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THE EFFECT OF POSITIVE STROKING ON  
THE SELF CONCEPT OF EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
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degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY  
JOHN QUINN  
Norman, Oklahoma  
1977

THE EFFECT OF POSITIVE STROKING ON

THE SELF CONCEPT OF EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS

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The Effect Of Positive Stroking On  
The Self-Concept Of Eighth Grade Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if either teacher-praise or self-praise can enhance the reported self-concept of Eighth Grade students. Sixty-nine S's were randomly assigned to one of three groups. All S's did the same exercises for one week. One group received three praise statements each day from the teacher. A second group said the same praise statements to themselves. A third group received no praise. It was hypothesized that some praise would be more effective than no praise, teacher-praise would be more effective than either self-praise or no praise, and that self-praise would be better than no praise. A one-way analysis of variance indicated no significant mean effect of treatment.

### Introduction

School districts throughout the United States are adding self-concept enhancement as a major goal for their pupils. A recent survey in California indicated that every school district in the state included the enhancement of self-concept as a primary goal for its children (Canfield & Wells, 1976).

Many articles have been published concerning techniques for enhancing self-concept. Of particular interest and concern for the author are those which deal with praise. Several studies (Coopersmith, 1972; Hedges and Nicolette, 1972; Jew and Mattocks, 1974) suggest that "praise" is an effective enhancer of self-concept. Their conclusions are based upon subjective observation. Felker and Thomas (1971) concluded that self-referrent praise is an effective enhancer based upon correlational studies. Since it is inappropriate to determine a cause and effect relationship between praise and self-concept through observation or correlational research, it is important that the relationship between these variables be studied experimentally. The purpose of the present study was to investigate the assumption that praise is an effective enhancer of self-concept by using experimental methodology.

According to Transactional Analysis Theory, a person's self-concept begins to develop from birth. Everyone has the need, or as Harris (1967) calls it, the "hunger" for these strokes from significant others. Self-concept results from



the feedback or stroking from these significant others. Strokes are defined as any acts which show recognition of another's presence (James and Jongeward, 1971).

Stroking can be non-verbal, in the form of physical touch, facial expression, gesture, or any act that acknowledges that one is there. Stroking can also be verbal in the form of spoken words which acknowledge that one is there.

Stroking can be positive, enhancing the self-concept of the recipient and conveying the feeling of "I'm OK," or it can be negative, conveying the message "I'm not OK," thus being destructive to the self-concept of the recipient (James and Jongeward, 1971).

Infants will not grow normally without the non-verbal stroking of others through daily intimate activities such as diapering, feeding, burping and fondling. Infants who are neglected, ignored, or do not experience touch, suffer mental and physical deterioration (Boyd, 1972).

According to Boyd (1972), as a child grows older, the early primary need for physical, non-verbal stroking is modified to a need for verbal stroking or recognition. The form of recognition, whether positive or negative, stimulates the brain of the recipient to verify to him that he is there and is alive.

Negative or positive strokes may stimulate a child's body chemistry, but it takes positive strokes to promote

emotional health and an OK feeling. Maintenance strokes are simple transactions such as a handshake. They lack meaningful content but they do give recognition (James and Jongeward, 1971).

Positive strokes are usually complementary transactions which are directly appropriate and relevant. They leave the person feeling significant, enhancing his sense of well-being, conveying the message that he is "OK." Authentic stroking nourishes the person.

Positive strokes may be expressions of affection or appreciation; they can be compliments about the recipient's competencies, thus helping him become more aware of his individual skills and resources.

There are four general "life positions" recognized into which a child can be categorized: "I'm OK--You're OK;" "I'm OK--You're not OK;" "I'm not OK--You're OK;" and "I'm not OK--You're not OK." The position a child assumes will depend upon the kind of stroking he receives. The older he becomes, the more resistance there will be toward changing the basic position (Harris, 1967).

Positive stroking is most effective in creating an "I'm OK" position when it comes from a significant other (Boyd, 1972). Parents, as well as teachers, are very significant others to children. Some children, however,

spend more hours and have closer relationships with teachers than with parents, in which case positive stroking from the teachers can be very enhancing to a child's self-concept.

A child deprived of positive stroking from parents or significant others is likely to have a low self-concept and the "I'm not OK" feeling. According to Harris (1967), persons not receiving enough positive strokes often provoke negatives ones, because negative attention seems better than none at all. By becoming disobedient or delinquent, children invite negative strokes. Being disobedient in a classroom invites negative strokes and attention from the teacher.

"Discounting" is the lack of attention or else negative attention, both telling an individual that he is not OK (Harris, 1967). A person who is ignored, teased, laughed at or ridiculed is being discounted. These acts lead to personality problems in the individual and to poor self-concept.

When strokes from others are not available, a person can produce the feeling of "I'm OK" by stroking himself (Boyd, 1972). Self-praise is better than no praise. Children who already feel OK about themselves and have a strong self-concept benefit much by praising themselves for doing a good job on something if no teacher or other significant person is available to do this (Boyd, 1972).

However, a child already needs to have a good self-concept in order to stroke himself. A child feeling not OK about himself strokes himself in a negative manner, further reinforcing that he is not OK.

Even though enhancing students' self-concept is a major goal of school systems, much in our educational system is detrimental in achieving this goal. Many strokes received by students are negative ones. School systems still place so much emphasis on grades, usually in a negative fashion. For instance, corrections are written in red ink on the student's paper, showing the number of incorrect answers rather than the number of correct ones, emphasizing the negative. Often teachers write remarks on student papers which are criticisms rather than praise statements or helpful suggestions. A paper with such negative strokes often produces in the student a feeling of failure, not one of encouragement. A child already having a low self-concept will be discouraged from trying harder.

Behavior problems are usually handled with negative strokes such as, "Sit down!" "Go to the Principal!" "Can't you do anything right?" instead of positive ones which would encourage desirable behavior. Students with poor self-concepts often are behavior problems in school and misbehave to gain recognition.

The students who receive the most positive strokes achieve well, are nicely dressed, or do not present behavior problems. They usually already have a good self-concept and are capable of stroking themselves more. The student having a poor self-concept may be very shy and an under-achiever (Boyd, 1972). In his case, the frustration of being discounted and not receiving positive strokes may cause him to withdraw and give up trying to achieve because of feeling he will never be able to please the teacher.

A teacher having a poor self-concept may find it difficult to give positive strokes to others. A person feeling "not OK" about himself finds it difficult to feel OK about someone else, and consequently tends to hand out negative strokes rather than positive ones.

Another problem in many classrooms is the large pupil-teacher ratio. With so many responsibilities to care for, a teacher might find it difficult to concentrate on positive stroking.

While the goal of school systems to enhance the self-concept of students is most worthy, it will be very difficult to achieve unless the type of feedback and stroking is changed to a positive one.

This study will implement two kinds of positive stroking (teacher-praise and self-praise) in the classroom to determine if either is effective in enhancing the self-concept of students.

Consequently, the hypotheses of this study are:

- 1) Some praise is more effective in enhancing self-concept than no praise.
- 2) Praise from significant others is more effective than self-praise.
- 3) Praise from significant others is more effective than no praise.
- 4) Self-praise is more effective than no praise.

## Methodology

### Subjects

The initial sample consisted of seventy-one Eighth Grade students. Two students were excluded from the analysis because of absence, so that the final sample consisted of sixty-nine students. However, the two students participated in the exercises during the days they were present. The sixty-nine students were Caucasian, from the lower middle socio-economic class, of average intelligence and ranging in age from thirteen to fifteen years.

### Procedure

Subjects were assigned randomly to one of three groups (teacher-praise, self-referrent praise, no praise).

The teacher introduced the author as a friend who would be visiting the class each day during the week. The students were also informed that during this week they would be doing some written exercises which would be somewhat different. Before each day's exercise, the teacher reminded the S's not to share their responses with anyone else, and that upon completion of the exercise, they were to do other schoolwork.

Each exercise took approximately ten minutes to complete.

Upon completion of the written part, the teacher took each student individually into the hall, while the author remained in the classroom with the others.

All students did the same exercises, as follows, for four days:

#### First Session

The instructor asked the students to write down three of the nicest things they had done for someone.

#### Second Session

The instructor asked the students to write down three things they were proudest of in life.

#### Third Session

The instructor asked the students to write down three things they had done in school that were special to them.

#### Fourth Session

The instructor asked the students to write down three positive aspects concerning themselves. The task was illustrated by citing the following examples:

"I'm a good student."

"I'm friendly."

"I like people."



In addition to doing these exercises, each student of Experimental Group I was taken individually from the classroom into the hall. The teacher said three praise statements to the student per day for four days, as follows:

First Session

"You are so considerate of others!"

"What a kind thing to have done!"

"You are a thoughtful person!"

Second Session

"You have a right to feel proud of that!"

"That's fantastic!"

"You are an important person!"

Third Session

"You have a lot of determination!"

"That's great!"

"That should make you feel very special!"

Fourth Session

"That describes how important you are!"

"Very good!"

"You certainly are a very special person!"

Each student of Experimental Group II, in addition to doing the exercises, was taken individually from the classroom into the hall. The students applied self-referrent praise by reading aloud in the presence of the teacher the following statements printed on a card:

First Session

I am so considerate of others!  
What a kind thing I did!  
I am a thoughtful person!

Second Session

I have a right to feel proud of that!  
That's fantastic!  
I am an important person!

Third Session

I have a lot of determination!  
That's great!  
That should make me feel very special!

Fourth Session

That describes how important I am!  
Very good!  
I certainly am a very special person!

Students in the Control Group were also taken out of the classroom individually. They did not receive praise from the teacher or themselves. The teacher looked at their written exercises without comment or response.

On the final day, following the fourth session, the Piers-Harris Self Concept Test was administered to the subjects.

#### Instrument

The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale, used to determine the subjects' self-concept, consists of eighty descriptive sentences. Each person circles T or F as it applies to himself. This instrument was chosen because: (1) it was standardized on a similar sample as the one in this study; (2) it provides one global assessment of self-concept; (3) it is relatively inexpensive to use; and (4) it is easy and quick to administer and score.

The Kuder-Richardson Formula 21 was applied to determine internal consistency. Coefficients ranged from .78 to .93. Spearman-Brown odd-even formula was also applied to grades 6 and 10 with resulting coefficients of .90 and .87 (Piers-Harris, 1969).

Test-retest results were conducted to determine the stability of the test. A retest following a four month interval resulted in a coefficient of .77 for 244 fifth graders (Piers-Harris, 1969). The scale is thus judged to have good

internal consistency and adequate stability.

Construct validity was established by Mayer (1965) and Cox (1966). Scores on the Piers-Harris were correlated with scores on the Lipsitt's Children's Self-Concept Scale (1958) for a sample of 98 special education students, 12 to 16 years of age. He obtained a correlation of .68 ( $p < .01$ ).

Cox correlated scores on the Piers-Harris with Health Problems on the S.R.A. Junior Inventory. The sample consisted of 97 sixth to ninth grade students. He found correlations of -.48 ( $p < .01$ ) and -.64 ( $p < .01$ ) respectively.

Miller (1966) correlated the Piers-Harris with the Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale. The results ranged from -.54 ( $p < .01$ ) to -.69 ( $p < .01$ ).

### Results

Table I indicates the mean self-concept score for each of the three levels of treatment: control, teacher-praise and self-praise. The teacher-praise group (Experimental I) obtained a mean self-concept score of 59.82, which was greater than the self-praise group (Experimental II) mean of 54.52, and greater than the no-praise (control) group mean of 53.08.

A one-way analysis of variance was employed to determine if a significant main effect of treatment had been obtained. Table II indicates there was no significant main effect of treatment ( $df=2,66$ ;  $F=1.414$ ).

### Discussion

The following considerations are possible reasons for the hypotheses not being supported. According to T. A., one makes a decision concerning self-concept at a very early age. As one becomes older, self-concept becomes more resistant to change. Consequently, the younger one is, the more effective positive stroking from significant others will be. Adolescents have self-concepts well entrenched which resist change. Since the self-concept of younger S's is less established, there would be a better chance of obtaining significant results if the study were done with younger S's.

It is possible that the time period in this study, four days, was too short for a significant change in self-concept to occur. A longer time period might have been more effective in working through resistance and thus enhancing self-concept. This, however, would result in a loss of time from teaching core curriculum, and permission to implement the exercises for an extended period would be extremely difficult to obtain.

Lack of significant results may have been partly due to the Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale not being sensitive enough to detect changes in the S's self-concept. There is no instrument that can discern accurately one's inner feelings. Consequently, only the "reported" self-concept was measured.

It is possible that a difference existed between what was reported and what was really felt.

Another reason for non-significant results may be that those students with initial low self-concept responded favorably to teacher-praise but not self-praise, since it is difficult for someone who feels Not OK to give himself positive strokes. Those S's with high self-concepts might have gained little from either approach since they already felt OK about themselves. This might explain why the self-praise group had a much larger standard deviation than the other groups.

An additional factor could have been whether the student had positive or negative feelings toward the teacher. Those S's with negative feelings might have discounted the teacher's attempts at stroking, while those with positive feelings may have responded more favorably.

The above discussion suggests the following recommendations for future research in the area of self-concept:

- (1) S's should be chosen from the elementary grades.
- (2) An optimal period for treatment should be determined.
- (3) A measuring device should be developed to determine if the students consider a particular teacher to be a "significant person."

- (4) A pre-test should be administered so that gain scores can be determined for S's with low and high self-concepts. This might allow one to detect an interaction between the treatment and the initial level of self-concept.
- (5) It is strongly recommended that colleges of education place much more emphasis on the teacher's role in the enhancement of the student's self-concept.

TABLE I

Means, Number of Subjects, and Standard Deviations of Self-Concept Scores

Treatment	Mean	N	SD
Control (no praise)	53.08	23	11.46
Experimental I (teacher-praise)	59.82	23	13.82
Experimental II (self-praise)	54.52	23	17.10

TABLE II

One Way Analysis of Variance of Self-Concept Scores

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Between Groups	579.625	2	289.813	1.414	0.249
Within Groups	13,526.938	66	204.954		
Totals	14,106.563	68			



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## Prospectus

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### Statement Of The Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine if either positive reinforcement (praise) or self referrent praise can effect a positive change in the reported self concept of eighth grade students. Self-concept is defined as those characteristics measured by the Piers-Harris Childrens' Self Concept Scale.

The present study will be limited to three Eighth Grade classes of a Junior High School in the Custer County School District. The students are Caucasian and from the lower-middle socio-economic class.

### Introduction

School districts throughout the United States are adding self-concept enhancement as a major goal for their pupils. A recent survey in California indicated that every school district in the state included the enhancement of self-concept as a primary goal for its children (Canfield & Wells, 1976.)

Many articles have been published concerning techniques for enhancing self-concept. Of particular interest and concern for the author are those which deal with praise. Several studies (Coopersmith, 1972; Hedges and Nicolette, 1972; Jew and Mattocks, 1974) suggest that "praise" is an effective enhancer of self-concept. Their conclusions are based upon subjective observation. Felker and Thomas (1971) concluded that self-referrent praise is an effective enhancer based upon correlational studies. Since it is impossible to determine a cause and effect relationship between praise and self-concept through observation or correlational research, it is important that the relationship between these variables be studied experimentally. The purpose of the present study is to investigate the assumption that praise is an effective enhancer of self-concept by using experimental methodology.

### Rationale

According to Transactional Analysis Theory, a person's self-concept begins to develop from birth. Self-concept results from feedback or stroking (verbal or non-verbal) from the environment. Stroking can be either positive or negative. A person who develops a positive self-concept has received mostly positive strokes which indicate that he's "OK". Feedback is most effective when coming from "significant others." In the child's world, teachers are significant others.

When strokes from others are not available, a person can produce the feeling of "I'm OK" by stroking himself. Lack of stroking fails to enhance self-concept.

Therefore, the hypotheses of this study are:

- 1) Some praise is more effective in enhancing self-concept than no praise.
- 2) Praise from significant others is more effective than self praise.
- 3) Praise from significant others is more effective than no praise.
- 4) Self-praise is more effective than no praise.

## Methodology

### Subjects

Sixty-nine eighth grade boys and girls will serve as subjects. The subjects will be Caucasian, from the lower-middle socio-economic class, and of average intelligence.

### Procedure

Sixty-nine subjects will be randomly assigned to one of three groups of twenty-three each (Experimental Group I, Experimental Group II and Control Group.)

All students will do the same exercises the next four days. These exercises will be as follows:

#### 1st Session

The instructor will ask the students to write down three of the nicest things they have done for someone.

#### 2nd Session

The instructor will ask the students to write down three things they are proudest of in life.

### 3rd Session

The instructor will ask the students to write down three things they have done in school that are special to them.

### 4th Session

The instructor will ask the students to write down three possible aspects concerning themselves. The task will be illustrated by citing the following examples: "I'm a good student;" "I'm friendly;" and "I like people."

In addition to doing the exercises, each student of Experimental Group I will be taken individually from the classroom into the hall. The teacher will say three praise statements to the student per day for four days. Following are the praise statements to be used by the teacher:

### First Session

"You are so considerate of others!"

"What a kind thing to have done!"

"You are a thoughtful person!"

### Second Session

"You have a right to feel proud of that!"

"That's fantastic!"

"You are an important person!"



Third Session

"You have a lot of determination!"

"That's great!"

"That should make you feel very special!"

Fourth Session

"That describes how important you are!"

"Very good!"

"You certainly are a very special person!"

In addition to doing the exercises, each student of Experimental Group II will be taken individually from the classroom into the hall. Each student will apply self-referrent praise by reading to themselves the following statements printed on a card:

First Session

I am so considerate of others!  
What a kind thing I did!  
I am a thoughtful person!

Second Session

I have a right to feel proud of that!  
That's fantastic!  
I am an important person!

Third Session

I have a lot of determination!  
That's great!  
That should make me feel very special!

Fourth Session

That describes how important I am!  
Very good!  
I certainly am a very special person!

Students in the Control Group will also be taken individually into the hall but will not receive praise from the teacher or themselves. The teacher will look at their responses without responding.

On the final day, following the fourth session, the Piers-Harris Self Concept Test will be administered.

### Instrumentation

The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale will be used to determine the subjects' self-concept. It consists of 80 descriptive sentences. Each person circles T or F as it applies to himself. This instrument was chosen because:

- 1) it was standardized on a similar sample as the one in this study;
- 2) it provides one global assessment of self-concept;
- 3) it is relatively inexpensive to use; and
- 4) it is easy and quick to administer and score.

The Kuder-Richardson Formula 21 was applied to determine internal consistency. Coefficients ranged from .78 to .93. Spearman-Brown odd-even formula was also applied to grades 6 and 10 with resulting coefficients of .90 and .87.

Test-retest results were conducted to determine the stability of the test. A retest following a four-month interval resulted in a coefficient of .77 for 244 fifth graders. The scale is thus judged to have good internal consistency and adequate stability.

Construct validity was established by Mayer (1965) and Cox (1966). Scores on the Piers-Harris were compared with scores on the Lipsitt's Children's Self-Concept Scale (1958) for a sample of 98 special education students 12 to 16 years of age. He obtained a correlation of .68 ( $p < .01$ ).

Cox compared scores on the Piers-Harris with Health Problems on the S.R.A. Junior Inventory. The sample consisted of ninety-seven sixth to ninth grade students. He found correlations of  $-.48$  ( $p .01$ ) and  $-.64$  ( $p .01$ ) respectively.

Miller (1966) correlated the Piers-Harris with the Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale. The results ranged from  $-.54$  ( $p .01$ ) to  $-.69$  ( $p .01$ ).

### Design

A review of the literature with the exception of Bledsoe (1967) fails to support separating boys and girls (Sears, 1970; Captin, 1969; Piers and Harris, 1964.) However, only Piers and Harris have examined the self-concept of the grade level used in this author's study.

Consequently, this author administered the Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale to forty-nine eighth grade students which closely approximated the population to be used in this dissertation. The sample consisted of twenty-three boys and twenty-six girls of normal intelligence. The results yielded no significant difference between the girls ( $X=53.8$ ) and boys ( $X=52.4$ ). As a result, sex will not be considered as a variable.

Scores on the Piers-Harris will be analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance with three levels of treatment: control, Teacher-praise and self-praise. If a significant main effect of treatment is found, the Tukey-method will be applied to determine which means are significantly different.

The scores of those students who miss any of the sessions will not be included in the results. Consequently, the degrees of freedom will be determined following the experiment.

### Review of Literature

According to Felker (1974), a child's self-concept has an appreciable effect on his classroom achievement and total life adjustment. Much of a child's perception of himself comes from the significant others in his life, e.g. his parents and teachers.

Two types of research questions involving self-concept have been investigated. The first, using a descriptive methodology, looks at the relationship of self-concept to academic achievement. The second attempts to present procedures for improving self-concept. Research based upon the former area will be presented first, and studies concerning the latter will be presented in the second part.

The studies which concerned themselves with the relationship of self-concept to academic achievement all found a positive and significant relationship (Brookover, 1964; Cole, 1974; Williams and Cole, 1968; Gorlow, 1963; Bledsoe, 1967; Sears, 1970; Captin, 1969; Piers and Harris, 1964).

Several studies were controlled for sex as a variable (Bledsoe, 1967; Sears, 1970; Captin, 1969, Piers and Harris, 1964) while other studies were not (Brookover, 1964; Cole, 1974; Williams and Cole, 1968; Gorlow, 1963).

Two studies (Cole, 1974; Gorlow, 1963) controlled for

the students' intellectual level while the majority did not.

Most of the studies chose their subjects from the elementary grades, but Piers and Harris (1964) employed subjects from elementary through high school.

A study of one thousand and fifty seventh grade Caucasian boys and girls was conducted by Brookover (1964). The purpose of the study was to determine if the student's concept of his ability in school is significantly related to his academic performance. Scores on the Self-Concept Ability Scale were correlated with the student's grade point average. The results yielded a positive and significant ( $p < .05$ ) relationship between self-concept and grade point average.

Cole (1974) investigated the relationship of self-concept and academic achievement. The sample consisted of one hundred third grade students of average academic ability as defined by the Otis Lennon Test of Mental Ability. Each subject was also administered the Metropolitan Achievement Test and his total scores in reading, language, math and spelling were recorded. The Children's Self-Concept index was used to determine self-concept. The Spearman rank-order indicated a significant and positive relationship ( $p < .05$ ) between self-concept and all areas of achievement, except spelling.

William and Cole (1968) explored the relationship between the self-concept and academic achievement of eighty

sixth grade students. The Tennessee Self Concept Scale was administered to each pupil to determine the self-concept of the subjects. The California Achievement Test was employed to determine each child's level of functioning in reading and arithmetic. The results yielded a significant relationship ( $p < .01$ ) between self-concept and levels of reading and arithmetic.

Gorlow et. al. (1963) conducted a study using sixty-four institutionalized women with I.Q.'s ranging from 50 to 70. The Laurelton Self-Attitude Scale and the California Achievement Test were administered. The results yielded a positive and significant ( $p < .05$ ) relationship between reading, arithmetic and self-concept.

Bledsoe (1967) found that girls have a more positive self-concept than boys. Other research yields no significant difference between the self-concept of boys and girls (Sears, 1970; Captin, 1969; Piers and Harris, 1964).

Bledsoe (1967) conducted a study concerning the relationship of the self-concepts of fourth and sixth grade boys and girls in relation to their academic achievement. A random sample of two hundred and seventy-one fourth and sixth grade boys and girls served as subjects. "A Self-Concept Scale" was administered to each subject. The scale consists of thirty trait-descriptive objectives which the subject checked as characteristic of himself. The subjects were also



administered the California Achievement Test to determine their academic level of functioning. The results indicate that the girls in both grades scored significantly higher in self-concept ( $p < .01$ ) than the boys in the corresponding grades. However, correlations between self-concept and academic achievement were positive and significant ( $p < .05$ ) for boys but no significant results were obtained for girls.

Sears (1970) used eighty-four girls and seventy-five boys in the sixth grade as subjects. The Self Concept Inventory was used to measure self-concept. The Inventory consisted of forty adjectives which were to be checked "yes" or "no" as each applied to the student. The results indicated no significant mean differences between boys and girls. Correlations for both sexes between self-concept and achievement were positive and significant ( $p < .05$ ).

Captin's (1969) sample consisted of ninety girls and ninety boys from three elementary schools of a small city in New Jersey. The results yielded no significant differences in self-concept between the boys and girls. A self-report instrument consisting of fifty items was devised to measure self-concept. Correlations between scores on the self-concept instrument and Iowa Test of Basic Skills were calculated. A significant ( $p < .05$ ) relationship was obtained between self-concept and achievement for both boys and girls.

Piers and Harris (1964) conducted a comprehensive study of one thousand one hundred and eighty-three elementary and high school students. Each student was administered the Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale. The results yielded no significant difference in the self-concept of boys and girls at any age level.

### Techniques for Enhancing Self-Concept

Coopersmith (1972), Hedges and Nicolette (1972), Jew and Mattocks (1974) suggest that praise from significant others is effective in the enhancement of self-concept, while Felker (1971) emphasizes self-referrent praise and modeling. Fisher (1972) also suggests the importance of modeling in improving self-concept. Canfield and Wells (1976), Felder (1971), Coopersmith (1969) emphasize the importance of students' setting realistic goals as important to positive self-concepts.

Fisher (1972) describes a two-step lesson, to enhance self-concept, which can be implemented on the first day of school. The teacher begins by modeling the procedure for the students. She shares with the class qualities concerning herself. Fisher suggests that the teacher follow this modelling with a discussion concerning the children's hidden qualities, e.g., "those things about me which others can't see," "those things I don't want you to see," and "those things I don't want to see about myself." The teacher emphasizes the value of being able to accept one's strengths and weaknesses.

The next exercise involves a creative writing lesson. Each child is instructed to write down the following:

(1) some things which are easy for himself to see; (2) some things which he will see only after a time; (3) some things which he will never see unless others tell him. The students do not put their names on the paper. The responses are discussed by the class as a whole. No data were presented to justify the propositions.

Hedges and Nicolette (1972) used photography with their students in an attempt to enhance self-concept. The subjects were selected from elementary school children in a rural school district. The authors suggested the following basic steps: (1) Demonstrate the process of picture-taking; (2) Encourage each child to photograph whatever they wish; (3) Develop the pictures and return to child as soon as possible; (4) Discuss the pictures with the child. Praise the uniqueness of his pictures and state that it isn't necessary to take pictures which are similar to others. They contend that the children gain a feeling of accomplishment and acceptance of their uniqueness which contribute to the enhancement of self-concept.

Haak (1973) presents a procedure which is helpful for the enhancement of self-concept. The who-are-you activity is designed to help children identify factors which contribute to the way they view themselves and others. Materials needed are a chalkboard, pieces of paper and pencils for each student. The experience is divided into two phases. During the first phase, the teacher asks the children to think about their

differences and similarities. Factors for thinking about self are outlined. During the second phase, each child writes descriptive sentences about himself and a guessing game is played which facilitates both self-disclosure and feedback from others. No data were presented as to the effectiveness of this procedure.

Landry (1974) investigated the effects of a self-concept enhancement program on four-year-olds who attend nursery school. A secondary purpose was to demonstrate that developmental guidance activities which focus on self-concept enhancement can be presented effectively in an organized program to young children. The program was organized into 33 sessions covering an 11-week period. Two instruments were used to assess self-concept: the Thomas Self-Concept Value Test and the Developmental Profile. The latter was completed by the teachers. A pre-test and post-test was administered to each child. The results indicated no significant increases in self-concept scores for the control groups. A significant ( $p < .01$ ) increase in self-concept was obtained in the experimental group.

Snyder (1974) recommends that the teacher arrange the seating facilities of the classroom so that small groups of children can interact and study together. She contends that children are more open and eager to contribute in a small group setting. She suggests that the teacher pay attention

to congeniality and allow the children themselves to assist in the formation of the small groups. Each child should keep a record of his school progress. Her reasoning is that they provide within the child a sense of security and accomplishment. The teacher should make sure there is opportunity for success by having the child evaluate his record with that of a previous period rather than with his peer group. These should be regular, specified periods throughout the school year. The child should be encouraged to share his record with his parents. This provides parents with the opportunity to give support and encouragement to the child.

During the past several years Coopersmith et. al. have been concerned with those factors that contribute to the development of positive self esteem. Following an intensive study of 1,748 middle class white males, Coopersmith made the following two suggestions for teachers:

(1) the teacher must communicate that he genuinely cares about each pupil as an individual. e.g. a genuine acceptance of each child by reinforcing every success, letting him know he was missed, and including each child in class activities;

(2) the teacher should set realistic class standards that are clear and definite. These should be established at the beginning of the school year and explained to each child. In setting up classroom standards, each child's ability must be taken into consideration.

Aronin (1974) applied activity group therapy to strengthen self-concepts. Sensory-motor development was employed as the activity.

In one country, counselors met with P. E. teachers to develop a screening and remedial program. K and 1st grade children with below average coordination were identified. It was assumed that such children had or soon would have a poor self-concept, as the result of derogatory comments and acts of exclusion by their peers.

The P. E. education teachers and the counselors decided to use six tasks from the Frostig "Move-Grow-Learn" material as part of the screening process. The Frostig Developmental Test was also used as a screening device with K and 1st grade children. The remediation program was adapted from the Physical-Coordination Clinic at the University of Maryland.

Jew and Mattocks (1974) found that some children begin school with an already impaired self-concept. They contended that the teacher can have an important impact upon a child's self-concept. They draw from their own experiences and present the following suggestions for teachers in shaping self-concept:

1. Picking up cues: The teacher should be alert for cues from the child as to his perception of himself in relation to others. The authors caution teachers not to force their own goals on the child if these are conflictual with those of his home environment.

2. Promote consistency in self-concept through teacher-parent contacts: ideally, the teacher should work with the parents to prevent or alleviate anxiety, thus promoting a consistency of the child's developing self-concept.
3. Promote confidence and integration: The authors contend that the development of the child's self-concept are aided by experiences which are relatively consistent, thus permitting the child to easily differentiate between self and non-self. Confidence and integration also need to be experienced to further aid in the development of a positive self-concept.
4. Awareness of body-image: Children with a physical impairment may experience a negative or inferior self-concept. They are frequently made fun of by their peer groups. The teacher should not avoid these situations, but help the child and classmates understand the problem. They should be encouraged to cooperate with one another.
5. Learning by doing and thinking: The teacher should practice patience and not be critical of failures. A mistake should not be treated as a tragedy. The teacher can serve as a model by admitting his own mistakes. Hopefully, the children will learn from their errors and not be defeated by them.
6. The correct use of reward and punishment: Reward is more effective than punishment in promoting learning. The threat of punishment arouses anxiety, which may lead to a rigid and constricted person. However, encouragement and praise by a teacher can have a positive effect upon the child's self-concept.

Felker (1974) suggests the implementation of his Five Keys as useful guides in the enhancement of a more positive



self-concept for children. The Five Keys are as follows:

- 1) Adult models by praising himself.
- 2) Help children evaluate realistically.
- 3) Teach children to set realistic goals.
- 4) Encourage children to praise themselves.
- 5) Teach children to praise others.

Key Four is of particular interest for this study. This key stresses the importance of each child learning to reinforce himself verbally. Verbal reinforcement can be internalized and is always available to the person. These verbal reinforcements can operate in a positive circular manner.

Key Four is based upon the findings of Felker and Thomas (1971). Their results indicated a positive and significant ( $p < .01$ ) relationship between self-concept and reinforcing statements.

Sixty-six males and sixty-five females, white, fourth grade pupils served as subjects. The Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale was administered to determine each student's self-concept level. They concluded that their findings were tentative and recommended experimental studies be conducted to verify their conclusions.

Canfield and Wells (1976) describe over one hundred techniques which were designed to enhance the self-concept of children. The authors stated that these techniques have been applied successfully in the classroom at all grade levels from kindergarten through college. No statistical

results were available. The techniques are separated into seven subgroups. These subgroups include: building an environment of positive support, individual strengths, personal identity, body image, goals, responsibility, and relationships with others.

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