacks affection, parental attention, and firm rules (Samuels, 1977). They are deprived of experiences that are the constructs for the development of an adequate self-concept, particularly from the standpoint of a steady family that would give needed attention and provide security. (Additionally, these children lack successful models to imitate) and their curiosity is seldom stimulated or channeled into exploratory and discovery activities. They have trouble developing a self-concept that promotes successful, independent behavior. The broken home denies attention and affection in quantity and quality; therefore, the children seldom have a feeling of success and security (Crow, Murray, & Smythe, 1966).

Jersild (cited in Crow, Murray, & Smyth, 1966) described effects of the environment on the disadvantaged child:

The growing child's attitude toward himself will be mainly derogatory. The child toward whom the predominant attitude of significant persons has been one of hostility, disapproval, and dissatisfaction will tend to view the world in similar terms. He will have difficulty in seeing or learning anything better, and although he may not openly express self-depreciatory attitudes, he has a depreciatory attitude toward others and toward himself. (p. 23)

In summary, at-risk children have a low self-esteem that is a result of a poor home environment. The low self-esteem appreciates into greater personal and societal problems as the child grows.

Self-Esteem: A Description

The development of a child into a healthy, productive adult is contingent upon a positive self-esteem. According to Coopersmith (1967, pp. 4-5), self-esteem is, "The evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself . . . is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward himself." Self-esteem is based upon: (1) the amount of respect, acceptance, and concerned treatment; (2) a history of success; (3) the individual's values and aspirations; and (4) the individual's manner of responding to devaluation (Coopersmith, 1967).

Self-esteem is a subjective experience that is conveyed to others by an individual's verbal report and other overt expressive behavior. People who have high self-esteem are happier and more effective in meeting demands than those with low self-esteem, who tend to withdraw from other people and consistently have feelings of distress. High self-esteem persons are more likely to be assertive, independent, and creative than are persons with lower self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967).

The importance of self-concept is underscored by Bills (1981, pp. 6-7), who stated, "The most cherished perceptions we hold are those which pertain to what we are like and what we aspire to be (and) of all aspects of ourselves, the most important to each of us is our self-concept." According to Gardner (1973, p. 93), "A pivotal event in the first years of a child's life is his development of a sense of self."

For children, self-concept is like the reflection of the self in a mirror. It is shaped by all the positive and negative reflections received from meaningful individuals in the child's environment. Gardner (1973) stated:

The evolution of self seems dependent upon contact with others, observation of social relationships between persons, monitoring of one's own behavior and growing awareness that persons speak of themselves and of the child himself as a separate entity (p. 93).

Maslow (cited in Leonetti, 1980) recognized the importance of positive self-esteem by stating, "Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability, and adequacy, or being useful and necessary in the world" (p. 25). Maslow stated further that when these needs are thwarted, feelings of inferiority, of weakness, and of helplessness are produced. "All people in our society have a need or desire for a stable, firmly based, high evaluation of themselves for self-respect or self-esteem and for the esteem of others" (Maslow, 1973, p. 162).

At-risk students have experienced: (1) failures instead of successes, (2) feelings of inferiority instead of self-worth, and (3) feelings of helplessness instead of adequacy. These experiences or lack thereof are brought into the educational setting with these children and have a tremendous impact on their school experiences.

Self-Esteem and the School Setting

A negative self-concept is carried into the educational environment, for as in other aspects of their life, at-risk students enter school expecting to fail (Fine, 1967). This expectation results in low school achievement and a lessened feeling of personal worth (Frost & Hawkes, 1966). Erikson (cited in Bloom, Davis, & Hess, 1965) stated:

[The child's] danger at this stage, lies in a sense of inadequacy and inferiority. If he despairs of his tools and skills or his status among his tools partners, his ego boundaries suffer, and he abandons hope for the ability to identify early with others who apply themselves to the same general section of the tool world. . . . Many a child's development is disrupted when family life may not have prepared him for school life or when school life may fail to sustain the promises of the earlier stages. (p. 72).

These children fail not because they want to, nor because they value any less what others value, but because they are unable to achieve (Gottlieb & Ramsey, 1967). The learning activities carry the threat of failure, which contributes further to the feelings of inadequacy, shame, and alienation. It is an assault on their self-esteem which is dealt with by anti-social attitudes and behavior. Swanson (1991) identified low self-esteem as the most significant characteristic of children with behavioral and attitude problems.

The low self-esteem with which the at-risk child enters school is entrenched further by a lack of intrinsic motivation causing more failure. Whiteman's (cited in Passow, 1970) description of this phenomenon is as follows:

The lower achievement level may even feed back on the slower development of the originally lowered cognitive skills. A series of interactions between underlying abilities, overt achievement, and inward self-confidence may take place--lower abilities producing lowered achievements, lowered achievement inducing diminished self-confidence, which in turn feeds back upon achievement and so on. If one adds the devaluations brought about by race-prejudice superimposed, and poverty-prejudice, these processes may be accelerated (p. 37).

Deutsch (1967) carried this concept further:

The self-image is vital to learning. School experiences can either reinforce invidious self-concepts acquired from the environment or help to develop--or even induce--a negative self-concept. Conversely, they can effect positive self-feelings by providing for concrete achievements and opportunities to function with competence, although initially these experiences must be in the most limited and restricted areas. The evidence leads us to the inescapable conclusion that by the time they enter school, many disadvantaged children have developed negative self-images, which the school does little to mitigate (p. 35).

A child who internalizes mostly negative responses from the early childhood environment has no reason to expect mastering of new skills or fulfilling challenging tasks at school (Butler-Por, 1987). To suffer failure time and time again is a serious blow to the child's pride, and the failure does not give the child the courage to attempt

more tasks; therefore, "A self-feeding cycle of failure and frustration is born" (Bloom, Davis, & Hess, 1965, p. 37).

The concept of self means that the successful student is the one who is likely to see himself in essentially positive ways. Gill (cited in Purkey, 1970) found that patterns of achievement significantly relate to the perceived self in public school students and concluded that because of the importance of the self-concept in the educative process, more emphasis needs to be given to it. Purkey stated, "Judging by their statements, successful students can generally be characterized as having positive self-concepts and tending to excel in feelings of worth as individuals" (p. 20). He also stated that the single most important assumption of modern theories about the self lies in the maintenance and enhancement of the perceived self as the motive behind all behavior. Each person constantly strives to maintain, protect, and enhance the self of which he is aware. "If this is true, then it follows that experience is perceived in terms of relevance to the self and that behavior is determined by these perceptions" (Purkey, 1970, p. 10). Summarily, Purkey stated, "It is evident that children come to school with all sorts of ideas about themselves and their abilities" (p. 37). If the child sees the educative process as meaningful and enhancing to the self, then he is likely to grow in self-esteem and academic achievement provided the school is not perceived as a threat nor as an overpowering environment (Purkey, 1970).

Individuals have a need to seek successful experiences to avoid the sense of worthlessness and social disapproval caused by failure, and in school students believe that personal worth depends largely on accomplishments (Raffini, 1988). According to Grossnickel and Thiel (1988, p.23), "Some educators believe that a healthy self-esteem is the single most important quality of successful people." Achievement and self-concept are related, and the relationship is not based solely on intelligence (Silvernail, 1985). Bills (1981, p. 7) emphasized further the relationship of self-esteem and school

by stating, "In school experiences . . . the self-concept is the most important judge of meaningfulness."

"The classroom is one of the major arenas in which children will test the need to achieve, to feel confident to experience independence, to be recognized, and to feel important" (Leonetti, 1980, p. 25). The level of esteem that students have will determine the approach they will take to assigned tasks or objectives for, "(H)ow children see themselves in their environment affects the confidence they maintain in themselves as learners" (Leonetti, 1980, p. 40).

Self-concept begins early in life and is resistant to change, but change is possible because there is a constant striving toward positive evaluations of self to meet the self-esteem needs (Samuels, 1977). The school can play a role in helping a child to change the self-concept. According to Morese (1985), the support system is crucial in maintaining and altering the self-concept of a child. Since the school is the only environment that is professionally monitored, it is capable of being the kind of support system that can help a child's self-esteem. Morese continued with the importance of the role of the school in self-esteem intervention by stating, "When things do not go well and the self-concept becomes deviant, or self-esteem falters at pre-adolescence, it is time to intercede and provide assistance. With adolescence ahead, one does not wait and hope for self-correction" (p. 28). A 1967 study by Coopersmith concluded, "At some time preceding middle childhood, the individual arrives at a general appraisal of his worth, which remains relatively stable and enduring over a period of several years" (p. 5).

Low self-esteem people have greater needs for esteem enhancement and are more satisfied by the approval of others and more frustrated by disapproval of others. Therefore, if self-esteem needs are met, low self-esteem people will respond to others. Samuels (1977) stated, "(W)e can have faith that if experiences are offered to

counteract previous negative ones, changes in perception will eventually follow" (p. 66).

Samuels continued with the differences school can make:

(A) child who comes to school with the feeling that he is stupid or ugly may at first resist attempts of those he likes to change his self-perception, but the striving for positive self-esteem can enable new significant others to modify the child's self-picture. (pp. 66-67)

Even gifted children can be underachievers because of poor self-esteem. Whitmore's 1980 (cited in Roach & Bell, 1989) study of gifted underachievers found that the presence of low self-esteem creates many problems, both academically and personally, for the student. He also reported that low self-esteem may lead underachieving gifted students to non-productive avoidance behaviors. The gifted students who are overlooked and underserved are those coming from disadvantaged circumstances.

Samuels (1977) stated that students will develop a positive self-concept if trust, autonomy, and initiative are encouraged. He continued by stating:

For children who have not had experiences that foster adequate feelings of competence and worth, the school becomes more critical as another socialization agency. . . . Children who do not feel completely adequate because of experiences at home can be helped to have success experiences at school. (p. 175)

Music and Self-Esteem

At-risk students have low self-esteem, and the low self-esteem is manifested in the educational setting by underachievement and behavioral problems. These manifestations serve to perpetuate and entrench the low self-esteem. Because of its uniqueness as a social setting, the school has the capability to provide an environment that can change the cycle of failure enabling the at-risk child to develop a positive self-esteem.

Therapists have used music as a means to enhance the self-concept of exceptional children and adults for many years. According to Graham (1975, p. 10),

"Basic to any process or progress in the music education of exceptional children is the development and preservation of accurate body image-healthy self-concept." Graham continued by stating:

In the course of development of an accurate image of his own and others' bodies, the child learns to interpret the meanings of his musical encounters with others. These encounters including the reaction of the music educator--approval, disapproval, praise, criticism--are the basis for developing the healthy concept of self that is so essential for the adjustment of exceptional children. (p. 10).

Cypret (1975) affirmed Graham's (1975) position by stating that a goal of music for special education children is to, "(D)evelop a likeable personality and a proper self-image in the atmosphere of contentment and acceptance offered in the musical setting with opportunity for pleasurable successful achievement building self-confidence and determination" (p. 86). Scoggins (1975) discussed the relationship of music and self-esteem:

Through music experiences the withdrawn, unresponsive child often can be reached. Because there are no wrong responses to music--only different responses, dependent on previous experiences--musical experiences can enhance a child's feelings of self-worth. Such experiences involve the total child increasing his feelings of security, stimulating all of his physical senses, aiding in the development of positive attitudes, providing for self-expression that meets approval of peers and elders helping him learn social skills and acceptable group behavior, and reinforcing and enriching learning in all areas. (p. 97)

Through the musical activity and the resultant positive feelings, closeness, communication, and security are enhanced. Even though responses may be simple, a sense of achievement is felt. Scoggins (1975, p. 97) stated, "The more music is used to accompany physical activity, mirror emotions, stimulate and challenge mental activity, and provide a means of expressing deep feelings, the more the child senses himself as a whole person."

Flick (1975) stated that an overall goal in educating exceptional children is to enhance the self-image the following ways: by personal development in relationship to others; in accepting the role of both leader and follower; by developing a greater feeling

of capability and security; and by the development of poise, self-confidence, and personal satisfaction. To accomplish this overall goal, she uses music because:

Music, by its very nature, focuses and organizes the child's responses. Through its form, rhythm, and tone it appeals to all the senses and carries the child along in an atmosphere of spontaneity and joy. Thus it provides the environment needed for positive learning in all areas of education and is a natural safeguard against discouragement. The child responds joyfully to the movement of music with his one instrument--his body. While participating in musical experiences he is feeling, speaking, singing, hearing, seeing, and experiencing them all together. Thus music, a natural means of reaching children, can develop the mental and physical discipline of children, which in turn aids them in other learning (pp. 150-151).

The Child Service Association, a casework agency for the protection of neglected and/or abused children, uses music in a preschool program to develop academic skills, attitudes and values that make learning and growth possible. Music is an integral part of the child's day:

Since our primary goal is to help the children build a self-image of themselves as acceptable and adequate individuals, it is of no little significance that their musical responses are socially acceptable and successful, as well as a personally satisfying and enjoyable means of communicating their feelings and ideas. (Foster, 1966, p. 53)

In 1962 Nordoff and Robbins (1967) initiated a demonstration program of music therapy with retarded trainable children and with emotionally disturbed children. For eight months, over 500 children participated in special musical activities. They found that self-confidence grew with self-realization:

Almost every child appeared to develop, through his participation in the work of the group as a whole, a new "self-image". This was directly nourished by the quality of the emotional experiences all had received strengthened by the purposefulness they had used, and illuminated by the happiness of their achievements (pp. 51, 55).

In reference to music for handicapped children, Alvin (1977) stated that a child can achieve self-knowledge through his own appraisal of his musical achievement. It can help him to develop a healthy attitude towards success or failure. The self-appraisal can lead to more mature attitudes in situations involving other people. In a

1967 study by Goodell (1972), handicapped children were chosen for a special music project. Teachers were involved in the project and the subsequent evaluations. One of the guidelines the teachers used in their evaluations was change in the self-concept of their students. One teacher was quoted as saying that her students had a better understanding of themselves after participating in the music program. Another stated, "The most noticeable changes were in . . . self-concept" (p. 35). Another teacher directly attributed a change in self-concept to the music program by stating, "The greatest amount of change has been in the area of self-concept" (p. 41). On a parental survey of the program, 14 answered "yes" to whether their child's self-concept had improved, 3 answered "no" and 8 gave no response (Goodell, 1972).

"The attestations of psychiatrists, psychologists, and clinicians leave small doubt as to the excellence of music as a means of developing or bringing about self-esteem" (Gaston, 1968, forward, vii). Sears (1968) stated that one of the classifications of music is experience in self-organization. The constructs of that classification is that music provides for the enhancement of pride in self by providing for successful experiences, for feeling needed by others, and for enhancement of esteem by others. He continued:

Positive learning experiences usually enhance an individual's feelings of worth. A foreseeable product or result often serves as its own stimulum to learning. The adaptability of music to learning on many levels of required ability, make it uniquely versatile for structuring situations leading to feelings of pride. The individual is confronted with objective evidence concerning the relationship of effort spent and goal achieved. (p. 40)

Music is used in the department of psychiatry at Mt. Zion Hospital and Medical Center in three phases of treatment. The goal of the third phase is reinforcement of independence and self-esteem. The task of the music therapist is to help the patient find the greatest possible pleasure and self-esteem through feelings of growth and accomplishment that help a person to achieve a sense of strength. "The more music

can build a patient's self-esteem, the more therapeutic it is for self-esteem is the best weapon against anxiety" (Morgan, 1975, p. 91).

Glenn (1992), past president of the Music Educators National Conference, stated that music education can help students at-risk and that it is a powerful means to reach at-risk youth by offering them a chance for hope and meaning in their lives. He stated further, "It [music] can hone creativity and raise self-esteem through participation in one of the great art forms" (p. 2). In discussions on general music classes in a secondary school, Hughes (1992, p. 8) stated, "(M)usic class offered students an opportunity for success. It brought them self-esteem and often their positive attitude generalized, and they found connections to other classes." He summarily stated that music could ". . . aid development of self-esteem" (p. 9).

Music allows for success without ranking and can lay the groundwork for basic skill areas. Zimmerman (1973, p. 69) stated, "Many exciting activities in the musical classroom are dedicated to honoring individual student differences. There are no limits when it comes to building self-esteem and individual integrity through music."

Lillemyr (1983) found a high correlation between positive self-perception, high cognitive competence scores, self-esteem and interest, and involvement in school music. He chose music for his self-perception study because the phenomenon of intrinsic motivation is particularly relevant with an aesthetic subject like music. His purpose in studying self-perception was, "(T)he dynamic and motivational aspects of self-concept, self-esteem, or self-perceptions have for a long time been conceived of as central to behavior" (p. 4).

Evidence supports the concept that music can reach at-risk students and that they can be successful in musical endeavors. A study developed by the Center for Music Research at Florida State University (1990) provided evidence that participation in music and the other arts resulted in heightened self-esteem. Quoting the study's results, "Low self-esteem is a characteristic of the at-risk student. For many of these

students, the arts provide a unique opportunity for self expression, pride in accomplishment, and thus increased self-esteem" (p. 14).

Music lends itself to the strengths of at-risk children. "Disadvantaged children often have artistic talent which begins with proper muscular control and stems from the strength of being able to think spatially" (Cheyney, 1967, p. 44). These children are inductive rather than deductive and music is an inductive concept. Furthermore, they are adept at spatial conceptualization, which is interwoven with an ability to visualize and be artistic. "The combination of spatial, visual, physical ability equals artistic ability. This then can be the medial step between a concrete and verbal experience" (Cheyney, 1967, p. 49). For the at-risk student, "(T)he arts have particular therapeutic possibilities" (Morese, 1985, p. 247).

Conclusion

Treat a man as he can be and should be and he will become as he can and should be.

Goethe
(cited in Covey, 1989, p. 301).

This literature review has shown that: (1) at-risk students have low self-esteem, (2) a low self-esteem affects the school achievements of at-risk students, (3) music therapists use music to build self-esteem in handicapped students, and (4) experts in music education and other educational arenas state that the potential for using music to build self-esteem in at-risk students is great.

Limitations of research tools that rely heavily upon quantitative techniques have not provided sufficient research data on this topic. Previous methods of research have been inadequate and have led ". . . to the incomplete and equivocal descriptions of the experiments themselves" (Wolff, 1978, p. 21). The effects of music upon the self-esteem of students is difficult to measure accurately or effectively with quantitative measures because they cannot completely describe the dynamics of a setting.

This study used a qualitative approach that provided a holistic description of a school's attempts to raise the self-esteem of its students. The study closely examined the impact of the music program in the school's attempts and focused on one component of the music program.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine a school's attempts to raise the self-esteem of its students. It examined the role of music in these attempts and specifically examined a component of the music program: a select musical performing group.

Population

The purposive sample was a group of 16 students in the fourth and fifth grades who were members of a select performance group within the music program at a public elementary school. Their membership in the group was based upon predetermined criteria by the instructor. The researcher classified these students as "at-risk" based upon Sartain's (1990) definition:

Children of school age who, because of one or more factors in a syndrome of disadvantageous traits, behaviors, and circumstances, are in danger of being unsuccessful in schools and/or in danger of becoming enmeshed in personally debilitating social, emotional, physical, or economic difficulties currently, or in the near future (p. 6).

Instrumentation

This "holistic investigation" of the naturalistic paradigm was conducted by the researcher by observing the students, conducting interviews, analyzation of student journals, analyzation of technical literature, outsider observations, and collection of demographic information. Triangulation was used to promote trustworthiness. The researcher served as the primary instrument for gathering data. All interviews were conducted by one researcher using structured and unstructured formats.

Procedures

The study was conducted during the 1992-93 school year. The school was selected because of the high number of at-risk students in the school and its recently instituted music curriculum designed to specifically target at-risk students. Permission to use the school as a research site was granted by the research committee for the school district and by the building principal (Appendix B). The students in the study were members of a select performance group chosen by the music instructor based upon predetermined criteria. The students, as well as the parents/guardians of each student, granted permission to the researcher for inclusion in the study (Appendix B).

Data were collected from human sources using structured and unstructured interviews and observations. Nonhuman sources included student journals, technical literature consisting of individual and school site achievement test scores, grades, absentee rates, mobility rates, the researcher's journals, two outside observers' journals, and demographic information on each student's home and on the school population in general.

Procedures: Phase One

Phase One of the study consisted of semi-structured interviews, daily observations, and collecting school documents and records. A musical aptitude test was given to all fourth and fifth grade students as part of the regular music class curriculum. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Test was given to the students in the purposive sample. Technical literature was collected from standardized achievement tests, other achievement instruments, and mobility rates for grades three, four, and five. Further demographic information on the school was gathered from district records.

Students in the purposive sample kept a reflective journal consisting of answering open-ended questions on their feelings and attitudes as well as their

reflections of the performance group of which they were a part (Appendix C). The students wrote in the journal after each rehearsal, two to four times a week, and as soon as possible after performances.

Observations of the school, students and staff, were noted by the researcher in a daily journal (Appendix D). Extensive entries regarding the performance group were made after every rehearsal and performance. Semi-structured interviews were conducted of the school principal, one parent, and four teachers in the school (Appendix A). The interviews were scheduled in advance by the researcher and ranged in length from thirty minutes to one hour. Two outside observers kept journals of their observations of the researcher and the students in the purposive sample.

Data Analysis/Interpretation: Phase One

Since naturalistic inquiry is largely emergent, a continuous effort of review, recycle, and change occurs during the collection of data and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Merriam (1988, p. 119), "Data collection and analysis is a simultaneous activity in qualitative research. Analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation, the first document read." Data collection, analysis, and theory are in a reciprocal relationship with each other.

Sources of data for this study were interviews, documents, technical and non-technical information. Analysis began with unitizing bits of information. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 63), "Data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences." Observations, sentences, and paragraphs were taken apart, and a name was given to each piece that represented a phenomenon or concept. For this phase, each unit was placed on an individual sheet of paper. These were then sorted into piles of temporary or provisional categories based upon look-alike characteristics. The emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses led to the refinement of questions and became the basis for the next series

of interviews and observations. It also provided clues where other instances of the phenomenon might occur.

Procedures: Phase Two

The data collection continued with semi-structured interviews. Twelve teachers, the school counselor, an assistant superintendent of schools, and a housing project counselor were interviewed (Appendix A). These interviews included refined questions based upon the emerging themes from Phase One analysis and ranged in length from thirty minutes to one hour. All were conducted after school. Twelve parents were also interviewed. Letters were sent to 16 parents requesting an interview and suggestions for a convenient time and place. Six of these parent interviews were scheduled in conjunction with parent/teacher conferences held by the school. Five other parent interviews were conducted at the parents' homes after school hours. For one interview, both parents were present; for the others, only the mother or female guardian was present. During these interviews, the parents provided personal information on the family and the student as well as information regarding the role of music in the home. Personal comments concerning the community and the school and its music program were also made. The parent interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes to 45 minutes. The students in the sample were interviewed in groups of four and were 20 minutes in length. Faculty interviews, parental interviews, the outsiders' journals, student interviews, and parental information were used to triangulate the journals and the researcher's observations.

At the end of the study, the self-concept instrument was re-administered to the purposive sample. Five follow-up interviews of the principal and four faculty members who had daily contact with the students in the sample were conducted to clarify emerging themes and to check negative cases. The emerging findings were confirmed

using multiple investigations, sources of data, and methods. The outside observers' journal entries were integrated into the final data.

Data Analysis: Phase Two

According to Merriam (1988, p. 123), "Analysis becomes more intensive once all the data are in." Unitizing information continued, but in Phase Two, the computer program, The Ethnograph (Seidel, Kjolseth, & Seymour, 1988) was used. The verbatim text data from all interviews, field notes, outside observer's journals, and students' journals were entered into the program. The data were then unitized on the computer text. Categories describing portions of the data were identified and entered into the computer file. Text segments with the same identifying codes were amassed and printed for further analysis.

Thinking about, discovering, and manipulating the abstract categories and the relationships among those categories led to preliminary theorizing that became sub-categories. The categories were broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways to establish grounded theory. The sub-categories were linked to a larger category in a set of relationships. Differences or negative cases were noted: "It is just as important in doing grounded theory studies to find evidence of differences and variations as it is to find evidence that supports our original questions and statements" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 109).

The final theory was limited to those categories that have properties and dimensions and statements of relationships that exist in the actual data collection. "Validating one's theory against the data completes its grounding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 133).

Procedures: Phase Three

The third phase was the writing of the case study. A brief narrative of each sub-category was developed, and these became the outline for the main narrative and the analysis and interpretation. The format used to write the case study followed that used by Lightfoot (1983):

Not only did I want to honor these schools, applaud their efforts and acclaim their success; I also recognized that it was important for readers to be able to place these high schools in context--visualize the terrain, the community, the neighborhood streets, and the people. As a form that is partly shaped by aesthetic considerations, portraiture is to some extent a visual medium, full of powerful imagery. If I were to mask details of context or provide misleading descriptors, for example, I would begin to compromise the portrait. (p. 22)

After the case study was written, member checks were conducted by giving a copy of the study to selected members of those included in the data sources. Differences were noted and negotiated, and the final version is contained in Chapters IV and V.

Summary and Final Analysis/Interpretation

The importance of proper methods of data collecting and analysis is addressed by Merriam (1988):

The final product of a case study is shaped by the data that are collected and the analysis that accompanies the entire process. Without ongoing analysis one runs the risk of ending up with data that are unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed. Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating. (p. 124)

The ongoing data collection and analysis/interpretation allows the design to be emergent rather than preordained which is essential in the naturalistic paradigm. "The focus of the naturalist should forever be on adaptation and accommodation" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 249). The researcher used the following stages for the collection and analysis/interpretation of data:

1. Unitizing: The researcher broke down into bits of information any part of the data that was a discrete incident, idea, or event that could be given a name that stands for or represents a phenomenon or concept.

2. Categorizing: The researcher used text segments with the same identifying codes in The Ethnograph computer program to amass and print categories for further analysis and interpretation. Relationships among the categories became the basis for preliminary theorizing. The data were broken down conceptually and put back together in new ways, resulting in "Specifying a category in terms of conditions that give rise to it; the context in which it is embedded; the action/interactional strategies by which it is handled, managed, carried out; and the consequences of those strategies" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97).

3. Case Study Report: The case report was written in a manner that makes clear the complexities of the context of the study. Integrated into the case study are the ways these complexities interact to form the phenomenon that the case study portrays.

4. Audit Trail: An audit trail was conducted by an external auditor to examine the processes whereby data were collected and analyzed, and interpretations were made. This was accomplished through a review of documents, journals (student and researcher), field notes, unitized and categorized data, and the case reports. This process assured the confirmability of the case study.

The thick description of the context allows judgments about its appropriateness with other contexts possible through the emerging themes.

CHAPTER IV

CHANDLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Community: A Microcosm of Societal Problems

This is not a "drop in" community. Reputation, justly or unjustly earned, combined with the isolation of the area, makes this a "destination only" community. The highrise buildings of downtown, symbols of money and power, are still visible. To those who live in the community, these emblems serve only as reminders of a life that is virtually unattainable.

A long, winding, exit loop off a major highway literally spins me into the community. As the car comes up to the access street, a difference, whether real or imagined, creeps into my mind.

This community is part of a larger, urban community of approximately 350,000 in a southwestern state. It is a city founded by Native Americans who settled along the banks of the river. Others eventually joined them, including black Americans who were searching for a new way of life, a better way of life. It is ironic that the people who first established the city are now called "minorities".

Passing over the highway, my attention is directed towards a large police station. Taking up an entire square city block, the parking lot is full of squad cars, and I do not know whether to feel safe or afraid or just curious. Sitting peacefully across the street is a nursing home, the epitome of tidiness with its immaculate lawn and structures. After a right turn, I pass by a tiny bait shop and then pause at a stop sign. Straight ahead on the other side of the intersection is a bar that is closed. Two patrons argued one night and tried to burn the place down. The blackened doors and piles of

rubble are an ironic contrast to the lush trees that line the other side of the narrow street.

At the top of a small hill, the community comes into view. To the left is a house with a well-worn footpath beside it that ends at an apartment complex: low-income housing run by the city's housing authority. On the right, sitting in a large field-like area, is a school and beyond it are small, mostly run-down houses that comprise the "neighborhood".

"Neighborhood" is a misleading label, for the people in the houses do not feel neighborly toward one another. The area is replete with gang violence, vandalism, drugs, prejudice, and family violence. In the traditional sense, there are no neighbors here, only people who live next door to each other.

The community is an isolated one, for it is cut off by a highway, a major street, and a lake. There are very few businesses here. Most of the services available are those that the city provides for the families who live there: a diverse population of black, Native American, white, and Hispanic families. It is a community that violence, poverty, and bigotry have stigmatized.

Children tell stories of "People shooting things. They were shooting houses." They describe gang activities: "I heard you got to kill somebody to be in a gang. Got to rob from the store," and "You have to do dope." Everybody knows someone who is in a gang. It could be a family member, and it could be some of the children, for many of them know the gang signs. The following is a mother's personal story of gang problems:

And it's hard trying to convince the kids then, you know, [sic] that 'You're not like them. Why don't you just be yourself?' You've got to be like these kids or else you can't have any friends, and they're going to cause problems. And that's what they want to do; they want to be like them so there is no problem. That's why my oldest son is at home now, Max. Most of his friends are black, and a gang found out and threatened him. And in order for Max to stay with them and not get hurt he had to start acting like them. And he didn't want his family to get hurt so he was

doing things that I don't--thought he would ever [sic] do in order not to hurt us.

Children are not only the victims of crime, but they are also the criminals. A mother tells the following story:

It is a Saturday night at the housing complex. A boy, ten or eleven years old, pulls a knife on Joey. A neighbor runs up to Joey's mother and screams, 'This little boy's trying to stab him with a knife.' The mother runs down to the scene. There, a child with a long butcher knife was threatening to stab her son. After breaking up the confrontation, she addresses the other boy's mother: 'Woman, you don't know me too well. That's one thing you don't do is mess with somebody else's kids, especially when your kid's got a down when he had that knife.' She says, 'That little boy's already got anger in him the way it is. That's what's wrong with the world.'

Racial tensions plague the neighborhood. An individual who lives and works in the community states, "Usually the whites and the blacks have never gotten along in this neighborhood. There's always some conflict between the neighborhood." A couple's description of their neighborhood exemplifies this attitude: "This used to be all-white, a good neighborhood." A woman who has lived here for only a short time states, "I see it's [the problems] a race problem, a very bad race problem, and that I can't figure out why."

The low-income housing complex is home for more than half of the people in the community. There is a high concentration of recipients of Aid to Dependent Children, and most in the community are living at or below the poverty line. A teacher at the school describes the economic situation of many of the families: "They don't have enough money to take care of health. They don't have the clothing, just the basic things: the parents not having water for their children's clothing or their own clothing."

The sub-standard of living has emotional effects upon the families. A teacher at the school states, "Look at the low economic standards of the parents and education, which is very low, and not being educated and not being exposed. So most of them are living without hope." A counselor at the housing complex describes the feelings of those who live there:

There's a lot of feeling of people who do not have self-worth. They feel that they're in a hole and will never get out of it. They resort to alcohol, drugs, violence, sex. And our kids see a lot of that. They're grown way beyond their years. . . . Not necessarily book-wise, but street-wise in terms of things that happen in life. And that's because of the exposure.

The Home

The traditional family structure is rare in this community. The very heart of the family unit has been torn out. A teacher at the school states:

There's been a separation in the family. There's a family divided, and a lot of times it's either the mother or grandmother who are [sic] trying to raise these children . . . and that they're on welfare, they're on free lunch. They're trying to get by. They're trying to survive. . . . They're overwhelmed with the burden, the responsibility of it all. . . . I've had one lady write me a letter, basically saying that there was not enough food for her family.

Children experience instability in their lives. A guardian of a student said, "Well, I know it's hard, but they were with their grandmother; they were with the father just a very short while, and now they're with us. . . . So that's tough too, changing three or four homes."

Large, single parent households are common. There are several homes where 20-year-old single mothers are raising three to five children. In one case, a mother is 34 years old and is expecting child number 10. She is a drug abuser and a child abuser; her nine children are now in foster homes. In another household, a mother lives with her six children. There are five different fathers for these children; the mother has never married any of them.

The pressures of an unstable family environment serves as a breeding ground for child abuse; a previously "good" child will become angry, withdrawn, and seemingly non-caring. Sometimes, they will tell another adult they hurt, but most of the time they will not. The signs of physical abuse can sometimes be seen: welts caused by an extension cord, an eye damaged by a belt buckle, hickies on the body of a five-year-old

girl, put there by "daddy". The following conversation took place between a child and her teacher:

'I just can't go to O. R. [detention]; my mama will beat me with the plunger stick again, and I'll get sent to a foster home again.'

Quite stunned I said, 'Plunger stick? They hit you with a plunger stick?'

'Yes,' she said. 'That's why I was put in a foster home.'

'But now you live with your mom and dad again?'

'Not my real dad. He was killed in a fight. Some guy beat him to death with a brick.'

'So you live with your mom and your stepdad?'

'Yes.'

'Have they hit you with the plunger stick since you moved back in with them?'

'Not yet, but they're always waving it around saying they're going to use it. . . . My dad says that if I tell anyone about being hit with the plunger stick, he'll come up to the school and beat me right in front of those teachers with it.'

Children are neglected. A teacher at the school tells of a conversation she had with a five-year-old boy:

[He] got just relating stories to me about being home at night watching his-two-year old brother and an infant sibling. And it was mind boggling to think that this child, who could not take care of himself in this school where he was safe and monitored, you know, continually, [sic] that he would be left in charge of a toddler and an infant with no one else in the house.

There is also verbal abuse. A parent said, "I thought I'd make him [the son] mad. I thought I'd tell him how stupid he was. Maybe he'd get mad at me and try to do better."

At the other extreme, some parents are afraid to punish their children. One mother readily admits that she is afraid to spank her children because of "child abuse, . . . cause now I got child abuse to worry about." Parents are held responsible for what their children do, but to use corporal punishment is to risk retribution from the

authorities. One child knows his mother has been investigated by Child Services, and, according to his teacher, "She can't do anything at all with him cause he knows she can't spank him, and he told her that." She states the child's behavior, ". . . has been terrible."

The following scenario portraying the parents' frustrations is given by an individual who counsels parents:

I'm doing all I can do. I have three kids. I got a teenager that's running amok. It's hard enough to keep her under control, and then I got two young kids. I don't want my child to grow up and be in a gang, which he's exposed to every day to the point that he knows the symbols and stuff. And so, I'm going to nip this stuff in the bud right now. I'm not going to let him think that he can go and take something that's not his and get away with it.

Living in a dysfunctional family affects a child in the school setting. A teacher states, "I mean, if they've been told they're rotten kids or bad kids or whatever at home, then I think some of them live it out here just believing that." Parents vent their anxieties and frustrations to people at the school. A teacher said the following:

Parents are expressing to me frustration in not being able to handle their children. Their children are out of extremes, out of bounds. The children are basically calling the shots. The children I'm having trouble with are the kids whose parents have no control over their children. Uh [sic], it's kind of like they're just hoping they'll grow up on their own without any structure.

One parent laments, "He's [her son] back talking me, telling me to 'shut-up'. Never have I gone through this with him before."

There is another side to family life in the community. One parent describes her relationship with her children as, "We get along real good. . . . They look out for me."

Another parent works hard to provide the very best for her children:

Each one of them do [sic] what they like. I don't care how much it costs. If that's what they really want to go for, then I'll get it cause I didn't do it, and their daddy didn't do it, so I'm gonna let them do it.

Sadly, many parents are not interested in their children. "A lot of kids I've noticed just go to school to get out of the parents' way," is a parent's observation. A teacher at the school states, "I've noticed some younger parents are more interested in themselves than they were their children. Most of them are doing their own thing." An example is a mother with three children, the oldest about 14. The mother leaves them home alone every night. The children are abused by their father, but the mother still sends them to visit him every weekend because, according to a neighbor, "She wants them out of the house." In the summer she sends them to camps. The children did not used to be alone at night; their mother's live-in "companion", another woman, used to take care of them.

The School

Beige--the color dominates the structure of Chandler Elementary School inside and out. The building is bounded by a parking lot, houses, and grass fields. A smaller dirty yellow building sits behind the main structure. It is a "prefab"--code name for student overflow.

The main building is typical of the architecture of school buildings of the 1950's: one-story, flat roof, brick and concrete. This was once an all-white elementary school. Black children attended a school a few blocks down the street where the police station is now. Desegregation mixed the children of the two schools, and eventually the other was closed and torn down. Grades kindergarten through fifth are now housed here, with approximately 250 students. The entire public school district has 42,000 students. During the height of desegregation and the oil-boom, over 500 children crammed into the structure. In recent years, rumors about closing the school have surfaced due to the small enrollment.

The playground equipment is old and unvaried: metallic grey bars for climbing. The large grassed area sometimes serves as a soccer field, but for the most part,

recess time requires a great deal of imagination in order to be entertaining for the children. Consequently, recess time often becomes "fight time". There are no manicured lawns, no flowers; only what can be termed well-worn grass and weeds.

A sidewalk leads to the front of the building. On the right is a small fenced play area with direct access to the kindergarten room. Entrance to the building's main corridor is gained through doors on the right and on the left, with windows separating the two sets of doors. Upon entering the building, the beige color becomes even more dominant--the walls, lockers, and floor. Straight ahead through double doors is the gym, which serves as the center of the building. A right down the corridor leads to the cafeteria on one side and four small rooms and the library on the other. A hallway branches to the left where there are three classrooms on one side and the music room on the other. The beige lockers serve as a border for both sides of the hall. Back at the gym, going the other direction, there are more lockers on the right and plaques on the left. The plaques are reproductions of important documents in the history of the United States such as The Constitution, The Declaration of Independence, and The Emancipation Proclamation.

The corridor ends, forcing a right turn into another hallway. The office is here, with eight more classrooms and lockers further down. It is not an ugly building, nor is it a pretty building. It is a serviceable building. To walk the halls when there are no children present is to sense a bit of peace. However, when the children are here, one is reminded of walking a busy street in a major city. The incessant activity starts early and stays late. Working in this atmosphere requires constant peak performance intellectually, emotionally, and physically.

The October, 1992, ethnic distribution of Chandler was 66% black, 2% Hispanic, 28% white, and 5% American Indian. The low economic status of the families is reflected in the school's classification as 100% free and reduced lunch. A breakfast program is offered, and approximately 75% of the students participate in it each day.

The 1992-93 mobility rate for the school was 84%, second highest in the district. The year before it was 73%. Mobility rate is computed by dividing the mobility transactions by the beginning enrollment and multiplying by 100. A May, 1993, informal survey of 94 children in grades third through fifth revealed the number of schools the children have attended since kindergarten: 9.5%, one school; 47%, two to three schools; 26.5%, four to five schools; 17%, six or more schools. Two students have attended eight different schools since kindergarten.

The curriculum at Chandler consists of the following: reading, phonics, language, writing, math, social studies, science/computer, music/speech, and physical education. The district mandates the materials used in the reading and math classes. The math materials have been severely criticized by the teachers for being culturally biased against these students. The materials and methodologies for the remaining classes are determined by the classroom teachers, but the availability of funds inhibits their choices. For example, the language curriculum materials are 20 years old. A platoon system for grades second through fifth was implemented at the beginning of the school year. However, the movement involved with changing classrooms every 45 minutes did not provide the order and structure that these students need. There was a tremendous increase in discipline problems, and valuable instruction time was being lost. After 10 weeks, a restructuring placed the second grade in a totally self-contained environment, and grades third through fifth became self-contained for one-half of the day. The other one-half day the students rotated to music/speech, physical education, and science/computer classes. Special education students are mainstreamed when possible and are totally mainstreamed in music/speech, physical education, and science/computer. According to a teacher, the goal of the curriculum is to give, "the children opportunities to be successful either through academics, through the music program, through gym."

Composite achievement tests scores for the third and fifth grades for the last four years are:

GRADE 3		GRADE 5	
<u>Year</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Score</u>
1993	41	1993	39
1992	27	1992	31
1991	38	1991	45
1990	27	1990	46

These scores have placed the school on the state's "low achieving" list for three of the last five years.

The certificated staff consists of a principal, a counselor, and 15 teachers. Of these 17, four are male. Three of the certified staff members are black, one is Native American, the rest are white. There are three traveling/part time faculty members. The support staff includes three cafeteria personnel, a health clerk, a secretary, and two custodians.

Parent/School Relationship

Parent involvement in the school is minimal. Average parental attendance at student honor assemblies is five. A meeting of the parents of fifth grade students attracted three parents; there are 45 students in the class. "It seems like the only time we see the majority of our parents is when it's gone too far with something," is a teacher's view. Another states, "It takes a major catastrophe to get them to the school, you know [sic]."

She comes up the sidewalk to the front doors of the school. Her head is down, the shoulders are slumped, and she walks slowly. Some would call her obese; others would call her fat. Her nylon stretch pants are filthy, have holes, and are very tight. Her shirt, a man's shirt, is wrinkled, and there are two buttons missing at the bottom. Like the pants, the canvas shoes are soiled and have several holes. It is painful to walk. She clutches a large, black, vinyl purse. There is a pause at the school doors, a glance over both shoulders, and a sigh. She finally opens the door and steps in. There is a furtive look to the right, then to the left. She finds a spot along the wall, leans against it, and tries to be

unobtrusive. She doesn't want to be here, but she has to be here: That's what the letter said.

Intimidation--it is the root of the discomfort, reticence, and anger felt by many parents toward the school. A teacher states, "They're just scared and nervous a lot of times." What intimidates them? "A lot of them might feel intimidated by the teachers here in the building," is one teacher's observation. Another states, "I think that most parents have a low opinion of the public school system." The basis of this low opinion stems from a time when education in the city was undergoing tremendous changes. A teacher states:

And I think some of them grew up in a time when there was a lot of change in the educational system, and they didn't feel a part of it then, so they're still not comfortable with it. I think a lot of our parents are kids that went through the desegregation era, and they had teachers who didn't want to be in that situation, didn't want to be assigned to the schools that they were assigned to.

Even though they are now adults, the memories of bad educational experiences still remain. A teacher states:

I think they're afraid. I think a lot of them have had a negative experience with school itself, and to them they're reminded of a defeat or a failure that they've had in school. And so, to come back to school is like reliving what they went through. They're not real sure of themselves as parents, and they're afraid that they'll hear their children are not doing well in school.

An example of the intimidation is evident in a committee meeting with both parents and teachers. The parents sit on one side of the room, and the teachers sit on the other side. There is palpable tension in the room, for when some parents make suggestions, one teacher immediately criticizes them. In another committee meeting, a parent gives examples of others in the community who are scared of the teachers at the school, and who have left parent/teacher conferences feeling "stupid and hurt." These feelings contribute to the parents' already low self-esteem. The principal states, "I guess they feel so unsure of themselves that they can't come in here and discuss something as adults, or they are intimidated by this office."

Another factor in the intimidation is lack of education. A teacher states, "Most of these parents probably didn't finish school." Some parents have told teachers that their low educational level makes them feel inferior to the staff because they had a "dumb" role in school. Consequently, they still feel uncomfortable being around teachers. They try to help their children with their school work, but the lack of education hinders them. A first grade teacher explains:

They don't know how to read notes we send home. A lot of them will tell me, 'I don't know how to help my child with their reading assignments. I can't even do that myself. . . . I'm really worried about this; how to spell these words and these phonics papers that you're sending home. We don't have a dictionary. We don't know how to spell these words.'

A few of the parents are trying to help themselves by returning to school. One said that in addition to helping herself, she wants to set an example for her children: "I'm going to school to get my GED so that helps with all of them and that kind of enforces, 'Well, if mom gets up and goes to school, then I've got to get up and go to school.'" It is difficult, though, being a single parent and going to school. The strain is reflected in another parent's comment: "I'm thinking about quitting school, and they're [her school] telling me not to do that. Because these kids--see it's hard for me going to school and taking care of them. They don't straighten up. They're getting worse and worse."

Parents are experiencing great stress in their lives, and they are intimidated by the school. The effects of the strain are sometimes taken out on the school staff. A teacher states, "A few parents [have been] angry at me as a teacher for whatever's the problem their child is having, and I think they take the anger out on the teacher at times." One teacher bluntly said, "I think some of the parents don't like me." Another teacher relates that during a conference with parents, "I really had to convince them that I was trying to help their child succeed and not the enemy. . . . I've had a few parents that have tried pressure with me, to act tough with me." However, she understands the parents' frustrations by stating, "But most of the time they're not

parents who are acting tough with me. They're parents that are acting frustrated or fearful or overwhelmed."

The staff is hindered in contacting parents, for many times there are no correct addresses or phone numbers available to contact parents, or there is no phone in the home. A teacher states, "If they do have a phone, they're not there half the time, or they don't want to come up here." Teacher-written notes do not always get home, and if they do, there is often no response. One teacher, exasperated after numerous attempts to contact parents by phone and notes, has tried visiting homes: "I've gone to the homes. I've gone to the horrible homes. And you're scared. You feel unwelcome. You drop in on them. There's no phone of course, you know [sic]. You wonder if you're going to get out alive."

Not all of the staff is frustrated about the relationship with the parents. The counselor states, "I've always had good working relationships with parents. I've always been able to communicate with most parents. I would say 98% of parents I've dealt with I've been able to communicate with."

The parents need a lot of help. "The few parents I have talked to, most of them, they need a lot of help too in so far as education," states a teacher. Another notes, "I feel like if we can help these people to feel like they're worth something, the relationship will improve." One teacher's solution is the following: "I am very honest with my parents. I shoot straight. I will tell them the way it is, and I do. They know that I'm not going to pull the wool over their eyes or try to put something over on them. So they're more honest with me."

Another teacher persists with phone calls when possible and sends notes on a daily basis. With these she tries to stress the good things a child does. A teacher observes, "We do have some [parents] that want to get involved with what their kids are doing, and they want to be on top of their [the students'] behavior." An example of this is reflected in a parent's statement:

If their teachers have any complaints, they usually call and let me know what's supposed to be going on if I don't know what's going on. So we have a relationship as far as parent/teacher/kid relationship. We do have that type of relationship, and that's good.

Other parents also feel good about their relationship with the school. "Well, I can speak for my family in the school, and I think the school cares about my kids," is one parent's comment. Another blames parents for the poor school/community rapport: "It's the parents. You all work good [sic]. . . . You all helping the kids out." There are parents who are very grateful for the school holding parent/teacher conferences at the housing complex. One parent states, "It's good that the teachers come so parents can come and talk to them." In addition to making conferences more accessible to the parents, a new plan involving holding student report cards and giving them directly to parents at conferences was implemented and accepted by the parents.

There are a few parents who are active in the school. Six served on committees to write a school improvement plan and helped with a school "Fun Day". This same group also played an active role in notifying other parents of end-of-the-year activities through phone calls. There has been good parental involvement in four school activities: the winter music program, fifth grade promotion, a "Bring a Friend to Lunch" day, and a chili supper/bingo night.

School Problems and Frustrations

Because it is a social setting, the operation of the school is subject to conjecture and criticism. Emotions can run high in the face of the enormity and severity of the problems of the students, their families, and the community.

The main problem affecting the operational aspects of the school, and therefore open to the most criticism, is the role of school leader. Inconsistencies in the day-to-day operations of the school occur. Many of these stem from a lack of communication. "If the faculty and staff is [sic] not working together, it doesn't take long for kids to figure, you know, that things are just not what they're supposed to be," states a

teacher. Inconsistencies in discipline also generate criticism. Teachers, parents, and students are confused as the rules seem to change from day to day. Order and structure are missing. A teacher states, "The kids, they know that some people are disciplined in a different way, and it seems like they're going to try the authority thing. And they think that they can get away with a lot more." There is a clamor for a stronger, more consistent discipline plan. Some parents, teachers, and even students think that corporal punishment needs to be a part of the discipline plan again. The generalized suggestion for the improvement of the inconsistencies is stronger leadership. A teacher bluntly states, "The whole school, in general, would function better with stronger leadership."

There are positive comments about the leadership. One teacher states, "I think he's a good principal. I like him. And the times that I've had conferences with him and parents, he's always had good ideas in different things to do with the kids." The principal's own description of his role is, "I'm being a mediator an awful lot. I feel like I'm the one who's supposed to provide the leadership to get certain things done."

The school staff seems, at times, overwhelmed by the multiplicity of problems and needs of the students and community. One teacher states, "I just think the problem's a lot bigger than the school. The problem is in society and the breakdown of the family unit, and we can't address that." Doubts creep into the minds of the teachers. "It makes it where we fight a battle certainly to maintain a good, positive attitude," is one teacher's statement. The constant struggle causes one teacher to remark, "I feel tired all the time," and another to say, "I'm really struggling." Adding to the frustration, according to one teacher, is noticing that, "Everyday you see one [a student] that has slipped away from us."

The frustrations translate into survival skills. "What I've done is just blocked off. I don't think in terms of results. I just think in terms of the present," is one teacher's coping mechanism. Another tries to cope but finds it difficult because, "Every day

during the school year I'm talking about it at home in the evenings, or I'm thinking about it, or I'm writing about it, or something." Another teacher states that she would, "go home at night feeling depressed about the whole situation until I really got to understand it a little bit more." Knowing how much to give of oneself is a constant question. "It's difficult to see a path to go ahead and really put out your energy and try to come up with some sort of good program," states a teacher. The ultimate result is burnout. "I found myself getting burned out this year and ready to quit," states a teacher. Another agrees saying, "I'm not sure I'll do this forever."

School Attributes

Faced with the frustrations and the mounting pressures, why does the staff stay? Love--it is a love that touches a deep, inexplicable part of oneself. It is a love that outsiders do not understand for they ask, "How can you teach there? It must be horrible." Sometimes they do not even ask "how" for when they discover where the school is located, they shake their heads and quickly change the subject. "But I love the school and I love the kids here, you know. I care about them," is one teacher's verbalization of feelings. To teach in this school is to believe in the students and to believe in one's ability to help them. A teacher states, "I actually love these kids, and I actually feel that I'm a positive role model."

Students perceive the love that the teachers have for them. One states, "The teachers laugh and have fun with us," and another states the teachers are, "Nice to us." What do the teachers do that make school special? According to the students, the teachers, "Do a lot of things like go on field trips--put games together." Another student mentions the special things teachers do in music class when she states, "[The teachers] play guitar and autoharp." The field trips are very important to the students. One comments, "We went to the zoo and the opera." Consequently, they say that, "A lot of fun things happen here," and school itself is fun. They think that being a teacher

is special because, "You're helping people", and "You have fun." The principal also mentions the staff as an attribute of the school: "I like the staff that we have here. Personally, on that level that to me is a big plus."

In addition to taking the children on field trips, the teachers provide numerous opportunities to recognize outstanding student achievement, especially at monthly all-school assemblies. Musical performances and athletic demonstrations are often a part of these assemblies. One student who sang and also received awards at one of the assemblies writes in her student journal, "I had a great time at the assembly today [sic] we song [sic] and got a lot of awards."

Most of the parents interviewed state that their children like school. Comments such as, "She loves school", "She hates missing school", and "She likes it," are given by the parents. One parent said that she knows her son likes school because, "He's constantly talking about everything he's done," when he comes home. Another spoke of the therapeutic value school has for her child: "I think it--she gets away from the problems [by being] at school." However, one parent responds, "I don't know. He don't ever talk to me about school or how he feel [sic] about school."

Student Needs

It is in this complex setting that this school strives to meet the needs of the students. The school's mission statement is:

It is the mission of Chandler Elementary School to provide educational programs and services that will assist students in fulfilling their individual potential while becoming responsible citizens. In order to accomplish this goal, students will be provided opportunities for achieving academic excellence, enhancing self-esteem and acquiring a sense of community.

However, it is not the formalized mission statement that undergirds the school's responsibilities. In fact, the words of the statement almost become ostentatious in the face of the needs of the children. A teacher verbalizes her feelings:

Well, we're supposed to educate the children in the community, but I feel like in recent years that it's become more--that we're supposed to rear the children in the community, at least in this community. . . . We're supposed to teach them manners and life skills and a lot of things that used to be taught at home.

The task of meeting the students' needs and the even larger task of helping the community are seen as huge and insurmountable by some staff members. The counselor states:

We can do all we can while we're here. We can tell them. We can counsel them. We can love them. We can try to expose them to as much as we possibly can. There's not too much more we can do after that because we are not the biggest influence in their lives.

A parent echoes this comment:

You [the teachers] can't do something at the school, then children go home to a completely different environment. It starts at home. You can't change a child being here seven or eight hours a day, five days a week and expect them to change. That's the way today's world is.

However, the majority are not daunted by the responsibilities. A teacher expresses this sentiment: "I think if we as a faculty, together with the student body, work to overcome some of these things within this building, I think that these children will take it back home with them."

The children rely heavily upon the school. This can be noticed by the fact that many students arrive 30 minutes before the building opens. They do this in all kinds of weather. Almost all of those who live in the housing complex walk to school along the well-worn footpath. The majority of those who live in the neighborhood also walk to school. A few children are brought by adults; even fewer ride the bus.

Watching the children come to school, I see students walking in bitter cold weather wearing shorts, a t-shirt, shoes with no socks, no gloves, and no hat. Some have on a lightweight jacket that is more suited for protection from a May shower than from a February arctic front. Every year the school, with the aid of a local business, buys coats or locates used ones for several of the students. There are a few children who have nice jackets and coats, and it is not unusual for them to wear these all day at

school even after the weather becomes warm: The coat provides a sense of security for them.

I see some children wearing the same clothes to school several days in a row because no one has bothered to do the laundry, or the water has been turned off by the city. Many of the children wear clothes that are too small or too big. These frequently have giant holes, are missing buttons, and the zippers are broken. As some of the children walk by, I smell clothes that have not been washed, that have been slept in and wet in. Instead of bathing and changing clothes before they come to school, they get up hurriedly because they know if they are first at school, they are first in the breakfast line. Outwardly, they do not seem offended by the fact that their clothes smell like mildew, sweat, dirt, and urine.

Some of the children wear shoes that are so small that toes stick out, and walking is painful. Others have on shoes that will not stay on the feet because they are so big. Because there are some homes without water, it is not uncommon to send children to the restroom to wash their faces, hands, and arms first thing in the morning.

Every few days, a child comes to school wearing new clothes. It is easy to spot this child, for now there is a confident swagger to the walk, and other students gather around looking at and feeling the new apparel. Students are always quick to show the teachers their new clothes. One teacher remarks, "I try to find time for them to listen to . . . a happy moment that they might have because they have gotten a new pair of shoes." Often times, new clothing will be worn several days in a row because the child is so proud of it. When students in a musical group received new t-shirts for a performance, they brought them to school the next day. After proudly showing them to many of the students and teachers, they gently folded them and placed them in their lockers.

While the majority of the students eat breakfast at school, each day there are 10 to 12 students who do not get to eat because they are late to school: There was no

one at home to get them out of bed in time for breakfast. There are also children who qualify for the free breakfast, but eat at home instead. A parent explains her reason for her children eating breakfast at home: "Every morning my kids get a hot breakfast at home because I know if I get up, and I prepare their breakfast, I know exactly what they're eating. And it's easier to learn when you're not hungry."

Several of the children have eye problems and can not see the chalkboard in the classroom. Free glasses are available for them, but their parents will not or can not go to the clinic for the no-cost exam and glasses. An increasing number of the children have speech problems characterized by varying degrees of stuttering, fragmented thought patterns, and mispronunciations. Diseased teeth and gums, lice in hair, hair falling out, greasy hair, and ringworm in various places on the body are commonly seen.

What I notice most of all watching the children as they come in the door are the smiles: Smiles that appear in spite of all kinds of adversity. There are smiles because they are at school, and here is a place where they are fed, they are warm, and they are hugged.

"Hunger, inadequate clothing for the weather conditions, unsanitary and unhealthy living conditions, physical and mental and sexual abuse," are obstacles to learning according to a teacher. Another describes it as, "Somebody's [sic] may not have had anything to eat over the weekend and come to school hungry. They might have had some type of abuse over the weekend and come to school an emotional wreck." It is not unusual for the same students to be late for school quite often. A teacher states, "And if they're late, they haven't had their breakfast," and they start the day out missing part of their lessons. Thus, their academic struggles are compounded. At the opposite end of that spectrum, there are students who come to school even when they are ill, and sometimes it is difficult to find a family member who will take a sick child home and provide needed care.

Another need of the children is positive exposure. The only world they know is the immediate one in which they live. The school counselor states, "Our kids haven't been exposed to anything. . . . There are black kids and white kids . . . who have really gotten their acts together. . . . Our kids haven't seen that, and they don't believe that they can achieve that." A counselor at the housing complex who grew up in a situation similar to that of these children states, "Being exposed to as much as possible, to me, is critical."

Emotionally, these children need a support system, for there are children who don't have anywhere to turn for help. Because of this, a teacher states, "The responsibility [for being a support system] becomes the school's responsibility." A top school administrator states, "Within the school we need to build a complete support system." When the natural support system is missing, love and attention are missing. A teacher states, "But the love and the things that you get from your family, these kids just don't get." Understanding and sympathy are absent. One teacher views the reason for this as, "Maybe they're never shown any sympathy. Maybe they don't get much understanding at home." Another teacher states: "They don't really have a sense of true family and a close knit family that you can depend on. And so I try to make that happen here in the room. I try to give them a sense of belonging and a place in our family."

A teacher observes, "You can tell how many hugs are needed around here just watching the children come up and want to hug you, constantly. They're never touched lovingly." The staff does not worry about negative repercussions from hugging students. "And I'm real free with the hugs and pats on the back and stuff. I think they need it that much. That's why I don't have a problem with that," is a teacher's comment on the potential professional dangers of hugging children. The principal tries to be present at all the physical education and musical activities that the children participate in throughout the city. His reason is, "I feel like it's good that somebody's there to

applaud them. . . . It offers me chances to give these kids some support that they seemingly need."

Many of the children lack social skills and basic life skills. A teacher states, "There's no one at home to do it [teach life skills] or who's willing to do it." Therefore, many are left on their own to take care of their own needs. They "fix" their own meals: a bowl of cereal or a package of Kool-Aid. They wash their own clothes, sometimes in the bathtub. They get themselves up in the morning, and they stay home alone at night no matter how young they are. The children acquire the "skills" of the community. An example of this is a conversation I had with a fifth grade student:

"How are you going to make a living? Are you going to steal?"

"No," he replied.

"Are you going to sell drugs?"

"Yes."

"Do you know that people who sell drugs usually end up in jail or die?"

"I don't care."

"Operation Aware" and "In-School Connection," as well as people from the community are brought to the school to help the students learn positive life skills and to emphasize to the students the relationship between education and success.

Summarily, most of these children have very little care. One teacher observes, "They're sort of lost in the shuffle somewhere, and they don't think they're very important And there's just no dream, and without a dream how can you go anywhere? Many of them just exist from day to day." The students' needs left unattended damage, destroy, or prevent the development of self-esteem in the children. The counselor states, "These kids come with no self-esteem or very low self-esteem." They are put down and have not had the chance to be the best at anything. A teacher states, "Their feelings don't count. They're just supposed to be a quiet person." For the majority of the children, they are missing someone at home to support

them such as the parent who tells her children, "So, if that's what you want child, go for it. Whatever you do, if you got the energy for it, I'll be right behind you to push you on." Another parent's nurturance of her children is exemplified when she states, "I know there's no reason for them to be failures. They can talk to me. . . . If they have problems, we help each other." This type of parental support is the exception.

Staff Roles

With the children having so many needs, the teacher's role is expanded. One teacher states, "My role in this school is to teach children that come into my room things that are not only in the textbook, but also to teach them, to give them some idea of life in general." Being a role model is important. One teacher states, "I think that possibly by example we can teach some things like how to treat others. I try to be a positive person a lot of the time and just be firm, friendly, and fair with them." The staff strives to create a positive attitude in the classroom. "I would say that I try to make each child realize that they have something worthwhile to offer; that they are capable; that they can do, can accomplish anything that they put their mind to," is one teacher's classroom philosophy. The children have tremendous potential. The principal states, "These kids have so much to offer."

No longer is being a teacher of information enough. "I think we've been placed in the parent, parenting role more than we have before . . . part time mom to some of them," is one teacher's role description. This expanded role is not without ambivalent feelings on the part of the teachers. One states, "Many times I feel like a high class baby sitter, and I've felt that way many times." The posture that a school's primary responsibility is custodial care remains a prevailing attitude that grates on the staff. But ultimately, they accept the challenge as exemplified by the following statement by a teacher:

And what we do does affect lives. I can't come here and say, 'Well, I will just teach you what I think you should know, and you don't get it, that's

tough.' I want to say that sometimes, but I can't because I feel like their whole life depends on me trying.

These children cannot drop their "cultural baggage" at the school door each morning. A district administrator states:

"They need someone to give them the good, positive strokes to make them feel good about themselves so they will want to learn and to continue to come to school on a regular basis and get involved in their class work."

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the judgment of the self. For a child, a positive self-concept is the feeling derived from a sense of satisfaction when certain conditions in his life have been fulfilled. The children at Chandler have had very little in their lives satisfactorily fulfilled, and without remediation, school becomes another experience that leaves them empty. Staff members realize the importance of self-esteem for these children. One teacher said, "They've got to have some self-esteem, or they're not going to get anywhere." The principal states, "I don't know how anybody can be productive unless they have some self-esteem."

Low-Esteem Indicators.

Attention--the students hunger for it. For many, the reflection they see of themselves is a deprecatory one, so to validate this image, the things they do and say are usually negative.

"I can't" is an attitude with many of the students. "The children don't feel that they can do the work; therefore, they are disruptive," observes a teacher. In classes students will bang on their desks while claiming "I'm stupid," or "I can't do anything." "This is too much for me to do," and "I don't like this," are also heard. Some will attempt to cover-up by saying, "Oh, that's so easy," but then will become frustrated in not being able to do the task in the face of their verbalizations.

One teacher does not see low self-esteem in her class of 26. She states, "They all think they are wonderful, which amazes me. I thought they'd all have low opinions of themselves. . . . I think they have good self-esteem which, I'm sure is a real contradiction."

It is 12:00 p.m.. They should be outside, but instead, three second grade students are in the boys' restroom. Two have a body lock on the third, and they are trying to stick his head in a toilet. Others come into the restroom and laugh and cheer the two boys on. Meanwhile in the cafeteria, a third grade boy is screaming vociferously. The counselor has to pick him up and carry him from the cafeteria. On the way out, the boy flings his arms and hits another student, who immediately seeks retaliation with his fists. All the while the counselor is still carrying the third grader with arms and legs flailing away. A teacher's aide rushes to stop the retaliating student, but he swings around and throws her up against the locker; bruises appear on her body before the day is over. On the playground a second grader calls to another student, "Your mama's a whore." Another spits out, "You dopey mother-_____", and the fight is on. Two fourth grade girls have a war of words that threatens to get physically violent. No one is sure how or why it started; they only know that someone said something and immediately, the verbal venom was spewing forth. A teacher breaks it up, but after school, the girls renew their conflict outside in back of the building where no one can see them. A bone-chilling scream sends a teacher dashing out there, whereupon she finds the two girls locked in their own brand of combat. One comes out of the fight with a broken finger, the other has teeth marks on the rib cage area put there by the other girl. Inside the building at a locked back door, a student is literally running and throwing his body full force against the door. The noise causes a teacher to come out of her classroom, and the anger she sees in the boy and the savagery of his collision with the door frightens her. With the help of another teacher and a

custodian, they finally calm the boy down. His problem? He wanted to exit the building through that door and that door only.

One word, one touch, one alteration in plans, no matter how slight, can elicit animosity, and for many, the only rectitude is to get angry, to fight. Alternatives are not considered, and possible repercussions have no meaning. Hostility, self-destructiveness, and aggressiveness are manifested throughout the school setting. The children are quick to defend themselves when things go wrong, and they lash out at one another frequently; therefore, positive peer relationships form slowly. One teacher states, "I think maybe they feel badly about themselves, or they have this bad image about themselves, so they're going to live up to that bad image." Not all the students fight. Those who do not, view fights as a way "to get attention," and they think it's "stupid."

A low esteem manifestation that I have observed is the posture of the students. While walking or standing the head is often down, the shoulders slumped, and the hands in pockets. It is the same when they sit--they slouch in their chairs, lean forward, elbows on the knees, head down. They have difficulty in making eye contact with adults. Instead, they will look down at the floor or the eyes will dart from side to side. Some do this even when they are receiving praise.

From the students' perspectives, disparaging remarks about self and others, an inability to ask for help, and constantly getting into fights are indicators of a poor self-image. One student generalized these manifestations by stating, "The way they act. Act stupid. They do stupid stuff. The way they carry themselves [sic]. They talk out loud and say things."

The negative verbalizations and actions are overt expressions of the students' feelings of self. There is an antithesis between the attitudes of self and the words that are on the inside of the windows at the front of the school. They are words put there by the principal for the students to read every day as they leave the building: "Exit this

building with the knowledge that you are the future builders, dreamers, and leaders of the world."

Music, Physical Education, and Speech

In 1990-91, music and physical education became a part of the core curriculum. After 10 years without these curriculum components, the students at Chandler would now have these classes as a part of their daily school experiences taught by full-time instructors. Previous to this, any exposure to music and physical education was dependent upon the classroom teachers and an after-school program. The administrators made the decision to fund these two positions for the following reasons: to help students' self-esteem by tapping into talents; improve attendance and decrease the mobility at the school by offering special programs; to expose students to the cultural aspects of music and the importance of good physical health; to strengthen academics; to give the community something it could be proud of so the bond between the school and the community could be strengthened. The two classes have become important to the students. A teacher states, "I don't think the kids would even be halfway happy if they didn't get to come to music and gym."

In the first and second years of the music and physical education programs, students in grades first through fifth received 45 minutes of instruction in each class. The third year, the year of this study, grades third through fifth received 45 minutes of class each day. The changes were in response to a restructuring of the classes to meet new state standards of class size. The music classes also incorporate basic instruction in speech arts.

Physical Education

The physical education program uses many types of in-class activities to promote good physical conditioning, enhance the children's attributes, and "give the

kids an out as far as using their extra energy," according to the instructor. Extra activities such as basketball, cheerleading, and gymnastics are provided, as well as field trips to go bowling, to the State Fair, and to various physical education competitions throughout the city. The instructor states, "They can come into gym and do the best job they can possibly do, and that's all I expect of them."

I have observed the physical education classes and noticed that the majority of students thoroughly enjoy themselves. They run, they laugh, and they scream in ways that are productive. I have been amazed at the athletic prowess of some of the students. Their abilities in gymnastics, jump rope, and basketball are truly incredible, especially considering that until they had a full-time instructor, everything the students were able to do, they taught themselves. They have performed very well at athletic competitions that they attend and at various school assemblies throughout the year.

Speech

Instruction in the speech arts is included with the music instruction and consists of dramatizations, role playing, and individualized speeches. Dramatization is included in the winter program and individual speeches are a part of the black history program. Fourth and fifth grade students are selected to participate in the district wide speech arts festival in the spring.

The Music Program

I, the researcher, am the teacher that was hired in 1990 to teach music at Chandler Elementary. I accepted the position approximately two weeks before school started. The first day I walked into the school, one week before classes began, I was shown a room in a pre-fab building and was told that would be the music room. I looked around. Old books and papers were scattered everywhere, and dirt profusely covered everything. An odor of staleness prevailed; a manifestation of the mildew and

dust that was present. There were no chairs, no desks, but two chalkboards, one on the east wall and one on the west wall, indicated that this indeed was a classroom. Gallantly hanging above the east chalkboard was a small United States flag. Even though they were filthy, six windows let in plenty of sunshine. So much so that it was about 100 degrees in the room. Obviously, air conditioning was non-existent.

I asked about equipment and materials. Materials--there were none. They had been discarded when the program was cut. Equipment--a piano would be brought out to the room from the main building. That was it. The man who was principal at the time tells people, "She [the teacher] began with nothing but her purse." Yet, somehow I knew that this room had character for children and music can bring life to anything, even this musty, hot room.

With the principal's help and that of a teacher consultant, we foraged and found old music textbooks that had been discarded by other schools. The district's music supervisor gave me \$100 to buy rhythm band instruments and loaned me a few others. Armed with these, the piano, and personal materials collected through 13 years of teaching, I began the first music classes at Chandler Elementary in one of the hottest September months on record.

I will never forget those first few weeks. The looks on the children's faces, particularly their eyes, are forever etched in my mind. Their teachers would bring them to the room, and they would be talking excitedly to each other. Those eyes were huge, particularly when they saw the piano and the rhythm instruments. And those old books? The children did not care that they were old; the books were new to them. They leafed through them eagerly and asked questions continuously. When I played the piano, they were amazed. They grasped songs quickly, and when, two weeks after school started, a local television crew came out to do a story on the music program, the simple words of the children who were interviewed spoke volumes of their positive feelings for music.

Four months later, the winter program at Chandler Elementary won a city-wide contest for outstanding winter musical. The cash award was used to buy more instruments. In the spring of that first year, a grant was presented to the school to buy guitars. As a result, the following school year, fourth and fifth grade students began learning basic guitar playing. Since that time, the winter program has won two more outstanding awards--a testament to the musical talent of the students. First and second graders participated in the winter program, even though they did not have regular music classes.

The looks of joy are still on the faces of the children three years later. A teacher states, "You can tell they love doing it. You can tell looking at their faces when they're singing. When they're doing whatever they're doing. The kids love music." A teacher relates the following incident that occurred between herself and a student:

I said, 'Can you play the guitar?' His old eyes got so big and he said, 'Yeah, I can play.' And I said, 'Would you play for me?' He said, 'Well, yeah.' He was excited. He really was. That was a big time for him. And then he turned around and did it for Mrs. Carmichael.

Curricularly, in music class the students are given opportunities to perform, create, and analyze music and its constituent parts--melody, rhythm, timbre, form. There is instruction in the voice, hand-held rhythm instruments, autoharps, and guitars. Opportunities for rhythmic movement and listening are also provided. Field trips to the opera, the ballet, the philharmonic, and other places to enhance cultural awareness are taken to reinforce what is learned in the classroom and to give students exposure to professional musicians and performances. Artists are also brought into the school to demonstrate and work with students in a close, informal atmosphere. Students are encouraged to give their best effort according to their own abilities through both group and individual participation. All types of music are studied, with particular emphasis placed on the multicultural aspects of it. The highlight of the year for the students is the winter program. Every child in the school participates in this performance.

The winter program is an opportunity for the students to show-off, to demonstrate their musical talents to their parents, other members of the community, and school administrators. The children start asking in September and October about their role in the winter program. According to a teacher, "[The] children become very excited about being a part of a program." It gives them a chance to perform, to feel successful, and to be recognized. A teacher states, "It gives the kids a chance to get up there and shine not only as an individual but as a group." Another teacher observes: "I notice that they love doing it. They just absolutely love to get up there and do it because they've done it enough and practiced enough that they're confident enough they know they can do a good job. And they give it everything they've got."

The parents who attend the programs are impressed by the students' performances, for they have been heard to say, "Go!, that was good," after the program is over. What are the students' reactions to being in an all-school production? A teacher observes, "They seemed to really want to be a part of it. They enjoyed it. When they first heard the songs they were going to sing, they were excited. . . . They kept singing those after rehearsal."

Regarding music class in general, one parent relates, "He [her son] likes your [music] class, and he likes to sing." Another parent states, "They [her children] like it [music class]. I know that." During a walk with a student one day she said, "I really like music." One parent voices her personal feelings about music classes: "I tell what I think--that doing that, having the music and the different activities is really great for them."

The teachers observe that music helps students in many respects. One states, "You're still teaching math skills. You're still teaching reading skills. You're still teaching visual skills, eye-hand coordination skills, social skills. . . . It's just going on in a more fun, creative way." The opportunity to get out of the regular classroom and go to music is viewed as a plus. "They get to do something that's fun. They get to have

some self-expression," states a teacher. Another states, "It's [music class] an educational experience as well as just a chance to sing. And I'm sure a lot of children see it for that and value it for that." One teacher cried as she put into words her feelings about the children's participation in music:

And so I think that when they have such tremendous problems at home and people dealing drugs outside their apartments and shooting their daddies--and one little girl told me her daddy was dead because he was pulled out of a car window and beaten with bricks to death--when they have all of that in their lives, it's just a prayer thing. They don't see anything different for them in the future. . . . Music class gives them their vent; gives them their out. And you at least latch onto that and make something positive out of that and show them that they can put that in the rest of their lives and not just have to suffer.

All but two members of the staff have musical backgrounds. They sang in choirs (school and/or church), played in a band or orchestra, and/or had family members who played or sang. Four continued playing/singing in college. Two staff members in addition to myself have music degrees, and another is a national champion accordion player. Seven members of the staff are still very involved in music: singing in church choirs, playing instruments, or giving music lessons.

The Jazz Cats. The second semester of the 1990-91 school year, the first year of music at Chandler, the principal of the school suggested forming a special singing group that could go around the city performing. In doing this, the students would receive needed exposure, their talents would be showcased, and the school would receive much needed positive exposure. From that suggestion, the Jazz Cats were born. Six boys and six girls from the fourth and fifth grades were chosen for the first group. The criteria I used to select the members were singing ability, work ethic, and the overall attitude of the student.

The initial year, there were three performances outside the school, in addition to in-school performances. It was enough to cast the die: The Jazz Cats were special. The second year I used the same criteria for selecting members for the group, 12 in all.

Any students who were in the group as fourth graders the first year could remain in the group as fifth graders if they wanted to, and all six of them did. Our Adopt-A-School partner provided opportunities for two performances, and another business in the community had the students perform for their Christmas party. There were also in-school performances.

The third year, I selected eight boys and eight girls, and had the students audition. The auditions were a part of the regular music class and were held in September.

Even though the school has a high mobility rate, the membership in the group has remained stable: With the first group, no students moved from the school community; the second year, two students out of the 12 moved, and I did not replace them because it was late in the year when they moved. The third year, one student moved about two weeks after the group began rehearsals, and I replaced that student immediately. The membership in the group did not change for the rest of the school year.

When I interviewed parents of the Jazz Cats members, I asked them what their child's response was when membership selections were announced: "She was excited," and, "He was tickled to death--he wanted to join." One mother said her daughter came home from school exclaiming, "Oo, mama. I made it in the Jazz Cats!" Another parent states she did not remember her son saying anything about being chosen for the group: "He probably said, 'Mama, I'm going to be in the Jazz Cats' and ran upstairs."

The 16 children who make up the Jazz Cats were selected because they have certain attributes, but their needs, their interests, their family lives, and even their aspirations are representative of all the students at Chandler. The ethnic distribution of the group is as follows: three black females, five white females, five black males, two white males, and one Hispanic male. Ethnicity was not a consideration in the selection

of the students. Complete composite achievement test scores of the group range from a low of 11 to a high of 68. The overall average of the fifth grade class is 37, and the fourth grade class is 36. Scores on a basic musical aptitude test that was given in the fall semester ranged from 31 to 58 out of a possible 60. These scores were reflective of the entire fourth and fifth grade classes.

Of the 16 students in the group, none is living in a household with both natural parents. Seven of the students live in a one-parent or guardian household, and six live in a household with one natural parent and one step-parent. Three students live in a household with one natural parent who has a "live-in" companion. One of the households has been called, "The most dysfunctional family in the entire school district," by the district's central office. The number of children in the home range from one child to nine children, with an average number of three. Four of the students live in the housing complex, two are transfer students into the school, and the rest live in the neighborhood.

Two of the children in the group have admitted to being molested and sexually abused, and convincing evidence exists that at least three others in the group are sexually abused. One child in particular grew increasingly despondent during the school year, and there is a strong indication that her change in personality was due to some "attention" in the home. Another lives in a house with a known child molester.

Alcohol abuse is present in the homes. With one parent, who is an alcoholic, I tried four times to get an interview. Appointments would be made but then broken. Another parent, whom I had never met or even seen in three years, agreed to meet with me at the school for an interview in conjunction with another school activity. When the day arrived, I walked up to the parent and asked a question. When I was given a response, I could tell the parent had been drinking: It was 10:00 in the morning. Her attitude was such that the conversation consisted only of basic pleasantries being

exchanged. Another parent has also come to school to visit with teachers, and there is sufficient evidence to conclude that she had been drinking prior to those conversations.

One day I was having problems with one member in the group, and I could not get in touch with the mother because I did not have her work phone number, so I wrote her a note explaining the situation. The next day I received a reply:

Jonathan has watched his mother and father both go to prison. I have come along [sic] way from that time in my life three years ago. Jonathan has seen alot [sic] of things in his short time here. Not all of it has been good, but that is life and I am trying with Jonathan to help him cope. Pray for us.

There are indications that this child could also be a victim of sexual abuse by an older boy in the neighborhood. I visited some homes when conducting my interviews, and in all cases I was made to feel welcome. The children were particularly pleased that I would come to their house.

Of the parents I interviewed, all mentioned that their child spends a great deal of time listening to music at home. Tastes in music range from country to classical to rap. One parent states, "He puts his little headphones on. You can't hear it in the house. It's completely quiet. What you do hear is him singing. You can't hear the radio." The singing at home is mentioned by others. One parent states, "Oh, that's all she does around the house is sing." One said her son sings in the bathroom all the time, and, "He sings everything." In addition to music, watching television, playing Nintendo, and reading are the past times of the students.

Every parent I interviewed except one has a musical background. Some played musical instruments, others sang in glee clubs in school. One describes herself as, "an old hippie". She states, "So, you know, I've always been in music. I just always found it to be a way to deal with everyday stress and strain. My home life wasn't very happy and that way I could escape." Several parents still sing in church choirs or around the house. "We listen to it quite a bit at my house," is one parent's comment. Two children have instruments at home--drums, guitars, and a piano.

Death has touched these children: A baby sister, an uncle who was a father figure, and a father are close family deaths of these children. In the case of the uncle and the father, there were days when the strain upon the children could readily be seen at school. One cried easily for several months, particularly when he was frustrated, and he was getting into trouble more often. The other student often sat in a trance-like state in the classroom and would not complete assignments. Absenteeism became a problem.

Racism is present in some of these children's homes. There are comments from white parents about "those people", insinuating blacks. I saw a Confederate flag displayed in a home. I was told by parents that they did not want their child to go to another "black school".

In spite of, or perhaps because of, their circumstances, these children have lofty goals: They want to be lawyers, doctors, teachers, a veterinarian, a dancer/singer, a machinist, a basketball player, and a computer programmer.

The year of the study, the students had numerous performances: seven monthly school assemblies; the winter program; the black history program; two performances at a college campus; two for the Adopt-A-School partner (one of which was a dedication with many dignitaries present); a city-wide banquet of a religious organization; the teacher's talent show; fifth grade promotion.

Rehearsals for the Jazz Cats are conducted during the lunch/recess time. The rehearsals usually last 20 minutes, leaving the students five minutes to write in their journals and 20 minutes to eat lunch. Sometimes on performance days, we rehearse before school or after school. The group's uniform is a t-shirt that was decorated by a teacher, blue jeans, and casual shoes. The group sings all varieties of music from folk to pop to spirituals. Choreography that the students and I together design is performed with some of the songs. Students are strongly encouraged to strive for both musical excellence and academic excellence in all that they do.

From the 16-member group, I formed a dance group. I did this because many of the students at the school are excellent dancers, and I felt they needed an opportunity to show yet another of their many talents to the community. I selected three members of the Jazz Cats whom I knew were terrific dancers to start the group, and these three brought in three more Jazz Cats members making a dance group of six--three boys and three girls. This group rehearsed at 8:00 in the morning, and they choreographed all the dances themselves. They performed twice in the community with the Jazz Cats and at numerous all-school assemblies.

The school staff has watched the development of the group. The principal notes, "I've seen the looks on the faces of those children when they were performing. Just the enthusiasm and the excitement that being at those places seemed to generate . . . that kind of look of happiness and satisfaction at what they did." A teacher observes, "I never heard them complaining about practicing. They just couldn't wait to come in here and practice at lunch or practice before school." The other students view the group as something very special and elite. One teacher states, "The younger ones are able to look up and say, 'Well, maybe by the time I'm older, I can be in the Jazz Cats.'"

A Performance: There is a performance tonight. The Jazz Cats are going downtown to perform before a group of 200 people. They have never sung for this many people, so emotions are high. The day before they write in their journals: "I hope the performance will be great"; "I hope we doo [sic] good tomorrow and when I leave I want to feel good about my self [sic]"; "I want the people to be proud of us." The lunchtime rehearsal is fun. The students sing strongly, they smile, and they dance with energy. Teachers walking by the room comment on how good the students sound. Pride emanates from them for when they finish a song, they smile big, laugh, and talk excitedly. I tell them to be at the school at 5:45 p.m. The first one appears at 4:45. By 5:20 all but four are present, so we have a brief rehearsal. Like the lunchtime

rehearsal, it is great. The music and laughter permeate the empty hallways of the school. At 6:00 the transportation arrives, and it is time to leave. The chatter during the ride is incessant but the driver does not seem to mind.

We arrive at the performance site--a beautiful church. Inside are over 200 people from all parts of the city, most of whom have never heard of Chandler Elementary. As I watch the children, I sense some nervousness, but they mainly seem to be excited. They rehearse their dance steps, critiquing themselves as they do so. The time has come, and I tell them to smile, to sing out, and above all, have a good time. The stage is a large one and is very high. I am concerned that this will intimidate the students, but I need not have worried. When they begin singing the first song, the smiles are wide, the mouths are open, and the performance is incredible. The audience smiles; they sing along; they clap to the rhythm of the music. The children feed upon the audience's response and get stronger with each song. In 12 minutes it is over. The applause is thunderous, and I am amazed. The children can hardly contain their excitement until they get outside. They burst through the outside doors, and immediately they are laughing and slapping each other on the back. They knew they were a hit. On the way back to the school, they talk even more than they did on the way to the church. As I let them off at their homes, they all tell me, "Goodbye." Some add, "Thank you. I really had a good time", and others say, "That was fun." The person responsible for the arranging the performance writes a note to the students:

Thank you, thank you for your excellent performance at the annual meeting last Thursday. You were very well prepared, and your enthusiasm made every person in the room feel joyous. Many persons asked me to send to you their appreciation for your fine contribution to the program. You got things off to a good start. Keep up the good musical work. You are a credit to Chandler

The next day the children write in their journals: "I feel happy," "it [sic] really really was so so fun [sic]," and "I feel proud."

Conclusion

The children at Chandler are simple in many ways, but in many ways, complex. Their needs are readily discernible, but the keys to meeting them are not. Watching and listening to them, I can sense the tremendous impact the community and the family have on these children, and the question arises, "Can I really make a difference?" The odds are overwhelming, but the alternative is too frightening to consider. An inner commitment declares, "We must do everything possible to help these children; to help heal their hurts; to help them feel good about themselves."

CHAPTER V

ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATION

The Phenomenon and Its Context

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an analyses and interpretation of Chandler Elementary, specifically its attempts to improve the self-esteem of the students. A low self-esteem affects every aspect of a child's life, including the school experience, and if there is no successful, meaningful remediation, a virtual decay of both the individual and society as a whole will ensue.

An analyses and subsequent interpretation of the data revealed a phenomenon with possible causal conditions; strategies for dealing with the phenomenon; intervening conditions that help or hinder the strategies; and the consequences of the strategies (see Figure 1).

The phenomenon is, "The central idea, event, happening, about which a set of actions/interactions is directed at managing or handling, or to which the set is related" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 100). Low self-esteem in the students is the phenomenon in this study, and its manifestations are the context or properties of it.

The students behave in a manner which is consistent with the way they view themselves (Purkey, 1970). They act negatively because they view themselves negatively. A teacher states, "There is constant fighting among children, bickering. The only way to solve a problem is to lash out at whatever's around you." Many students constantly ridicule others, and there is an inability to empathize. These, along with inept social skills, inhibit the development and maintenance of positive peer relationships.

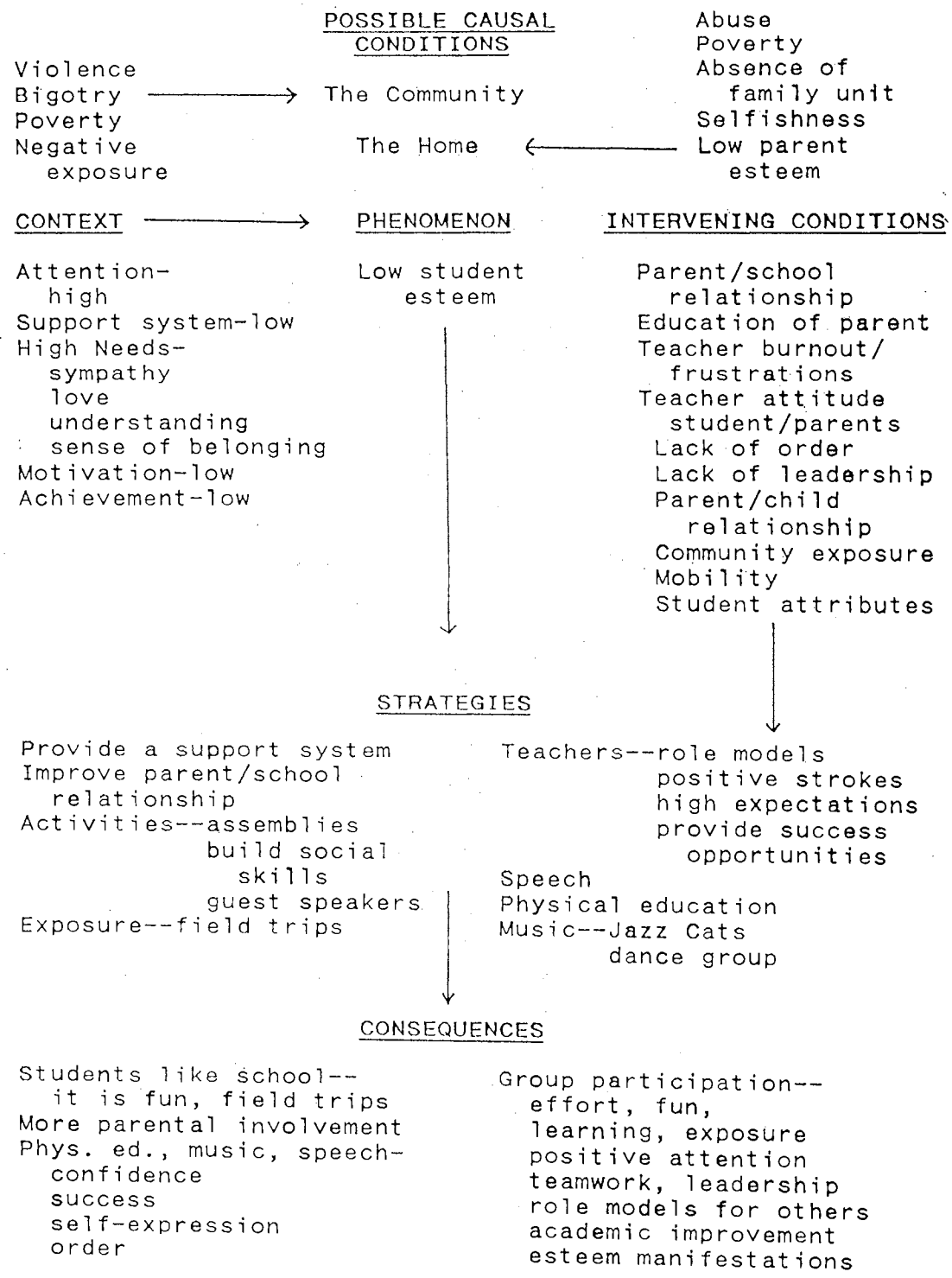


Figure 1. The Analyses and Interpretation

Many students feel incompetent in the classroom. They are heard to say, "I can't," "I'm stupid," "That's too hard." They think they cannot learn and are, therefore, unmotivated to learn, resulting in low performances and failures. Their poor physical posture and inability to maintain eye contact even when praised are indicative of their self-depreciation. Need levels for love, understanding, sympathy, and a sense of belonging are high. The students constantly seek hugs from the staff members and yearn for adult approval and understanding. Yet when another student touches them, confrontations easily arise.

The Possible Causal Conditions

Causal conditions are the events or incidents that lead to the occurrence or development of a phenomenon, but a single causal condition rarely produces a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). There are multiple causations of low self-esteem in children living in a society characterized by massive social disorganization. The home, the church, the socioeconomic conditions, the government, and the school are constituent elements of today's societal upheaval, and all play culpable roles in children's feelings about themselves. In this study, however, the focus is on two possible primary causal conditions of low esteem of the students at Chandler: the home and the community. These conditions are not separate entities but each, depending upon the vital variable of the human being, can act upon the other to create conditions that inhibit or prevent the growth of a healthy self-concept.

The community environment is replete with violence and bigotry, and the home is characterized by a broken/blended family, abuse, selfishness, and low parental esteem. Poverty affects both the home and the community at large. The impact of these upon the children is summarized by a teacher:

Like I said, they come from a home where there's none [self-esteem]. Certainly, with coming out of a home where, um, [sic] there's an abuser, whether it be physical or substance abuse, then there's definitely some

self-esteem problems there. Many of them come from low-income housing and so, of course, you know [sic], that, to me, is demeaning. And whether or not they are able to even verbalize it or not, I think that some of these people feel that they are just not as important as other people. . . . There's no push, there's no drive for the children because they don't view any in the home. They don't see a parent who is working toward betterment of themselves and their families.

The parents become more concerned about their own self-esteem and their own own needs rather than that of their children. This is consistent with Liston (1966), who stated, "Regardless of the assistance given them, impoverished families will not try to help themselves until they approach their own images of minimum essentials of security, belonging, respect, and self-achievement" (pp. 35-36). The self-feeding cycle of failure and frustration is passed on to the children. Parents are blaming other parents for the problems of the youth in the community so that ultimately, no one knows who is responsible for the children.

The separations in the family disavow any sense of belonging for the children. Single parents are frequently too busy trying to provide basic physical necessities for the family to give the children the emotional attention they need. Some choose not to spend time with their children, and consequently, the children are emotionally deprived and unfulfilled. They feel rejected.

Poverty impacts everything from physical needs to emotional needs. The fact that the school is declared a 100% free/reduced lunch school underscores the severity of the socioeconomic status of the families. The effects of hunger, inadequate clothing and health care, and living in unsanitary conditions are seen every day at the school, and they are obstacles to learning.

The stress upon the household is great. Parents have excessive responsibilities, and they do not receive needed help, encouragement, and recognition from others. In their frustrations, some parents resent the children, and consequently, children become the victims of abuse. The effects of all forms of abuse (sexual, psychological, negligence, emotional) are seen at Chandler. The children are on an

emotional roller coaster that affects their relationships with peers and teachers and inhibits their ability to be successful in the classroom.

The community does not offer opportunities for positive experiences. The children perceive the bigotry that feeds the tension among ethnic groups and creates a "them against us" attitude. The acceptance by a gang, stealing what cannot be bought, satisfies the need for attention and immediate gratification.

Strategies

Strategies are the purposeful, goal-oriented responses to, or tactics used, to manage a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The children come to Chandler with poor self-esteem, with the possible primary causes in this study being the community and the home. Because self-concept and school achievement are related, school can become a place where the low-esteem cycle continues, if there is no intervention.

Chandler tries to provide a support system of love, understanding, and a sense of belonging subsequently creating a climate of respect, warmth, and self-control and self-discipline for the students. This is evidenced by the frequency of hugs, a willingness to listen, and giving the students opportunities to express themselves. Providing a support system is crucial in maintaining and altering the self-concept of a child (Morese, 1985). The staff sets high expectations, provides frequent opportunities for success, and gives the students responsibilities, all designed to help the children do more than they think they are capable of doing. The staff is conscious of their responsibilities for being good role models, and they try to give the children positive strokes by praising them and rewarding them.

Improvement of the parent/school relationship is a strategy for helping the students. One step involves working with the parents so they will, "feel like they can come here with or without problems on their minds." This also includes creating an atmosphere of mutual respect so the parents will feel needed and important and that

the school is willing to listen to them. Various teachers are sending home positive notes about students to establish a good rapport between the parents and themselves. To give them a sense of ownership, a committee for writing a school improvement plan included parents.

Another technique used to improve the parent/school relationship involves the students themselves. According to a staff member, "I mean, if the kids get excited about something, the parents might get excited about something, you know." Activities in the music classes, particularly the winter program, have generated excitement in the children, and as a result, the parents have become involved in those activities.

The greatest responsibility for improving the relationship rests upon the school staff. One teacher comments, "It's just not gonna take the parents. It's gonna take the teachers getting involved, too." Another echoes this sentiment: "Just like in the classroom, we [the staff] are responsible with a way to turn the kids on. We are responsible for turning parents on."

The school uses every opportunity possible to expose the students to the life beyond the neighborhood's boundaries. Field trips help the children discover the world beyond that of the immediate neighborhood. This helps the children to learn that they can live in the community and not be a part of it.

Monthly honors assemblies, in addition to fine arts and physical education demonstrations and performances, are held to recognize outstanding student achievement in many areas. The entire student body is present at these assemblies, and parents are encouraged to attend. Programs such as In-School Connection and Operation Aware, along with guest speakers, are brought in to supplement the staff's teaching of basic social skills.

The physical education program and the music/speech program give students opportunities for success, for the outlet of emotions through self-expression, and for demonstrating and refining talents. Through both individual and group participation in

these programs students are encouraged to do their best according to their attributes in an atmosphere of mutual respect. These programs have branched out to include a basketball team and cheerleading squad, a track team, the Jazz Cats, and a dance group.

Intervening Conditions

Intervening conditions are, "The broad and general conditions bearing upon action/interactional strategies" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 103). These conditions can help or hinder the strategies.

Positive intervening conditions for the strategies include the attributes of the students. The students have multiple talents as evidenced by their success in physical education, music, and speech. The students consistently do very well at athletic competitions, at speech competitions, and the winter music program has won awards for three consecutive years. Also, the group, the Jazz Cats, have earned a reputation in the city for being an outstanding musical group.

Another positive intervening condition is the staff's attitude about the students. According to Grossnickel and Thiel (1988, p.25), "Teachers serve an important role in supplying accurate, caring, and objective feedback that guides the development of positive self-regard." The teachers have strong feelings about these students. An outside observer writes in her journal the following: "I just hugged her, told her how sorry I am, and that she could talk to me anytime. Sweet girl. I really like her." The feelings are reciprocated. A student writes, "Today I had fun performing for Mrs. Jackson." The students also state that one of the best things about the school is the teachers.

The inconsistencies in the operations of the school, particularly regarding discipline and communication, are negative intervening conditions. These stem from a lack of leadership and interfere with the staff doing its job effectively because they

become frustrated with the situation. Students also become frustrated, not knowing what the rules are from one day to the next, and they act out this frustration through inappropriate behavior. Samuels (1977) stated that a lack of firm rules has an adverse affect on children's self-feelings.

The parents' previous experiences with education are also negative intervening conditions. Failures in the classroom and painful encounters during desegregation have created a chasm between the parents and the school in general. Because of this, "They [the parents] have no desire to walk into another school building." Intimidation expressed in fear and anger are manifestations of these experiences. A teacher states, "The ways the parents have talked, you can tell that they are intimidated."

The relationship between parent and child is a negative intervening condition in some cases and a positive intervening condition in others. "I would imagine that most of the kids that we have who are real successful, that are good students, are the kids that have some sort of consistent, stable family background," is a teacher's observation. There are parents who have good relationships with their children: "I'm her [the daughter's] friend." Many have poor relationships: "And he'll say 'Whatever mama.' You know [sic], like, 'Leave me alone!'" A teacher states, "I've had kids that say their parents go to their rooms and don't want to be bothered," the entire evening. The parent/child relationship directly impacts a student's self-esteem and thus can inhibit or promote the school experience. There are parents who are trying hard to help their children and are involved in the school. They are the same ones who come to school often, phone, and/or write notes. Most, however, never come to school until the child is in severe trouble and facing suspension. One parent is adamant about not coming to school because her child's misbehavior is the devil's fault; therefore, there is nothing she can or will do to help.

The attitude by some parents that the main responsibility of the school is custodial care is also a negative intervening condition. This attitude breeds an "I don't

care," and "I don't want to get involved" demeanor and contributes to the frustration of the staff.

The attitude of the staff towards the parents is a negative intervening condition. A teacher observes, "Some of us [the school staff] are very receptive to a parent coming in and some of us are not, and while it may not be stated verbally, just our demeanor would indicate that." This demeanor was exhibited at the committee meeting where the faculty sat on one side of the room, and the parents sat on the other side.

While an intense desire by the staff to help the children is a positive intervening condition, the stress and exhaustion of fulfilling this desire causes burnout, a negative condition. Physical as well as emotional exhaustion became more frequent and pronounced as the year progressed, affecting the performances of the teachers. One teacher states, "Sometimes when we get overwhelmed or just sort of struggling and fighting for survival, and we're not always doing the kinds of things we want to do."

The things the children learn in the community at large interfere with the strategies for the children's exposure is limited to those things in the community. The parents are not able or are not willing to expose their children to opportunities to see positive examples of success that are a part of the larger community. Children view violence, bigotry, and poverty as constituent parts of their culture.

Mobility is a negative intervening condition. Students will start to make progress and become excited about school, then they leave. Any chance at positive bonding between the child and the school is lost. Sometimes, the children will return before the end of the year, but usually they will not.

A lack of order in the school setting is a negative intervening condition. According to Hawley and Hawley (1979), when order is lacking in low-esteemed children their self-respect continues to be negatively affected. The negative affects of low levels of order and structure could be observed when the classes were organized on the platoon system at the beginning of the year. The tremendous increase in

discipline problems during this time is indicative of the need for these students to have order in their lives.

Consequences

Consequences are "Outcomes or results of action and interaction" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97). They are the results of the strategies.

There has been improvement in the relationship between the parents and the school mainly due to efforts at the end of the school year. For fifth grade promotion, there was a huge turnout. Parent volunteers called other parents to remind them of the ceremony, and the parents responded by attending and by expressing their pride in the children's accomplishments. "Fun Day" brought out several parent volunteers. Parents were asked to serve on school improvement committees, and those that served became very active and very vocal in the committee meetings. Consequently, these parents have a sense of ownership in the plan and are excited about helping to implement it in the coming school year.

Holding report cards for parent/teacher conferences and having those conferences at the housing complex have improved the relationship. A parent states, "It's good that the teachers come so parents can come and talk to them." Another states, "You all helping the kids out. You all come and meet the parents." Some teachers reported as much as a three-fold increase in the number of their parents attending conferences.

Another consequence is the "fun" aspect the children get from school. In response to the question, "What's the best thing about school?", the students answer, "It's fun. You get to learn a lot of things." They also state that the teachers are the best part of school because, "They're funny and play with you," and "The teachers laugh and have fun with us."

Going places throughout the city proper is very important to the students as they frequently mention field trips in their interviews and write about them in their journals: "We went to the zoo and the opera. And we went to the Carmen opera too." Several of them state that they would like to be a teacher because, "You get to plan trips and do activities." One field trip involved taking fourth graders to see a pipe organ at a large church. The students asked many questions, and when it was time to leave I literally had to shoo some of the students out of the church because they were so interested in what they were seeing and hearing. I was told later that the gentleman who demonstrated the organ remarked to others that the Chandler students were the best group of students he had had for a pipe organ demonstration.

The physical education program gives the students confidence in themselves by emphasizing good physical health and the development of innate athletic talents. The students have numerous chances to display those talents in the city through gymnastic, jump-rope, and physical fitness competitions, and they consistently do very well. All the students have opportunities to be successful through various in-class activities. Many students vie for positions on the basketball team and the cheerleading squad. Once selected, the uniforms are worn with a great deal of pride by the students, and they are intent upon doing their best. According to their coach, the benefits of this to the students are many:

They lived and breathed basketball during the season, being in the gym. Sometimes we'd practice at 7:30 in the morning and then at lunch time every day. And then on days when I told them I didn't want them in the gym, they were in there anyway. . . . On ballgame days they'd be up here thirty minutes before I told them to be here, just so eager and wanting to go. And they'd just act like they enjoyed it. They felt positive about it. And, you know [sic], maybe if they didn't have such a good game, you know, they didn't care. They still wanted to play anyway.

The speech program is giving the students an opportunity for self-expression and builds confidence. When students won awards at a speech festival, they brought their ribbons to school showing them to other students and the faculty. An outside

observer's journal states, "Lisa won first place for speech; Ryan, third; Karl, second. All very proud and pumped up!" One of the students called his mother after giving his speech and exclaimed, "Mom, everybody said I was good!"

The music program is giving students a means of self-expression, cultural awareness, exposure, and confidence. A teacher states:

The kids seem to be more well-rounded. . . . I think it's a definite improvement to what we were. . . . They get to get out and go to music. They get to do something that's fun. They get to have some self-expression. . . . I certainly see more self-confidence and poise and even determination. I think some of that is coming from their ability to go into that music room and do some different things and be a part of something special.

Music gives the students a chance to show off in a positive way. When they perform, in the classroom or in a program, according to one teacher, "They're letting something out that's wonderful and beautiful and natural. That cannot be anything but positive." Students share their feelings about music with their teachers: "The kids really look forward to going to music. You can hear them say, 'Oh, today we're going to do such and such', and oh, you know [sic], they have a lot of fun," is a teacher's observation. Another states, "You can tell they love doing it. You can tell looking at their faces when they're singing, when they're doing whatever they're doing. The kids love music." The parents also view the music class as a good thing for the students. Attendance at the winter program has increased six-fold in the last three years.

Music also provides order that the children need. Scoggins (cited in Graham, 1975, p. 97) stated, "Music provides some security through its inherent order and structure." Through the musical experiences the children learn to focus and organize their responses in both group and individual activities in class and in performances.

The school staff sees the physical education and the music/speech programs as critical parts of the encompassing plan to educate the whole child. At a faculty meeting on the reorganization of the classes at the school, the staff emphatically stated they were willing to do away with the Chapter pullout program and implement a school-wide

Chapter program in order to keep music/speech and physical education in the school. In a school improvement committee meeting concerning self-esteem, the committee members (teachers, a parent, support staff) stated that music and physical education are needed in the school as an integral part of the overall program for self-esteem. A parent states:

Chandler has never really had that much of any kind of activities, and here in the last year you all have done a little bit more. I think it helps the kids out tremendously because they seem to like going to school. It's like, I mean, they don't--they're not always so up tight, you know.

A teacher states, "When you guys came and started the kids with the music and other things it gave them a lot more self-confidence." The principal said, "Those are all worthwhile activities that can make them feel good about themselves, that they can do it." The manifestations of self-esteem can be noticed overtly with the students. "Oh, they get more animated. And they're, you know, their eyes light up and you, they have more excitedness about them," according to a teacher.

Membership in the Jazz Cats affords the students an opportunity for group participation. According to Flick (1975, p. 189), "One of music's greatest values is its use in group situations, for once a child is a member of a group, the social skills of sharing, cooperating, relating to the peer groups, and gaining independence can be achieved." The attributes of participation in this group are fun, learning, exposure, effort, teamwork, leadership, serving as a role model for the other students, and academic improvement.

The students in the group value the experience of learning, musically and socially. An outside observer writes, "Jazz Cats in hall waiting to practice. Several became excited on hearing they had new material to learn." I was constantly amazed at how quickly the students would learn the songs that I gave them. Many would take a song home one day and the next day have it virtually memorized. According to Jonathan, in Jazz Cats, "You learn. Learn to control attitudes. You learn to have

discipline." The following are entries from the students' journals: "It was fun because we learned new songs," and "I think I can learn the songs because I think I am a bright girl and when I leave I feel good."

The use of students' journals in data analysis is appropriate. According to Rogers (cited in Purkey, 1970), self reports are valuable sources of information about the individual. Allport (cited in Purkey, 1970) stated the individual has the right to be believed when he reports his feelings about himself. Strong and Feder (cited in Purkey, 1970, p. 170) stated, "Every evaluative statement that a person makes concerning himself can be considered a sample of his self-concept, from which inferences may then be made about the various properties of that self-concept."

Putting forth individual effort is an element of the group participation. Many times the students would arrive early for rehearsal. An outside observer's journal entry:

The group, the Jazz Cats, are always eager to practice. Today they were to give a performance and upon their return from a field trip, they headed to the music room to practice. No fuss, eager, smiling. Their performance shows how much they enjoy the work they put into their practice.

The group members frequently took their music home to practice individually, with a parent, or with other group members. A parent states:

And she'd come home with new lessons that you would give. She would come home and she would sing and say, 'Okay, Mama. Start me off on this one.' It was one maybe I knew. 'Start me off on this one', and I'd clear my throat, and we'd go through the motions. 'That's it, that's it!' She'd sing it, and it's okay.

The students liked to rehearse and were upset when there was no practice. One student writes, "I am upset because we didn't have practice more before the assembly." They associated work with fun, and placed high standards upon themselves and the rest of the group: "I think I can do better than what I did today," and "I think we should accomplish more on the dance and more songs."

At-risk students have been exposed to insufficient educational experiences from school, family, and/or the community (Natriello, McDill, and Pallas, 1990). Participation

in the Jazz Cats gives students opportunities for positive exposure through performances. The principal states, "In addition to wanting to please, I have the feeling that inside they're kind of grateful for getting to go to some of these places and getting to do some of these things because normally they wouldn't." In a conversation with a student, she said the best thing about being in Jazz Cats is, "You get to go places and sing." An outside observer's journal entry is, "The Jazz Cats enjoyed performing at the college on the 5th. Several of them told me what a fun time they had." Abbey's mother states, "And she loves the whole idea of the going to different areas to sing."

The performances by the group created both positive anticipatory attitudes and feelings of success after the performances were over. Before a performance, I observed the students being extremely excited, and the intensity of rehearsals would increase dramatically. The anticipatory attitude is reflected in their writings: "Now I am ready to perform after today's practice [sic] and I feel that I can do it," and "When I leave I want to feel good about my self [sic]." Three feelings emerged from the performances: fun, good, great. An outside observer notes after a performance, "The children returned very excited. Comment--'We were so good we made them cry.'" The students write, "I had fun today and that was the greatest [sic] day of my life and I hope we can do it again," and "I think we did good and I am good." Andrew underscored the importance of wanting to do well with his entry after a performance: "I prayed [sic] and it came true."

The performances are a means for the students to have the attention that they crave, only in a positive mode. A group member writes, "Lat [sic] Wed day [sic] it felt good to have all the attention on us."

Leadership and teamwork are skills gained in the group participation. A staff member observes, "Certain members in that group are displaying leadership." When asked to write down their goals for the group, Dirk writes, "My goal [sic] for the group is to be a leader." Others write, "be more help to people," and "help others while we

practice and be good." During rehearsal, the students interject their own ideas into the music and the dancing and do not hesitate to help anyone who is having difficulty. I identified four members of the group as leaders: Dirk, Jonathan, Jan, and Shelia. On several occasions I talked to these four students, together and separately, of their leadership abilities and their responsibilities to the group and to the school at large. At no time during the year did I observe a lack of teamwork on the part of the 16 members of the group. If there were problems, they worked them out when I was not around. The leadership acquired through the participation in Jazz Cats transferred to the regular music classroom, particularly during rehearsals for the all-school winter program. I also observed numerous examples of leadership and teamwork in the dance group. There were some disagreements during this group's rehearsal; some students would get upset and not come to practice the next day. I noticed that these disagreements lined up as a "boys against girls" disagreement, and they were eventually resolved by the students, except for one incident when I resolved the problem.

The group positively affects the other students at the school. An outside observer's entry is, "Jazz Cats sang for the honors assembly. The parents and students were in awe (as usual)." During all-school assemblies when the Jazz Cats perform, the students become much more attentive. One teacher's observation is, "Cause you know how hard it is to get them [the students] to be still during the assembly; most of them really pay attention during that time [when Jazz Cats perform]." On numerous occasions throughout the year I had students ask me if they could be in Jazz Cats. One teacher was having difficulty with a student. She discovered that he loved the Jazz Cats, and so she told the child that if he wanted to be a Jazz Cat when he got older he was going to have to learn to behave. He understood that. The opportunity to be something special can be seen. "It gives the rest something to look at and to see that they don't have to be satisfied with just being a cog in the wheel or just lost in the crowd," is a teacher's comment. A student in the group said that after a

performance at the school, "They [other students] come back and say 'You did good.'" Another states, "And they listen." Perhaps the greatest compliment given to those in the group by the other students is, "And they sing our songs after we get done."

The staff supports the group. One staff member comments, "I've always been real pleased and proud. . . . The Jazz Cats do such an excellent job, you know, performing at almost every one of the assemblies we have throughout the school year." The members notice that, "The teachers smile," when the group is performing.

Several students in the group improved in their other school subjects. Members of the group would tell me of their classroom achievements. Other teachers mentioned the improvement of grades by those in the Jazz Cats. One teacher states, "And, you know, I would think that while all of it may not be as a result of being in Jazz Cats, I think that part of it is because they know that they've got to fulfill some other things." Andrew said, "For one thing, the way you [the teacher] do it, you get a bad grade, you're not going to go some of the places. If they want to be on it, they'll be encouraged to get good grades." A teacher who has Andrew in class states:

I don't know if it's from within himself or from within the home, but Andrew seems to have become more responsible. He seems to think Jazz Cats is something 'I get to do if I do some other things.' Whereas, last year we had trouble keeping up with papers and turning in assignments on time. And now he seems to become aware that everything's got to be done: 'I've got to get this in.' And I don't have to send home progress reports like I did last year about not getting his work in.

The parents of the Jazz Cats who were interviewed perceive positive feelings from their children concerning the group. Marvin's mother states, "He thought it was wonderful. He loves it." Ryan's mother said, "It seems like he likes the camaraderie of the group. It seems like he's proud of the group." Jan's mother states, "She comes home and tells me how they, what the songs they do; how they might express, you know, with themselves [sic] on things they do." The parents themselves felt good about their children being in the group. One parent states, "I don't mind supporting something

that is that giving to a child." With the prevalence of music in the homes, a common bond is created between the home and the school through music.

The students state they have fun in the group. "It's more fun to come in here and practice than go out and play," is one of their comments. Another states, "It's worth it. It keeps you out of trouble." There were many journal entries concerning the fun the students were having, how they know the group is special, and that they enjoy rehearsing.

The members of the group show an increase in self-confidence and self-esteem. An outside observer's journal entry stated: "They sing with lots of confidence; do a good job every time." In a phone conversation with an individual who had watched a performance, she states, "They're so confident and their enthusiasm showed. . . . People were touched." Entries from the students' journals on their feelings of self are, "I feel proud."; "I [feel] good we [when] i [sic] walk out of the room I feel good about my self [sic]"; "I fell [sic] good like there is a fire just lit up in me."

The effects of participation in the group have been profound for some of the students. Abbey's mother states that membership in the group has really changed her child:

Abbey has completely turned around. She's, like I said, she's not shy anymore. . . . She's not shy to ask questions anymore. . . . Before, she wasn't doing that and the only thing that I can contribute is being in Jazz Cats to where she has something special to do. . . . She's seemed to just kind of mellow out to where I think the Jazz Cats have helped her with the idea that everything will work its way out. So she doesn't seem to be this angry, quiet little girl any more. She wants to be very loving, very outspoken.

A teacher agrees with Abbey's mother. Through her observations she has noticed that Abbey has more self-pride, feels better about herself, and, "has blossomed." The teacher states, "And I think a lot of that is due to Jazz Cats."

Marvin's mother states, "He really likes it and feels like he's something special, and he is." A teacher has seen changes in Marvin this year: "He walked with his

shoulders down as if he were carrying the weight of the world and like he just, just felt like he was a nobody. And now he's changed. He's more involved in class."

Karl's mother relates what participation in the group has done for her son: "It's given him a little bit of confidence in getting up in front of people. . . . Now it seems like he's trying out for more things." Andrew's mother comments, "I think it's helped Andrew get out of some of his shyness."

Staff members comment on the effects of group participation on the students. A teacher states, "The kids that are in Jazz Cats, of course, they're certainly--it's increased their self-esteem, their importance." The principal who attended almost all of the group's performances states:

I can't think of any of the Jazz Cats that at one time or another during one of their performances--that you don't see a big smile come across their faces, whether it's during the performance or afterwards . . . that kind of look of happiness and satisfaction at what they did.

Conclusions

For those who have not grown up in a community like this, it is difficult to grasp the depth of the problems of the children, their families, and the community at large. However, the staff at Chandler is able to comprehend enough about the situation to feel a sense of urgency towards positive intervention in the lives of the children. The analyses of the data has shown that there are three important points to this intervention: The need to improve the relationship between parents and the school; the importance of the music and physical education programs in this process; the role of the teacher.

The most debilitating circumstance for the children in this study is the home. To compound this circumstance with low parental involvement in the school is to devastate the child even more, for without parental support, a child finds it difficult to embrace the educational experience. The child's sense of unfulfillment in the home continues at

school. Whether it is due to situational constraints or feelings of intimidation, the parent's inability to feel comfortable in the school environment has an unpropitious effect on not only their own self-esteem, but also the self-esteem of the child. The efforts of the school to understand and involve the parents have helped, but the existence of negative attitudes on both the parents' part and the staff's part continue to be a deterrent to the positive growth of the children.

More than any other part of the plan, the music and physical education classes have helped the students' self-esteem. In these classes the children are able to be successful, and for many, this is the first time in their lives that they have experienced success. Many times staff members mentioned the value of these two programs in helping the children to gain self-respect and to feel good about themselves. This attitude is reflected by the teachers' willingness to change the structure of the classes in order to keep music and physical education. The children have openly expressed positive feelings about these classes. Here, the students are able to relax their "guard"; the self-preservation mechanism that they have built in order to survive. For many, this is the first opportunity they have to work in a group situation in a positive way.

The benefits of music are continued in the Jazz Cats. The students in the group feel successful; they feel good about learning; they are excited to have the opportunity to go places and perform, to "show off"; they enjoy working hard to make the group the best it can be; they like the teamwork, the camaraderie, and the opportunities to be a leader. They are willing to give up recess and lunch time to rehearse, and they are willing to spend time at home to study the music and practice the dance steps. Having other students, the staff, and people outside the school setting tell them that they are very good generates feelings of pride and self-worth. This kind of attention makes them feel good, not guilty. Above all, they think it is fun. Putting this in the context of the community and the homes from which they come, having fun has far reaching meaning and implications.

In this setting the responsibility for helping the students gain self-esteem rests on the teacher, whether it is the music, physical education, or classroom teacher. For many children, the only relationships they have had with adults have been painful ones. Therefore, the teachers in the school try to help the children understand that grown-ups can help them, love them, understand them. According to Samuels (1977), studies have found that children with higher self-concepts are in classrooms in which teachers are supportive, calm, acceptant, and facilitative and that teachers are "significant others" in children's lives.

The strategies that have been implemented at Chandler for helping student esteem have succeeded to some extent. However, the negative influences in the community and the homelife are being compounded faster than the school's ability to negate them. Other plans will have to be implemented in order to overcome the trends of the children's environment that literally attack them and sends them spiraling downward.

CHAPTER VI

COMMENTS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, SUGGESTIONS, AND COMMENTARY

What I am; what I think I am; what I want to be;
what I ought to be.

Author unknown
(cited in Mosby, 1971, p. 65)

Comments

The purpose of this study was to examine a school's attempts to raise the self-esteem of its students, particularly the role that participation in a select musical group has in those attempts. Chandler Elementary was selected because its students are at-risk (Sartain, 1990) and because of its recently implemented music program.

For many years, proponents of the fine arts have espoused the merits of music education, not only for its aesthetic virtues but also for its concomitant nonmusical outcomes. However, due to a reluctance to accept naturalistic research, the elucidation of the importance of the utilitarian aspects of music has mainly been left to the devices of commentary, for these aspects are value-driven. In spite of valiant attempts, various measurement instruments and the accompanying statistics have not been able to reveal the nonmusical outcomes of music education in a worthy manner, for statistical information is only a piece of the total picture. The research on nonmusical outcomes that has been attempted has been unconvincing due to inadequacies in the experimental designs and "to the incomplete and equivocal descriptions of the experiments themselves" (Wolff, 1978, p. 21). With the acceptance of qualitative

research and its holistic descriptions encompassing multiple realities, a figurative still photograph of a setting can be made allowing trustworthiness and transferability to be established.

This study's holistic description is indicative of the situation in which more of our children and hence, more of our schools, find themselves. "Our young people are growing up in what many social scientists call the most negative, problematic, and even neurotic society ever" (Friedland, 1992, p. 96). Poverty impacts greater numbers of children. Of those who live in single parent homes, 73% will be in poverty at some point during their childhood (Ellwood, 1988). With the number of children living in single parent homes increasing, the psychological consequences that accompany the situation are also increasing: youth suicide; low intellectual and educational performances; higher than average rates of mental illness, violence, and drug use (Galston & Kamarck, 1993). Prejudice is still a prevailing attitude fraught with dangerous consequences, and crime has become a normalized part of society. An estimated two million children are abused physically each year (Jones, 1980).

Living amid these circumstances, it is no wonder that our children are coming to school with no sense of personal value. The central cause of essentially every problem involving young people is lack of self-esteem (Friedland, 1992). When they look at themselves, the reflection they see leaves them empty. Carter (1967, p. 137) stated, "The search for identity is real and traumatic for most youth in our kinetic world. The search for self for the marginal youth is without a doubt, more real and more traumatic." The reality is, schools must provide dynamic programs to help students raise their self-esteem because, "Next to the home, the school is the single most important force in shaping the child's self-concept" (Purkey, 1970, p. 40).

It is a complex situation, one that can only be portrayed with any sense of accuracy through the naturalistic paradigm. The portraiture of the setting appreciates understanding, and it is only through a degree of understanding that we will be able to

provide an environment conducive to helping these children form a positive image of self. Brickman and Lehrer (1972, preface, p. vii) stated, "As human beings, we should listen to our conscience: We must develop the potentialities of the poor through qualitative education, consisting of excellent teachers and appropriate curricula."

Conclusions

The first research question was: "What are the characteristics of the learning environment of this school?" The elements that comprise the school environment are a microcosm of the environment of the neighboring community; the problems of the community are the problems of the school. The actions of the students are characterized by violence, instantaneous anger, deprecatory remarks toward self and others. There is a sense of futility, a lack of motivation, and lethargy. These are consistent with Nurcombe's (1976, p. 58) observations: "The consequences of low self-esteem are lack of confidence, withdrawal, the rejection of personal perceptions, and high levels of psychosomatic distress, manifested in tension symptoms and a tendency to 'act out' impulsively when under pressure." Hunger, along with inadequate clothing and health care, affects the emotional and physical well-being of the children, thus severely impairing their ability to learn.

There is an attitude by those who are staff members that the school may be the last thing standing between the students and a lifetime of failure. For some staff members, this attitude is translated into despair. They see the situation as hopeless; the odds are too great to create lasting change in the students. Others are responding to the situation by giving their best within the parameters presented by the community and the school.

The second research question was: "What does this public school do to create a supportive learning environment that builds positive self-esteem in at-risk students?"

The school attempts to provide order, challenge, opportunities for success, respect, warmth, and self-control and self-discipline.

The school provides opportunities for the students to use their abilities academically, athletically, musically, and in public speaking. Education in life skills and social skills is given. The students are taken out into the city to get a broader view of life, to expand their cultural awareness. They meet new people, they see and hear things that are uplifting and positive.

The school is trying to improve its relationship with the community so the parents can become a helping part of the students' educational life. This is also done to make the parents feel that they are important, thus raising their self-esteem, for the parents cannot give to their children what they, themselves do not possess.

The third research question was: "What roles do the faculty, parents, and students play in this process?" Through the words they speak, their actions, or the way they dress, each faculty member is a role model. Many of the teachers become surrogate parents; they listen, advise, mediate, discipline, clothe, hug, feed, and teach life skills as well as academic skills. The greatest burden for providing an environment conducive to raising the self-esteem of the students rests on each teacher.

The students are not aware of the role they play in this process. They are confused by the discrepancies between what the community says and what the school says. A top school administrator describes this confusion:

These kids are coming into the first environment where there is structure and their lives are not structured. . . . You come into a school and now all of a sudden, the environment is structured. They are not accustomed to that. You get a lot of conflict.

Many of the students do not understand the concept of fulfilling a role for they have never been given a place of value in anything. They live for the moment guided by an external locus of control, and they do not understand the meaning of working for long-term goal attainment.

The role of the parent is paramount, for if they are hurt, lost, confused, and have no self-esteem then so are their children. The parents who try hard to support their children still must contend with the influences of the community, and they must contend with family problems for all of them have had or are currently experiencing great personal difficulties. The children whose parents take an active role in their home and school life are more well adjusted at school and have fewer problems. There are well-intentioned parents who are not able to spend time with their children because they are too busy trying to put food on the table and providing a place for the family to live. The children's emotional and educational needs go unattended. There are also those who are self-centered and choose not to spend time with their children. They push all responsibilities of child-rearing off on the school and other parents in the community.

The fourth research question was: "How does the integration of music into the elementary curriculum help at-risk students avoid problems of frustration, alienation, and self-doubt?" Through the classroom activities of playing instruments, singing, and having the opportunity to perform during all-school programs, all the students are involved in an atmosphere of success. A teacher states, "In the music program we give the kids a lot of chances to show off in a positive way." Each child is encouraged to be the best according to individual attributes. In music, frustrations are channeled into positive self-expression through various types of music and various mediums for expressing it. Alienation is dissolved through small group work in the classroom and large group participation in a program with the results being that cooperative success leads to individual success. Cultural awareness through different types of music and visits by different artists is also used to dissolve the feelings of alienation among ethnic groups. The class also provides a sense of order by providing students opportunities to focus and organize their emotional responses in a productive way.

Feelings of self-doubt are diffused through an atmosphere of encouragement, and as they sing or play they feel that, "They're totally letting something out that's wonderful and beautiful and natural." Other teachers visit the music classroom and praise the students, and many times they join the children in music class and on music related field trips.

The fifth research question was: "How does participation in a musical group help at-risk students develop the sense of self-as-learner and their ability to relate that to personal interests and goals?" The group participation enables the students to be a success. They discover they can learn the melodies and the words of many songs quickly; they can learn choreography and are able to sing and dance simultaneously; they learn they can do this for other people and receive praise; they learn they can be successful because their teachers, their parents, other students, and people in the community praise them. The students' ideas for the group are given credence by the teacher and the others in the group and are incorporated into performances. The success of self-as-learner transfers into both the regular music classroom and their other classes. The changes in the students from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year were noticed by others in the community. A letter from the school's Adopt-A-School partner noted these changes: "You . . . have taken a group of shy, unsure children and developed them into a polished, self-confident performing group."

All the students in the group have backgrounds in music from their families, and for many, it is still important in the home. Consequently, music serves as a link between the home and the school. The importance of this in an area with vast cultural differences cannot be overstated. Music can give everyone a chance to appreciate differences among individuals and cultures.

The success the students experience impacts their desires for the future. Almost all of the 16 have, at this point in their lives, chosen professional careers as

their goals. Positive career aspirations are a sign of heightened self-esteem (Grossnickel, 1989).

Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following implications and recommendations are suggested:

1. At-risk students are capable of cognitively performing well. Low standardized test scores are not indicative of the intellectual abilities of these students. This is evidenced by the fact that on numerous occasions, members of the Jazz Cats would be given a 10 to 12 page song on one day, and the next day they would have it virtually memorized. This also occurs in the regular music class.

2. These children need parameters. Studies show that at-risk children are missing order in their lives. Coopersmith (1967) stated that one of the conditions that distinguish high esteem from low self-esteem is clearly defined and enforced limits. This was evident by the failure of the platoon system at the beginning of the school year.

3. The implications for educational leadership are that transformational leadership is needed in a setting such as this. A strong sense of vision and the ability to lead both the students and teachers toward that vision is critical in creating a successful school environment. This vision includes a firm commitment to the belief that at-risk students are capable of being successful. A school leader with the courage to break out of the traditional mold through second order changes in order to find ways to help these children achieve success is imperative. In this type of school setting, weak leadership creates confusion among the students and the staff.

4. Teachers working with at-risk students need a support system. Burnout and physical problems are symptomatic of stress that, if not resolved, can be debilitating for both teachers and students. Staff development led by counselors and/or psychologists

trained in stress management in addition to after-school retreats would be beneficial in easing the stress involved with teaching these types of children.

5. Society has abdicated its responsibility for building positive self-esteem in children; therefore, administrators, teachers, and counselors need better training for self-esteem enhancement for children. The burden is too great, and the situation too complex to place the responsibility solely on the teacher. School is a mini-society, and it should work as a unit to break the self-perpetuating cycle of low esteem. Higher education must equip teachers, administrators, and counselors with the tools that will enable them to make the school environment one that can be different than the society at-large; one that has a vision different than that of the immediate community. Training in counseling and familiarity with available services are necessary. Experience supervised by counseling experts and/or educators trained in working with at-risk students is essential. With intervention, a child can break out of the low-esteem cycle into the self-fulfilling achievement cycle that creates self-confidence leading to expectations, motivation, performance, evaluation, and positive self-concept. Additionally, when the school community improves, the surrounding community will improve.

6. The school staff is directly responsible for improving the school/parent relationship. The staff should take the initiative in reaching out to the parents, enabling them to feel comfortable in the school setting. The staff needs constantly to seek parental input and to give the parents a sense of ownership in the school; letting them know their opinion is valued and used. These parents are extremely sensitive, even though it is not easily discernible because they have learned to hide it.

7. If the students are excited about something, the parents become excited. This was evidenced by the huge crowds for the winter program and the fifth grade promotion. For both occasions, getting the students enmeshed in the activities directly resulted in much greater parental interest.

8. The old methods of operating schools and teaching do not work with these students. Consequently, the next school year will involve the implementation of a whole new method of teaching; the "Great Expectations" program founded by Marva Collins. If it is going to be successful, the entire staff must work together with a common vision or the program will fail. Unity needs to be in existence for the sake of the students and the staff.

9. Music is a common bond between the school and the community. In addition to its value for the students, the music program can serve as a means to improve the relationship between the parents and the school. "Cultural compatibility" between the home and the school gained through music and the other arts can be the key to unlocking the potential in students from multi-cultured areas. When the home and the school function as a team of mutual understanding, the education of young people will be successful. The goal is not to denigrate ethnicity but is to understand and appreciate it more.

10. Music is not a frill to be taught only if there is enough money and enough time. Music, in addition to being aesthetically enriching, creates opportunities for exploring, experimenting, thinking, imagining, problem solving, and communication. These are the kinds of activities that at-risk students need. Music gives everyone chances to participate, to express himself, and to understand and appreciate differences among individuals and cultures. Music also provides order and security that must be in place for children to change their self-concept from that of a negative one to that of a positive one.

11. The ultimate determinant of successful intervention for at-risk students lies not with some external processes but within the deepest parts of each individual working with at-risk children. No program can be successful if the individuals using it are not willing to give completely of themselves, and if they do not believe in these

students and in themselves. The human element is the determining key to the success or failure of any educational adventure.

Suggestions for Further Research

More qualitative research, as outlined in this dissertation, is needed. The number of school children joining the ranks of at-risk is increasing tremendously, and educators need alternative methods for intervention to this problem. Also, a continuation of gathering data at this school is recommended. With the implementation of the "Great Expectations" program, the role of music in that program and the outcomes in regards to student esteem could provide valuable research. Long-term tracking studies of the students in this school is also needed challenging some of the assumptions of at-risk students. Further studies of this nature would also serve to enhance parents' and teachers' understandings of each other and the contexts in which they live and work.

Closing Remarks

I have worked with the children at Chandler Elementary for three years, and while I am able to grasp their situation more clearly, I still experience times of frustration because of the complexity of their lives. I, like other staff members, learn a little more each day. These revelations can be joyous, and they can be frightening and depressing. Yet, if we stand a chance of helping the students in their struggle, "in fulfilling their individual potential while becoming responsible citizens," then we must do everything in our power to understand the children and their culture. Giving up is not an option.

These children are worth our very best efforts. The "at-risk" label does not preclude them from becoming successful, productive individuals, for they have tremendous potential. One of the things that impressed me the most about the 16

children in the Jazz Cats was their ability to memorize the music quickly. Some of these children are the same ones who score in the bottom quartile on a standardized achievement test. The problem is not in their capabilities; the problem is they have not had opportunities to cultivate and express these capabilities in an environment conducive to success. Margurjer (cited in Fine, 1967, p. 130) stated, "The child with limited background has normal intelligence. He can grow up in school studies and in his life if reached and interested by what the school offers." The children at Chandler Elementary are capable of mastering cognitively intricate concepts, and they have talents that are exceptional as evidenced by the fact that the Jazz Cats have earned a reputation city-wide for their outstanding musical abilities.

Questions may arise as to the validity of this study, since I was both participant/observer and the music teacher in the study--concerns about the researcher being "native", creating an over identification with the parents, the staff, and the students.

The response of the parents to my requests for interviews is indicative of how they feel about music in their school, particularly their child's participation in Jazz Cats. I requested 16 interviews and was able to complete 12. I actually interviewed 13 parents, for in one case, both the mother and father wanted to be interviewed. I always felt welcome when I visited homes. With one particular incident, I phoned a parent to set up an interview, and when I told her I would come to her home, she asked, "You mean, you will come to my house?" She was so pleased by that.

The four interviews I was not able to get are characteristic of the family situations in which these children live. There was one house I refused to visit; the one called, "the most dysfunctional family in the entire district." Among the many problems in the household, a man who is a known molester in the neighborhood lives there. The mother in the home agreed to an interview at the school, but twice did not show for appointments. Two other parents that I was unable to interview were the alcohol

incidents referred to in Chapter IV. The final case was a situation where a boy was living with his mother and having many problems. The father took the boy the last few weeks of school. The situation was extremely volatile, and I did not want to do anything that would negatively impact the child more than what was already happening.

During three interviews, I sensed a hesitancy by the parents to open up and be honest with me regarding their relationship with their children. There were marked differences between what they told me and what I and other staff members have observed. Alcohol and sexual abuse are impacting these three situations. However, I unequivocally believe they were pleased their children were in Jazz Cats, for when we talked about that issue, their eyes would light up, and they would smile.

Any biases of the staff are based upon their observations of the success of the music program and particularly the Jazz Cats. Seven teachers have seen the evolution of the music program for they were at the school when it first began. They have seen the effects it has had on the children. I did not coerce their plaudits for the music program; they readily gave them. The fact that all but two have significant musical experiences in their backgrounds serves to reinforce their belief that music plays a vital role in the development of the whole child, particularly these children.

The students' eagerness to please me could have created a bias. However, writing in their journals became a part of the normal rehearsal routine. I periodically reminded them that their journals were privy to no one but me, and they were free to write whatever they wanted, even if that included their frustrations with other students, with me, or with other staff members. I found interviewing them refreshing. Their honesty is both humbling and thought provoking, as seeing things from a child's perspective is an enlightening experience. When these children feel good about something, they are almost passionate in their desire to share that feeling with others, especially their teachers.

Professionally, teaching at Chandler is the hardest thing I have ever done in 16 years of teaching experiences. From that first child stepping in the door early in the morning to the last one stepping out late in the afternoon, the challenge is ever present and draining. There are days of extreme frustration that leave me feeling emotionally and physically drained and wondering if I have enough left to get my act together for the next day.

For the school staff there is never a down time. The emotional, physical, and intellectual aspects of self operate at peak capacity constantly. Exhaustion is ever present and not far behind is burnout. Several teachers experienced burnout the year of this study. They were perilously close to quitting, but they were able to rebound enough to hang on until the end of the school year. Several are rejuvenated by the "Great Expectations" program that will be used in the coming school year. They realize that no matter how hard we try, how much we give, the children are coming to us with more and more problems, further and further behind in social and developmental skills, to where we can not even keep up, let alone get ahead.

There were many occasions when lunch time rehearsals with the Jazz Cats were the highlights of my week. Their eagerness was contagious, and I, like them, found myself humming the songs and smiling a bit more after rehearsals. For me, the most noteworthy discovery of this study was how important this group had become to the children in it. As I read their journals and talked with them and observed them, I came to realize that being in the Jazz Cats was, in all likelihood, the best thing that had ever happened to them. This was affirmed by a teacher's statement: "This [the Jazz Cats] was the highlight of their existence at Chandler."

Does participation in this group really change the students? Does it really help them to overcome their negative image of self? There were no significant changes in the first self-concept test and the second self-concept test. Eight students had higher self-concept scores on the second test, four had lower scores, and three stayed the

same. All of the students marked on their test that they felt like they were good in music. This program does not and cannot overcome all of the problems these children face. But as I look at their faces when they sing, particularly in front of a large crowd, and I read in their journals how they feel about themselves and their part in the group, and I hear them tell me how much fun they are having, I ask myself, "Where would they be without it?" Entries such as "I've done good and I feel great about it," "I feel good like there is a fire just lit up in me," and "I feel fine and special," leaves no doubt in my mind that this group positively fills voids in their lives. Following are two cases in point.

Jan. At the beginning of the year she was a happy, hard-working, delightful child. Suddenly, she became sullen, almost hostile, rarely smiling, and she was failing in her classes. She gained weight and had behavior problems. There were indications of sexual abuse by her new step-father and/or his friend that were recognized by several staff members. Things were so bad at home that Jan asked another teacher if she could live with her for the summer. She did not want to go home. In spite of attempts by teachers to get her to verbalize what was really bothering her, she refused.

Jonathan. He has the greatest leadership potential of all the students in the school. He is cognitively very bright and musically very talented. He, too, became increasingly despondent and hostile throughout the year and would instantaneously become violent. It was almost as if he became two different people. Both his parents have been in prison, and he was keeping company with an older boy at the housing complex--an older boy with deviant sexual behaviors.

Because of their increasing misbehaviors at school, I was under pressure to put Jan and Jonathan out of Jazz Cats. However, my observations were that being in Jazz Cats was their last grip on anything positive in their lives, anything about which they still felt good. I observed Jan coming to rehearsals with her head down, non-communicative. However, when she left, she was smiling and singing as she walked down the hall to lunch. I also saw the same thing with Jonathan. He would come to

rehearsal angry and sullen, but after singing, dancing, and having a chance to put his leadership abilities to use, he would literally bounce down the hall. I refused to put them out of the group.

Above all else, I have to look at the one word that the students wrote over and over in their journals--"fun". The first time I analyzed their journals, I was disappointed that they kept using that word to the point of, what seemed to me, redundancy. But the more I read, the more I realized this: In the face of so much deviancy in their lives, so much sadness, so much pain, the greatest compliment of all that they can give to anything is that it is "fun". From these students, fun is the ultimate commendation.

For my colleagues in music education who frown upon studies that emphasize the utilitarian aspects of music and not the aesthetic value of it, my comment is this: Nonmusical outcomes are a beautiful byproduct of teaching the aesthetic value of music. It is through being a part of something so creative, so beautiful, so enriching to the emotional aspects of self, that students are able to feel better about their school and most importantly, about themselves. The utilitarian and aesthetic aspects of music are not mutually exclusive.

Can the school really be expected to cope with the violence, bigotry, poverty, family situations that these children experience? Are we trying to impinge values upon these children? Critics of studies and programs such as this one would say that we are going beyond the bounds of our responsibilities. The debate has become irrelevant. The fact is, these children are depending upon the school. If we do not intervene and try to provide an environment that enables them to grow intellectually, emotionally, and socially, then our society as we know it will decay from within as the human persona becomes that of an angry, self-defeating creature.

In the words of Anderson (cited in Mosby, 1971):

Great mountains are cracked by tiny quantities of water. No isolated small detail of healthy behavior is futile because man is a society and cannot live unto himself. Other people are always affected by everything

we do, and everything we do is determined by what we conceive ourselves to be. (p. 168)

Commentary

Since music has so much to do with the molding of our character, it is necessary that we teach it to our children.

Aristotle

As I write this, a Beethoven symphony softly plays in the background. Also, as I write this, school budgets are being slashed, and one of the first items to be redlined is music. Throughout all school levels there is a prevailing attitude that music is a frill, a non-essential for the education of children, an "extra-curricular" activity contingent upon funding.

The following scenes I have observed in a school: A third grader struggles with reading a book on a pre-primer level; a fourth grader rocks in his chair and cries over and over, "I can't"; another fourth grader laments after attending a recital by a concert pianist, "It's too bad that black people can't learn to play the piano like that"; a fifth grader does not cry, for crying is a sign of weakness. Besides, the last time she cried, she was beaten with an extension cord. What does this have to do with music? Everything. Learning to read, learning to be successful, learning that cultural diversity spurs personal growth not inhibits it, learning that emotions can be freed in productive ways are only a part of the value of the musical experience. These are not non-essential skills.

Schools are now charged with educating the whole child. This does not mean stuffing a child full of information that will be on a test. What about the emotional side of that student? What about the student who is creative? How does that help a child understand what beauty is? Does the inability to perform on a test mean that that child is a throw-away? "The current classroom format and instructional methodology are generally the same as they've always been and no longer meet the needs of today's

students" (Friedland, 1992, p.99) Virtually every job, every action calls for a certain degree of use of the creative mind. The noted educational expert Edmonds (1982) commented:

Well, from a pedagogical point of view, that's not a very sound way to teach basic skills. One of the most effective programs in the United States is 'Teaching Through the Arts.' Teaching basic skills does not imply some rigid, mechanical approach. You are more likely to be effective if you go about it in flexible, responsive, inventive ways (p. 14).

Shuler (1991) stated:

Neither the nature of the back to basics curriculum nor the traditional method of delivering instruction appeals to at-risk students, and recent trends toward 'streamlining curricula' by omitting appealing but 'nonessential' subjects can only make this situation worse (p. 30).

From the times of the Old Testament and the ancient civilizations of China and Japan, music has been an integral part of the education and total well-being of humans. The fact is, any study of a civilization includes a close examination of the music of that civilization, for it affords a true representation of the heart of the civilization; its attitudes; its priorities; its emotions; its sense of commitment to the betterment of its people. Yet today, educational "professionals" are saying it costs too much to teach that to our children. The question is, can we afford not to teach it?

I have taught music for 16 years and have had students from age 5 to 45. My goal has never been to discover that rare musical genius, but has been to give students, no matter what the age, an opportunity to personally experience the depth, breadth, and beauty of music, and to present an opportunity for all, no matter what level of ability, to obtain success through a musical venture. Out of these 16 years, the last three have been the hardest, the most humbling, and the most rewarding.

The response of the children at Chandler to music has been a revelation to all who have witnessed it. I have seen children go from a depressed and sullen state, to smiling, clapping, happy children singing in the hallways, singing in the classrooms. Why? Because they were playing instruments, they were listening to and watching

professional musicians, they were learning to sing songs. I have seen children who have never been successful at any classroom endeavor receive praise from the staff, their peers, their parents, and people in the community. Nothing can compare to seeing the sheer joy on the face of a child who has made music with an autoharp, a guitar, a tambourine. If they can be successful in the music room, they can be successful in other endeavors. It is a matter of giving them the opportunity, stating that you believe in them, giving them the tools to do it, and then sitting back and letting it happen in their own way, in their own time, and with their own understanding. Music has an integrating power on individuals and on groups: A withdrawn child relaxes his guard and is more willing to participate with others; the hostile child becomes less aggressive.

To those administrators and school boards who say that music is too expensive, my response is this: The price we pay later is greater. When students are not allowed to vent emotions in positive ways, when they are not allowed to use their creativity in positive ways, they will seek other outlets, and many times those outlets are detrimental to themselves and to society.


Music is one of the most magnificent manifestations of our heritage, our culture. The means by which it is able to express the emotions of daily life, the way it can touch the human spirit cannot be equaled. To deprive children of this experience is to subject them to a life devoid of the extraordinary capabilities of the human spirit and the human mind. They are mere shells of what they truly can be. To say that there is not enough money to give our children this gift is indefensible. We must help our school leaders, school boards, and government officials to remember that what may seem important at the moment, often pales in significance with time.

In the words of Maslow (1971):

Effective education in music, in art, in dancing and rhythm, is intrinsically far closer than the usual core curriculum to intrinsic education. . . . Education is learning to grow, learning to choose and what not to

choose. In this realm of intrinsic learning I think the arts are so close to our psychological and biological core, that rather than think of these courses as a sort of whipped cream or luxury, they must become basic experiences in education. (pp. 178-179).

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION LOG

Phase 1--Begin September 1, 1992, End March 19, 1993

Secured permission from school district
 Secured permission from building principal
 Selected purposive sample
 Secured permission from students in sample and their parents
 Students began person journals
 Researcher began recording observations in journal
 Two outside observers began recording observations in journal
 Administered music aptitude test to all 4th and 5th grade students
 Began collecting technical literature: past achievement test scores, demographic information regarding school--population, ethnographic information, mobility rate, Federal funding status, etc.
 Administered self-concept instrument to sample
 Semi-structured interviews February and March: building principal, four teachers, one parent
 Unitized interviews, student journals, researcher's journal
 Established provisional categories

Phase 2--Begin March 20, 1993, End June 8, 1993

Readministered self-concept instrument
 Continue collecting technical literature--current achievement test scores, current achievement levels of purposive sample, etc.
 Continued researcher's observations and notations in journal
 Semi-structured interviews April: building counselor, nine teachers, seven parents
 Semi-structured interviews in May: three teachers, five parents, students in purposive sample, top district administrator, four follow-up teachers
 Semi-structured interviews in June: building principal, residence counselor

Final Analysis and Interpretation

Put verbatim text of interviews, all journals on The Ethnograph computer program, establish categories
 Preliminary theorizing--sub-categories and linked to a larger category
 Write narrative of sub-categories
 Write narrative outline
 Write case study draft
 Member checks, revision of draft
 Audit trial; final draft of case study

Interview Log

2/23-principal
3/10-teacher
3/16-teacher

4/2-teacher
4/12-teacher
4/15-parent
4/15-parent
4/16-parent
4/20-teacher
4/23-parent
4/26-teacher
4/29-school counselor

5/6-parent
5/7-teacher
5/11-students
5/13-teacher
5/14-parent
5/18-students
5/19-teacher follow-up
5/19-district administrator

6/4-principal follow-up

3/2-teacher
3/13-parent
3/30-teacher

4/7-teacher
4/13-teacher
4/15-parent
4/16-parent
4/16-parent
4/21-teacher
4/26-teacher
4/27-teacher

5/7-parents
5/7-teacher
5/12-teacher follow-up
5/13-students
5/18-teacher follow-up
5/19-parent
5/19-teacher follow-up
5/20-students

6/9-residence counselor

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION CORRESPONDENCE

Dr. Jim Sheffield
Director of Research
Highland Public Schools

Subject: Permission to conduct research for doctoral dissertation

This is a written request for permission from the Highland Public Schools Research Committee to conduct a study in Chandler Elementary School for the school year 1992-1993. The study is for completion of a doctorate in educational administration from Oklahoma State University.

The study proposed is a qualitative study on the effects of participation in a music curriculum on the self-esteem of at-risk students. The study will involve not more than 20 4th and 5th grade students who have been selected via pre-determined criteria for a special performance group, the Jazz Cats. This group has been a part of the music program at Chandler since the 1990-1991 school year. Parental permission for student inclusion in the study will be required. The parents will provide, with their approval, demographic information on the role of music in the home and parent involvement with their child's self-concept in the home environment. This information will be gathered by the researcher outside of school hours.

The students will keep a reflective diary consisting of open-ended questions regarding emotions, attitudes, reflections on the musical group and their roles in that group. The diary entries will be of not more than one page in length for each entry, and not more than two entries per week, except for times when the group has had a formal performance, either in school or outside of school, at which time an extra entry will be made for reflections on how the individual feels about the performance. Students will write in the diaries (which the researcher will provide) after rehearsals, held during recess time as has been the case in previous years with the principal's approval, after performances, or during home room study period with the home room teacher's permission.

The students will take the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale measurement instrument at the beginning and again at the end of the study. This will be given during one of the first rehearsals. Scores from a musical aptitude test given to all 4th and 5th grade students as part of the regular music classroom curriculum will also be used in the study. Other technical literature that will be used are student grades, achievement test scores, and absenteeism and mobility rates.

Demographic information regarding the school location, size, population, etc. will also be collected.

The faculty and principal will be interviewed in both a structured and non-structured format by the researcher. These interviews will take place after school hours at the convenience of each individual. One teacher, with consent, will serve as an outside observer to note the researcher's role in the building of self-esteem in the students, since the researcher is also the music instructor at the school. Interaction between this observer and the researcher will take place after school hours. The researcher will keep a journal on personal observations pertinent to the study.

Anonymity will be granted as completely as possible in a study of this nature. Pseudonyms will be used for each student and teacher in the study. Starting date for the study is middle fall term, 1992, with an ending date of middle to late spring, 1993. The principal of the school has granted permission for the study to take place.

Your time and consideration in this matter are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Christee L. Jenlink
Music/Speech Arts Instructor
Chandler Elementary School

Dear Parent:

_____ has been chosen to be a member of the Chandler Jazz Cats. The Jazz Cats is a select singing group from Chandler school that performs at various functions throughout the school year in many different places around Highland.

Your child was chosen because of his/her talent, positive attitude, and willingness to work hard. Your support is essential to making this a positive, lasting experience for your child. We are planning many exciting things for the group this year that will give the students involved opportunity to develop their talents and self-esteem while representing their school.

Please sign the bottom of this letter to indicate that your child has your permission to be a part of the Chandler Jazz Cats. Thank you.

Christee L. Jenlink
Music Teacher
Chandler Elementary School

Ronald Poe
Principal

_____ has permission to be in the Chandler Jazz Cats for the school year 1992-93.

Parent's Signature

Date Signed

Dear Parent:

I am doing a study on the effects of music on the self-esteem of elementary students and the students who are to be included in the study are those who are members of the Jazz Cats singing group at Chandler Elementary.

The study will consist of the students keeping a journal (diary) of their feelings and attitudes about Jazz Cats throughout the school year, interviews with the students and their parents, taking a self-concept test, and studying the progress of their grades during the time they are in the singing group. The students' and parent's real names will not be used in the study as privacy will be protected.

The Research Committee of the Highland Public Schools and the principal of Chandler Elementary have approved the study. It is hoped that what is learned from this study will enable us to meet the needs of our children, particularly regarding their self-esteem; that is, how they feel about themselves. Your help in this project is greatly appreciated, as ultimately all of us want to help our children as they go through their school years preparing for their future.

The enclosed form states that as parent/guardian you have granted permission for your child to be included in this study. If at any time you wish to withdraw your child from the study, you may do so. If you have any questions, please call me at Chandler Elementary. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Christee L. Jenlink
Music Instructor
Chandler Elementary School

I hereby give permission to Christee L. Jenlink, music instructor at Chandler Elementary, to include my child in the study on the effects of music on the self-esteem of elementary students. I understand that all names will be changed and the privacy of the students and I as parent will be protected. I also understand that I may withdraw my child from the study at any time and that the study has been approved by the Research Committee of Highland Public Schools and the principal of Chandler Elementary.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Dear Student:

I am studying the music program at Chandler Elementary and especially the Jazz Cats. The goal is to determine what effects being a member of a group like the Jazz Cats have on students.

As members of the Jazz Cats, I request your help in this study. I will need you to keep a journal (diary) that you will write in stating how you feel after rehearsals and performances. Also, you will take a self-concept test and a musical aptitude test.

All of your journal entries and the results of the self-concept test and the musical aptitude test will be kept confidential; that is, secret. Any names that are used, including yours, will be changed so that when the study is completed, anyone reading the study will not be able to figure out who the individuals in the study are.

The next page states that you, as a member of the Jazz Cats, have given permission to be included in this study. If you wish to not be included at any time, you may pull out of the study without anyone knowing.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Christee L. Jenlink
Music Instructor
Chandler Elementary

I give my permission to Christee L. Jenlink, music instructor at Chandler Elementary School, to include myself as part of a study on music at our school. I understand that no real names will be used and that the study will be done in such a way that my identity can not be distinguished. I also understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without anyone knowing.

Student Signature

Date

Dear Parent:

I am continuing the work that I began last fall concerning the benefits of a student being a member of a group like the Jazz Cats of Chandler Elementary and how being in such a group can affect how students feel about themselves.

So that I can complete this work, I need your help. I need about 30 minutes of your time so that I can talk to you about your view of your child being a member of the Jazz Cats and any advantages or disadvantages of such a group.

The time that I need from you can be done at school or in your home during the evening or on a Saturday. As I said, it will only take 30 minutes of your time and the things we learn can be used to help many other students in the years to come.

On the next page, please mark when it would be the best for me to talk with you and if it would be easier in your home or at school. Parent-teacher conferences will be held April 15 and 16, and if one of those days would work, just let me know and we will schedule a time that is good for you. I will contact you first to set a time and day that will work out for you.

I very much appreciate your help in this work. What we learn will not only help the students at Chandler, but will also help many other students in Highland by giving them opportunities at their schools that will help them to feel better about themselves as students and as people.

Thank you.

Christee L. Jenlink
Music Instructor
Chandler Elementary

_____ I will be able to come to the school to talk.

_____ I will come during conferences, Thursday, April 15.

_____ I will come during conferences, Friday, April 16.

_____ I will come before or afterschool on a day to be decided.

_____ It will be best for you to come to my home.

Phone Number (Home) _____

Phone Number (Work) _____

Home Address _____

THANK YOU

APPENDIX C

**SAMPLE OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS FOR
STUDENT JOURNALS**

(After rehearsals)

1. Because of the way I feel, I want to _____
2. I feel good because _____
3. I feel badly because _____
4. When I am in Jazz Cats practice, I feel _____

(After performances)

1. Today's performance was _____
2. After today's performance I feel _____
3. The next time we perform I hope _____

APPENDIX D

**SAMPLE JOURNAL ENTRIES: STUDENTS
AND RESEARCHER**

Student Entries (samples were recorded "as is"):

5/24: I had fun in practice today.

10/8: I had fun. I have fun everytime we practice. I have a great time being in the bluenotes.

10/9: I have fun working on songs. I am glad I am in the bluenotes.

10/12: I feel like I did better on opening my mouth to sing. I know we are going to be a good group.

10/13: I like being in the bluenotes. I had a great time.

10/15: I am glad we are doing a new song. I am upset because we didn't have practice. I wanted to practice more before the assembly.

10/16: I like the new song were going to be a group of people. We are going to bet along.

10/19: I had fun. I have fun every time we sing.

10/20: I feel great about performing tomorrow.

Date?: I had fun performing.

10/27: I had fun today.

10/28: I had fun practicing.

10/29:L We are fast at learning new song.

10/30: I had fun.

11/2: It was fun.

11/5: I had fun.

11/6: I had fun.

11/9: I had fun.

11/10: I have fun practicing our songs. I think it will help us sing much better.

11/11: I think were going to do great at UCAT.

11/12: Today I will practice and do very good.

11/12: I had fun at UCAT. I did pretty good.

3/31: BECAUSE OF THE WAY I FEEL I WANT TO: Do the best I can. This is one of the best days I have ever had.

4/1: I feel good--like there is a fire just lit up in me.

4/2: Good, happy, glad, and hungry.

4/5: Get good grades and stay in Blue Notes.

4/7: I FEEL GOOD BECAUSE: I am in the blue notes.

4/9: HOW DO I FEEL ABOUT MYSELF AFTER BLUE NOTE PRACTICE? I feel good about how good I am.

4/13: WHAT DOES THE SONG "WE ARE THE WORLD" MEAN? We are all apart of this world.

4/15: Happy, excited, and nice.

4/19: I am going to work hard on my songs.

4/21: Good, happy, joyful, and funny.

4/22: I will put it in two words: I'm nurvice.

4/23: I feel better.

4/26: I get to show my talent.

4/27: HOW DO I FEEL ABOUT MYSELF AFTER BLUE NOTE PRACTICE? I really feel good.

4/28: I would like to accomplish the pride I want.

4/29: I feel good.

4/20: I praid and it came true.

5/10: I feel proud and nice.

5/12: Today was funny because Cary and Damarco held hands.

5/17: I have learned Heal the World real well and I feel good.

5/19: We worked hard and I had fun.

5/21: I am confused about the graduation.

5/24: I an nervice about Graduation, but it was fun.

Researcher Entries:

4/15: I talked later to the class about the fact that we really cared about them; that they had the intelligence and talent to be anything they wanted to be, but they needed to start developing self-discipline. I also stated that the days of being an able-bodied person and sitting home and collecting welfare were coming to an end, and that welfare was intended to help those who wanted to help themselves. I asked one boy how he was going to pay for that TV and the cable to run it. I was getting little response. I asked if he was going to steal. "No," he said. I asked if he was going to sell drugs. "Yes," he replied. I asked him if he realized that people who sold drugs usually ended up in jail or dead, and he acted like it didn't really matter. Are they afraid of making themselves better? Are they afraid of rejecting their class? I had three interviews for conferences. One parent was outside the room while I was doing another, and either did not or could not wait. I was hoping to get five or six, but at least three is a start. The three were interesting. I had never had personal chats with the three mothers, and it was interesting. They seemed to like the school. For two of them, though, it's the neighborhood they don't like. Two were white; one was black. The stories were interesting. Their perspectives were interesting.

4/16: I interviewed Tom's mother and it went pretty well. She was the only interview that I really anticipated having this morning, but Jan's mother and Rob's mother showed up and I was very surprised. The recreation center coordinator was helping to get the parents to the right teachers, and when Ms. Murrow was announced, no one in the room could believe she was there. We did have more parents show up because we were holding report cards and not passing them out until conferences. (See notes after interviews of Allen, Farris, Jack, Bentley, Foster and Murrow for my feelings on these.)

4/19: The Vo-Tech brought over the other song they want the students to sing for the program. They are going to get the students new shirts, which is good. Stephanie seemed pretty okay today. Jonathan was very helpful. Sue was gone. I want the dancers to dance for the assembly Friday. I would also like the group to sing. I keep trying to impress upon them the importance of these two performances. I found out today that the mayor is going to be at the Vo-Tech dedication, and also Tom Peterson. At the end of school today, Tom pulled a fourth grade girl's pants down. His mother was here to pick him up for the speech contest and she was told. She was obviously upset. When discussing the punishment, she mentioned how she was afraid to spank him because of "child abuse." This is the second time she mentioned this, and the third time I've had a parent mention it. Tom will probably not get to go on the Jazz Cats' trips next week. The good news was that Al, Mike, Greg, and Pamela made the finals. They were very proud, especially Pamela, as she won first place. Pamela's mom was there, and was quite pleased. Mike's aunt and Tom's mom were there also. I think Tom felt badly that he didn't do a little more. Rehearsal went great. They were excited and they really sounded good. Mary and Nancy remarked on how good they sounded. They were smiling and were really enjoying themselves. I was especially glad to see Jan excited. They keep begging me to tell them what the surprise was from Vo-Tech, and I just said they would have to wait. They begged and begged. It was fun to tease them. The only bad rehearsal spot was Johnny. He was not interested, and I had a feeling that he wouldn't come because he hadn't turned in his permission slip, and past history indicated that when that has happened, he doesn't show up. Indeed he didn't. The rumor was that he was going to Texas and he wasn't at school on Friday. I just

wish he trusted me enough to tell me. Tom showed up 45 minutes before we left. The others came in between 5:30 and 5:45. Susan didn't show. They were all excited and talked a lot and ran around a lot. We rehearsed, then I gave them their new T-shirts. They were very proud. The van took all the students, but I wanted to drive my car, so Rachel rode with me. Earlier I had picked up Andrew because his mom came by and asked me to as her car was broken. I was glad to help and she appreciated it. On the way back from picking up Andrew, I saw Shannon and Jamie walking, so I picked them up too. Shannon has really been hanging around me. I think she admires me a lot right now. On the way to the church, I asked Rachel about middle school and her dad, and she talked rather freely, but she never mentioned the rape. She did mention that when he was here at winter holidays, she was not supposed to go with him without her mother's knowledge. I told her that she would do will in middle school because she was much more confident of herself.

APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

Date: 06-18-93

IRB#: ED-93-078

Proposal Title: THE EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATION IN A MUSICAL GROUP
ON THE SELF-ESTEEM OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

Principal Investigator(s): Ed Harris, Christee Jenlink

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW
BOARD AT NEXT MEETING.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A
CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR
BOARD APPROVAL. ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO
BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for
Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Modifications received and approved.

Signature:

Maria S. Tilley
Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: June 21, 1993

2

VITA

CHRISTEE L. JENLINK

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

**Thesis: THE RELATIONAL ASPECTS OF A SCHOOL, A MUSIC PROGRAM, AND
AT-RISK STUDENT SELF-ESTEEM: A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Alva, Oklahoma, August 2, 1954, the daughter of Verlin and Jeane Nance.

Education: Graduated from Carmen-Dacoma High School, Carmen, Oklahoma, in May, 1972; received Bachelor of Arts in Music Education from Northwestern Oklahoma State University in May, 1976; received Master of Education degree from Northwestern Oklahoma State University in May, 1978; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in December, 1993.

Professional Experience: Band/Vocal Music Director, Carmen-Dacoma Public Schools, Carmen, Oklahoma, 1978-87; Instructor in Music, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Alva, Oklahoma, 1987-88; Instructor in General Music, St. Augustine Catholic School, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1988-90; Instructor in General Music, St. Mary's Catholic School, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1989-90; Music/Speech Arts Instructor, Lindsey Elementary, Tulsa, Public Schools, 1990; Music and Speech Arts Teacher, Chandler Elementary School, 1990 to present.

Professional Organizations: Music Educators' National Conference, Oklahoma Music Educators' Association, Phi Beta Mu Music Fraternity, American Educational Research Association.