

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 440

CS 009 284

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TITLE Self-Concept and the Disabled Reader: An Annotated Bibliography.
PUB DATE Apr 88
NOTE 43p.; Exit Project, Indiana University at South Bend.
PUB TYPE Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Annotated Bibliographies; Elementary Education; *Reading Attitudes; *Reading Difficulties; Reading Failure; Reading Improvement; Reading Instruction; Reading Research; *Remedial Reading; *Self Concept

ABSTRACT

Intended to be of help to teachers who deal with students having problems in reading, this annotated bibliography examines research findings on the relationship between reading achievement and self-concept in elementary students. The introductory portion states the problem and the purpose of the study, as well as its limitations and organization. The 28 annotations follow, incorporating studies on self-concept and reading, the implications for teachers regarding classroom climate and instructional strategies, and the effectiveness of self-concept enhancement. The summary provides an overview of the annotated literature, followed by conclusions and recommendations. Twenty-nine references conclude the work. (SR)

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SELF-CONCEPT AND THE DISABLED READER:
AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the course E591

April 1988

DS 009284

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SELF-CONCEPT AND THE DISABLED READER:

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Introduction

Children in our school systems are asked daily to take chances: to write a paper that will be evaluated, to read for a class that may laugh, to do board work that may be wrong, to create an object of art that will be judged. Viewed at another level, children are asked to risk their self-concept (Deeds, 1981, p. 78).

For those children who experience repeated success in school, the above situations may be of little consequence. But for children who constantly meet with failure, those same situations can seriously damage their self-concepts. A child who has problems in reading is constantly "risking" his/her self-concept. Because reading permeates the entire curriculum, learning to read is vital and not succeeding at it can result in hopelessness, frustration, and a negative self-concept. Teachers can and do offer remedial programs to help disabled readers overcome their reading problems; however, for children suffering from low self-concepts, these programs alone may not be enough. A review of research and current literature could help teachers deal more effectively and successfully with disabled readers.

Statement of the Problem

Children with reading disabilities often possess low self-concepts resulting in a lack of motivation and a poor attitude toward reading; however, teachers can take steps to improve low self-concepts which may ultimately enhance reading remediation.

Purpose of the Study

This study is designed to examine research findings on the relationship between reading achievement and self-concept in elementary students. The research will be summarized and implications for teaching will be noted. It is hoped that these suggestions will be of help to all teachers who deal with students having problems in reading.

Limitations of the Study

First, there was a wide range of assessment instruments used. Among the research studies, self-concept scores were measured in a number of different ways: various tests and inventories, teacher observation, personal interviews, and often a combination of these evaluations. In addition, reading achievement was measured in a variety of ways: specific, standardized reading tests, reading subtests of standardized achievement tests, or basal reader level tests. In some instances, reading ability was determined by the difficulty of the basal reader in which the child was reading.

A second factor limiting this study was the lack of a consistent definition for self-concept. Some studies claimed to

have assessed global self-concept or self-esteem, while others differentiated between specific constructs of self concept such as self-concept of ability, sense of personal worth, competence, belonging, etc.

A third factor worth noting was the variation of sample groups. The subjects ranged in age from four to twelve years old. Some studies used only boys, while others included boys and girls. At times only remedial readers were studied as compared with studies utilizing poor, average, and above average readers. Additionally, some studies did not provide a matched control group for comparison.

A fourth limitation is in the reliability of self-report instruments like those used to evaluate self-concept. It is not known for sure whether students are always able to answer honestly even though they are asked to do so by the test administrator. It is also of debate whether students truly understand each item in the same way it was meant to be understood by the test developers.

Organization of the Study

Annotations appear in the order in which they are cited in the summary. The research has been summarized according to the outline that follows. Conclusions and recommendations are included subsequent to the summary.

Outline

- I. Research findings
 - A. Self-concept and reading
 - B. Learned helplessness
 - C. Cause and effect
 - 1. Reading achievement influences self-concept
 - 2. Self-concept influences reading achievement
 - D. Attitudes toward reading
- II. Implications for teachers
 - A. Classroom climate
 - 1. Teacher attitudes
 - a. Positive
 - b. Accepting
 - 2. Positive reinforcement
 - 3. Student choice
 - 4. Successful experiences
 - B. Instructional strategies
 - 1. Materials
 - a. Strengths
 - b. Interest
 - c. Difficulty
 - 2. Goal setting
 - 3. Grouping
 - 4. Recreational reading
- III. Effectiveness of self-concept enhancement

Definition of Terms

- dyslexia: (1) "syn. reading disability;"
(2) "a type of visual aphasia with the associative learning difficulty" (Good, 1973, p. 200).
- extrinsic motivation: "the use of rewards or punishments external to intrinsic interests in the material itself in the attempt to control behavior" (Good, 1973, p. 375).
- intrinsic motivation: "determination of behavior that is resident within an activity and that sustains it as with autonomous acts and interests; contradictory with extrinsic motivation" (Good, 1973, p. 375).
- learned helplessness: "experience with uncontrollable outcome results in the individual developing generalized expectancies for uncontrollability in the future, which in turn results in passivity" (Johnson, 1981, p. 177).
- locus of control: "the degree to which an individual perceives personal control over his or her life" (Beane and Lipka, 1986, p. 41).
- reading achievement: "attainment in any of a number of reading skills, habits, and attitudes; usually estimated by performance on some criterion measure such as formal or informal reading tests, or by reading grade levels" (Good, 1973, p. 7).
- reading disability: "lack of ability to read due to some physical, mental, or other cause, ranging from partial to complete inability to read; a handicap in reading" (Good, 1973, p. 473).
- reluctant reader: "a child who is a capable learner and reader but who is not inclined to read" (Good, 1973, p. 472).

- remedial reading: "in reading instruction, activities planned for individuals or groups of pupils in order to provide for both the diagnosis of reading difficulties and their correction; usually carried on in a special remedial class" (Good, 1973, p. 475).
- self-concept: "the individual's perception of himself as a person, which includes his abilities, appearance, performance in his job, and other phases of daily living" (Good, 1973, p. 524).
- self-esteem: "the judgement and attitude an individual holds toward himself" (Good, 1973, p. 525).
- self-image: "the perceptual component of self; the image one has of the appearance of his body; the picture one has of the impressions he makes on others" (Good, 1973, p. 525).
- self-perceptions: See self-concept.

Annotations

Thomson, Michael E., and Hartley, Gill M. "Self-Concept in Dyslexic Children." Academic Therapy 16.1 (Sep. 1980): 19-36.

This study was undertaken in an effort to investigate the self-esteem and personal constructs of dyslexic children. The subjects were two groups of fifteen children between eight and ten years old. The dyslexic group and the control group (reading at or above chronological age) were matched for age, intelligence, sex, and socioeconomic background. They were given the Kelley Grid test (to determine how they perceived friends in relation to self), a semantic differential test (to investigate the child's concepts of how others see him), and the Self-Esteem Inventory. The results indicated that dyslexic children held a strong association between reading ability and happiness and that they may have negative feelings toward people who point out or emphasize their difficulties, such as a teacher or parent. The dyslexic group had an overall lower level of self-esteem, especially in the home and school environment, implying that dyslexic children are aware of parental disappointment in their reading ability which ultimately produces a low self-esteem. Thomson and Hartley concluded that teachers should be aware that reading difficulty may often affect social and emotional development; therefore, teachers should provide an environment where children can succeed.

Vereen, Margaret. "Reading Achievement and Self-Concept of Fifth Grade Students." Kean College of New Jersey, Spring 1980. ED 192 264

For the basis of her study, Vereen hypothesized that poor readers would possess a poor self-concept. Fifth-graders (51 boys, 66 girls) constituted the sample population. Reading scores were taken from the students' cumulative records as measured by the Metropolitan Achievement Test (reading subtests). The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was administered to the subjects by classroom teachers. Directions and test items were read orally to not discriminate against the poorer readers. There was a positive relationship, statistically significant at the .01 level, between reading achievement and self-concept. Vereen recommended further studies be done with larger groups and additional grade levels. She further recommended that more research be conducted to determine the effectiveness of programs designed to enhance self-concept.

Rogers, Carl M., Smith, Monte D., and Coleman, J. Michael.
"Social Comparison in the Classroom: The Relationship
Between Academic Achievement and Self-Concept." Journal
of Educational Psychology 70.1 (Feb. 1978): 50-57.

Rogers, Smith, and Coleman used the social comparison theory as the basis of their study. Social comparison theory states that people form their self-concepts based on significant others in their environment. They used this theory to clarify the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. Therefore, they hypothesized that a child's self-concept is formed not in an absolute measure of achievement, but in the child's perception of how his/her achievement compares with the achievement of those in his/her social comparison group. One hundred fifty-nine academic underachievers aged six to twelve from 17 different classrooms participated in the study. All participants were administered the Metropolitan Achievement Test and the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. The results were analyzed two different ways. First, all 159 subjects were pooled together and ranked according to their achievement scores, then assigned to either high-, medium-, or low-achieving groups for math and reading. Second, students were ranked within each classroom according to their math and reading scores separately. Then within each class, they were assigned to high, medium, or low groups. Results showed that on all seven aspects of the self-concept measures, the high-reading-achievement group had the highest self-concept scores, and the low-reading-achievement group had the lowest self-concept scores. However, when the results were analyzed irrespective of within-classroom standing, there were no significant differences among groups in terms of mean self-concept scores. Rogers et al. concluded that the results strongly supported their hypothesis that the relationship between academic achievement and self-concept is based largely within the context of the social comparison group. In other words, they maintained that a child compares his/her level of achievement to that of his/her classmates then forms his/her self-concept based on the results. If the results are good, self-concept is high. If results are poor, self-concept is low.

Butkowsky, Irwin S., and Willows, Dale M. "Cognitive-Motivational Characteristics of Children Varying in Reading Ability: Evidence for Learned Helplessness in Poor Readers." Journal of Educational Psychology 72.3 (Jun. 1980): 408-422.

The purpose of this research study was to examine self-perceptions as they relate to motivation and competence in reading. The authors hypothesized that based on predictions about children of various reading abilities, the poor readers would be less persistent when facing difficulty and display a lower expectancy of success than average or good readers. The subjects were fifth-grade boys made up of good, average, and poor readers. They were each given a reading task and an unspecified task. The tasks were manipulated so that half of the students experienced repeated success and half experienced repeated failure. After instructions, but before the test, each student was asked how well he thought he would do and after completing each test, students were asked to attribute their success or failure to ability, effort, task difficulty, or luck. Results were as follows: 1) Poor readers expected to solve fewer puzzles on both reading and unspecified tasks than good/average readers. 2) Good/average readers persisted approximately 40% longer on difficult tasks than did poor readers. 3) Poor readers blamed failure on personal incompetence rather than effort or task difficulty. 4) Poor readers showed greater decrements in expecting success following failure than good/average readers. All of the findings appeared to be consistent with an interpretation of learned helplessness in children which is characterized by lack of persistence when facing failure, negative attitudes about intellectual performance and competence, and low self-esteem. The authors concluded their report with some very general implications for education and reading remediation.

Johnson, Dona S. "Naturally Acquired Learned Helplessness: The Relationship of School Failure to Achievement Behavior, Attributions, and Self-Concept." Journal of Educational Psychology 73.2 (Apr. 1981): 174-180.

Johnson's study was designed to explore two aspects of the learned helplessness theory: if value of outcome predicts passivity and how failure affects self-concept. Sixty white males from nine to twelve years of age were chosen and placed in one of three groups: average, failing, and remedial. The average group attended regular classes and made stanines of four or five on the reading scale of the most recent group achievement test. The failing group had stanines of two or lower on the reading scales, but had been diagnosed normal intellectually. The remedial group had attended self-contained remedial classes for at least one year and had made stanines of two or lower on the reading scale of the last group achievement test. All children were given the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Intellectual Achievement Responsibilities Questionnaire. Both scales were administered orally. Each child was then asked to perform an experimental task consisting of three mazes with the first being impossible to solve and the other two quite simple. The time spent and the number of trials on the impossible maze were noted as measures of persistence. Half the children were chosen from each group to receive academic incentive with the other half receiving academic incentive plus a monetary reward for each correct maze. The results of the study showed that only the failing group worked harder for a monetary reward than for academic incentive alone. As predicted by Johnson, the results of the children's self-reports showed that those with higher self-concepts demonstrated higher achievement, attribution to self for success, and attribution outside of self for failure. Johnson concluded that the failing children demonstrated the behavioral and emotional damages predicted by learned helplessness theory. The remedial group, however, had somewhat higher and more variable self-concept scores than the failing group suggesting that remediation had been effective in changing their self-concepts.

Marklund, Inger, and Hanse, Mona-Britt, eds. "Learning to Read: Project No. 2239." School Research Newsletter 5 (Aug. 1984). ED 248 494

As part of a continuing project on learning to read, several studies were conducted showing a positive relationship between linguistic awareness and reading achievement in six-year-olds. A related study was conducted using 46 under-achievers in reading from the first grade. A matched reference group reading on level with their potential was used for comparison. The students were followed through grade six and tested at grades one, two, three, and six on self-image development. On all of these occasions, the reference group maintained a more positive self-image than the poor readers. The relationship between reading ability and self-image was further exemplified by the fact that those students who had overcome their reading problems by sixth grade had developed a positive self-image.

Thai, Ngoc-Mai Thi, Ph.D. "The Relationship of Reading Achievement and the Self-Concept of Vietnamese Refugee Students." Dissertation Abstracts International 43.6 (Dec. 1982): 1911-A.

Vietnamese refugee students were used as the sample for this doctoral dissertation study. Sixty fourth-graders, 60 fifth-graders, and 60 sixth-graders from six different schools in southern California were given the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills to measure reading ability, and the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale to measure self-concept. The findings revealed that as Vietnamese students' reading ability increased, their self-concepts improved. No sex differences were found and the length of time in the United States had no effect on self-concept scores.

Revicki, Dennis A. "The Relationship Between Self-Concept and Achievement: An Investigation of Reciprocal Effects." Dissertation Abstracts International 42.6 (Dec. 1981): 2484-A.

One hundred forty-seven second-graders served as subjects for this study designed to show the relationship between academic achievement and self-concept. Students were given the Self-Observation Scales and the Stanford Achievement Test to measure self-concept and reading and math achievement respectively. Reading and math scores were found to be positively associated with self-concept. The relationship was stronger for reading than for math. Based on the magnitude of the relationship, Revicki believed that achievement more strongly influenced self-concept than vice versa. He further stated that an increase in achievement and success in school may improve self-concept which may subsequently influence future academic performance.

Wattenberg, William W., and Clifford, Clare. "Relation of Self-Concepts to Beginning Achievement in Reading." Child Development 35.2 (Jun. 1964): 461-467.

After examining numerous research studies showing the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement, Wattenberg and Clifford set up their own study designed to show the direction of causality in the aforementioned relationship. First, they obtained measures of mental ability and self-concept for a group of kindergarten children in Detroit. Two and a half years later they obtained measures of the same children's reading progress and self-concepts. The results showed that the measures of self-concept taken in kindergarten proved significantly predictive of progress in reading and were not significantly related to mental ability. Therefore, the results supported the hypothesis that self-concept in kindergarten has a greater influence on reading progress than reading progress has on the self-concept.

McMichael, Paquita. "Self-Esteem, Behaviour and Early Reading Skills in Infant School Children." In Reading: Problems and Practices. Ed. Jessie F. Reid and Harry Donaldson. London: Ward Lock Educational, 1977, 115-126.

Boys aged four and a half to five and a half were the subjects of McMichael's study aimed at determining the relationship between behavior, self-esteem, and reading ability. McMichael questioned whether self-esteem relates to a reality of ability, whether self-esteem contributes to reading test scores, and whether low self-esteem is related to either antisocial behavior or reading difficulties. One hundred ninety-eight boys were tested and screened. The Children's Behavior Questionnaire was completed by teachers. The children were given the Thackray Reading Readiness Profile and the Goodenough Draw-A-Man Test. Another test measuring self-concept was also given which pinpointed personal worth and competence as categories of self-concept. Each child was tested individually. Results indicated that children who represented themselves as less competent on the self-esteem items were also less competent in the basic skills required for reading. At the end of their first school year, the boys were tested again. Again, competence on the self-concept tests appeared to be associated with reading test scores. In addition, McMichael determined that children with low self-esteem were more likely to exhibit antisocial or negative behavior. This relationship was maintained at the end of the year testing. McMichael compared the results of this study with those of Wattenberg and Clifford (1964) who found that low self-concepts and poor achievement were already established as early as kindergarten. McMichael concluded that based on this research, behavior and self-esteem problems co-exist at school entry and that reading failure is likely to reinforce low self-esteem rather than causing it.

Purkey, William W. Self-Concept and School Achievement.
Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970.

This book was written especially for teachers. Purkey acknowledged the growing emphasis on self-concept and success in school and subsequently placed the teacher in the role of integrating self-concept in the curriculum. Chapter 1 was an overview of theories about the self. Chapter 2 explored the strong relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. Chapter 3 explained how the self develops in social interaction and what happens upon entering school. Chapter 4 suggested ways in which the teacher can build positive self-concepts in students. Purkey remarked that teachers can influence their students by viewing themselves with respect, viewing students positively, holding high expectations for students, conveying positive attitudes, and developing a classroom climate of challenge, freedom, respect, warmth, control, and success. Purkey included a helpful section for teachers on how to evaluate self-concepts. This included a list of published tests and self-report inventories as well as a list of problems to be aware of when using any type of self-report instrument. Purkey stated his belief that we can no longer ignore the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement and that parents and teachers should play a large part in helping students develop positive self-concepts.

Zimmerman, Irla Lee, and Allebrand, George N. "Personality Characteristics and Attitudes Toward Achievement of Good and Poor Readers." The Journal of Educational Research 59.1 (Sep. 1965): 28-30.

Zimmerman and Allebrand hypothesized that as compared to good readers, poor readers would possess less productive attitudes toward achievement. In their study of 71 poor readers and 82 good readers, a poor reader was defined as reading at least two years below grade level. A good reader was defined as reading at grade level or better. Subjects were drawn from fourth- and fifth-grade classes with twice as many boys as girls in each group. The California Test of Personality was administered to both groups as a measure of personal and social adjustment. To measure attitudes toward achievement, each child was asked to tell a story about Card 1 of the Thematic Apperception Test. When comparing scores on the personality test, the good readers described themselves as better adjusted in every area. The poor readers were below average on all subscales. The major difference seemed to be in their feelings of personal worth, self reliance, and feelings of belonging. Specifically, poor readers typically held feelings of hopelessness and discouragement. Results of the Thematic Apperception Test revealed significant differences between the two groups. Good readers created stories emphasizing effort, practice, and long-term goals. In contrast, poor readers composed stories that stressed discouragement, flat obedience to authority, and little effort. Many of their stories ended unfavorably and had an overall negative tone. Zimmerman and Allebrand concluded that in this study, the good readers appeared to be more internally motivated and well-adjusted than poor readers, resulting in more effort and persistence when striving for success.

Claytor, Mary W. Martin. "The Relationship of Reading Achievement, Reading Attitude, Self-Concept and Classroom Behavior, a Multivariate Study." Dissertation Abstracts International 39.8 (Feb. 1979): 4727-A.

Recognizing that unsuccessful reading experiences cause students to suffer in other content areas and may eventually lead to an overall negative attitude toward reading and school, Claytor studied the relationship between classroom behavior, reading attitudes, achievement, and self-concept. Her sample consisted of 154 boys and 130 girls from regular fifth-grade classrooms. Students were tested using the Self Observation Scales, Survey of Reading Attitudes, Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, and Devereux Elementary School Behavior Rating Scale. Among other findings, Claytor discovered that a student's attitude, behavior, and self-concept are highly related with reading achievement.

Lewis, John. "The Relationship Between Attitude Toward Reading and Reading Success." Educational and Psychological Measurement 40 (Spring 1980): 261-262.

In order to determine the relationship between attitude toward reading activities and actual success in reading, a sample of 149 third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students in Minnesota were given a reading attitude inventory. These scores were correlated with their scores on the reading subtests of the Metropolitan Achievement Test. The correlation reached the .05 level of significance, indicating a positive relationship between attitude toward reading activities and reading success. However, Lewis concluded that attitude toward reading was not a major factor in reading success due to the low magnitude of the correlation.

Briggs, L.D. "A Poor Attitude: A Deterrent to Reading Improvement." Reading Horizons 27.3 (Apr. 1987): 202-208.

Briggs recognized the importance of a positive attitude to the reading process. He said that a positive attitude promotes and sustains learning while a negative attitude results in a lack of effort, lack of motivation, and misbehavior. He pointed to the teacher as the one who must help students develop constructive attitudes toward reading. Although he confessed that home environment can have a very negative effect on the attitudes of children, teachers can bring about change. Briggs maintained that a student's self-concept has an impact on his/her attitude toward reading as well as the amount of effort put forth and that if the teacher can help students improve their self-concepts, the students will be better able to develop positive attitudes. He suggested this be accomplished by giving positive reinforcement on an individual basis that is based on the child's own progress and by providing children with numerous opportunities to experience success.

Purkey, William W. Inviting School Success: A Self-Concept Approach to Teaching and Learning. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1978.

After writing his book Self-Concept and School Achievement (1970), Purkey received many questions about specific ways to enhance students' self-esteem. In response to these questions, Purkey wrote this book which approaches schools from a humanistic viewpoint. He viewed teachers as "inviters". He described good teaching as inviting students to see themselves as able, valuable, and self-directing. The teacher's primary role, according to Purkey, is to see students in positive ways and to "invite" them to behave accordingly. Purkey emphasized the power of the teacher to invite or disinvite learners and why his "invitational teaching" approach increases student success and happiness in the classroom. Chapter 2 stressed the significance of a positive self-concept to the learning environment. Chapter 3 focused on ways in which teachers can view students positively. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 dealt with the skills of an "invitational teacher" and included specific suggestions for classroom implementation. Purkey's book was intended to be used in various college courses, undergraduate and graduate, as well as by principals, counselors, teachers, or anyone desiring to improve education.

Quandt, Ivan, and Selznick, Richard. Self-Concept and Reading. 2nd ed. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1984.

Quandt and Selznick have written an excellent book providing teachers with practical suggestions for improving the self-concepts of poor readers. Although short in length, this book contained a clear, step-by-step guide for dealing with problem readers with emphasis on self-concept. They began with definitions of self-concept and reading and the development of both. They explained how to diagnose self-concepts through tests, inventories, and informal observations. The main focus was on building positive self-concepts in reading. Some suggestions were to be accepting of mistakes as a teacher, offer positive reinforcement to children who comment positively about others, develop a positive classroom climate, reduce negative comments and actions, avoid embarrassment as a punishment, minimize the difference between reading groups, avoid comparisons and competition among groups, avoid comparing individual progress with work of another student, capitalize on students' interests and strengths, provide opportunities for repeated success, make successes public, and encourage a positive home environment. Quandt and Selznick were quite specific and detailed about implementing these suggestions. While they did not elaborate upon related research or delve into complex theories on self-concept, they provided a very useful guide for the classroom teacher which might serve as an introductory source on the topic of self-concept and reading ability.

Meredith, Kurt, and Steele, Jeannie. "The Troubled Reader: Access to Intervention for the School Psychologist." Des Moines: Iowa Department of Public Instruction, 1985. ED 266 562

Although intended for school psychologists, this report contained valuable material for the regular classroom teacher or remedial reading teacher. Meredith and Steele first reviewed the reading process and listed characteristics of students with poor reading skills. A section on evaluating and diagnosing students' reading skills was also included. A large portion of the report dealt with remediating self-concept. Meredith and Steele recognized that self-concept plays a critical part in reading development. They identified strategies in four categories: grouping for instruction, teacher feedback, student response to the instructional setting, and peer interaction. Rather than grouping solely on reading achievement, they suggested grouping according to work habits, social skills, self-concept, interests, etc. They warned against comparing groups in terms of "high" or "low" and recommended changing groups often to avoid labeling. Meredith and Steele noted the strong influence of teacher feedback on student self-concept. They urged teachers to provide positive and specific feedback to all students, to praise on a one-to-one basis in close proximity, and to give negative feedback in private whenever possible. They identified many clues one could use to determine whether a child possesses a low self-concept. These clues listed characteristics of low self-concept children in the areas of competition, failure, locus of control, peer interaction, and classroom interaction. Along with the characteristics of low self-concept children, Meredith and Steele provided numerous suggestions in each category which might help improve a child's self-concept. Many of the strategies they proposed were supported by research.

Noland, Ronald G., and Craft, Lynda H. "Methods to Motivate the Reluctant Reader." Journal of Reading 19.5 (Feb. 1976): 387-391.

As the director of a reading clinic and a special reading teacher, Noland and Craft described some teaching strategies for motivating unsuccessful readers. Noland's undergraduate and graduate students held tutoring sessions for two hours twice a week. The main goal of the program was to provide successful experiences for these reluctant readers. The following strategies were proven to be successful for students aged seven to sixteen who were identified as failing readers. 1) Carefully test for and diagnose specific strengths and weaknesses, then begin correction and instruction based on the diagnosis. 2) Provide a large supply of reading material that is of high interest to the students. Whenever possible, allow students to choose books themselves. 3) Use small group or one-to-one tutoring whenever possible. 4) Before beginning each session, teacher and student should chart their self-concepts by placing a card on a continuum from "very happy" to "very sad". This allows the teacher to adjust expectations and activities accordingly. Do the same at the end of each session to observe any changes in self-concept as a result of the reading experience. 5) Establish a contract between teacher and student. Grant a tangible reward when parts of the contract are accomplished. 6) Allow students to help make decisions concerning their learning environment, making it an attractive place where they will want to come to read. 7) Give many opportunities for recreational reading. 8) Begin instruction at a very basic level to ensure success. 9) Set realistic goals which can be frequently checked and adjusted if necessary. Noland and Craft believed success is the key to motivating reluctant readers and that without successful experiences, problem readers may develop a crippling, negative self-concept.

Beane, James., and Lipka, Richard P. Self-Concept, Self-Esteem, and the Curriculum. New York: Teachers College Press, 1986.

Beane and Lipka have attempted to blend educational psychology and curriculum planning while focusing on self-concept and self-esteem. Their belief was that a school without an emphasis on enhancing self-concept is incomplete. The book gave many concrete examples of practices that enhance self-concept, however, it was intended to serve as a guide for professional educators in developing a "self-enhancing" school. Chapter 1 defined self-concept and self-esteem and what it means to enhance self-esteem. Chapter 2 focused on institutional features which can enhance self-perceptions. Here, Beane and Lipka proposed a shift from a custodial climate to a more humanistic climate characterized by democratic procedures, high levels of interaction, personalness, respect, self-discipline, and student decision-making. They also felt schools should strive for multidimensional grouping patterns to avoid labeling and preferential treatment by teachers. Another key issue in developing positive self-concepts was locus of control. Beane and Lipka encouraged schools to move away from institutionally imposed rules and move toward decision-making that allows for cooperation and independence. Chapter 3 explained how curriculum planning could be used to enhance self-perceptions while Chapter 4 included sample curriculum plans for secondary and elementary. An extensive list of references as well as a helpful index brought the book to an end.

Beane, James A., Lipka, Richard P., and Ludewig, Joan W.
 "Synthesis of Research on Self-Concept." Educational Leadership 38 (Oct. 1980): 84-88.

This report highlighted recent research on self-concept in the educational setting. Based on this review, the authors suggested many ways in which schools can help students develop positive self-concepts. 1) Maintain a democratic school climate emphasizing student participation, respect, fairness, personalness, etc. 2) Minimize failure and create success-oriented experiences. 3) Avoid consistently grouping by ability. 4) Provide cross-age tutoring. 5) Conduct workshops for parents and hold parent/student/teacher conferences. 6) Include students in developing school/classroom rules. 7) Help students regularly evaluate their own progress.

Briggs, L.D. "Motivation: A Problem Area in Reading."
Reading Improvement 23.1 (Spring 1986): 2-6.

As a professor of elementary education at East Texas State University, Briggs identified lack of motivation as one of the most frequently observed characteristics of children with reading problems. He reported some of the symptoms to be inattentiveness, disinterest in books, shyness, quietness, day-dreaming, indifference, anxiety, or nervousness. He said that some students who lack motivation may even become antagonistic during reading activities, show little or no concern about their progress, see no value in learning to read, and seldom check books out of the library. Briggs stated that both interest in a story and the ability to read it must be present if motivation is to be high. He placed some blame on teachers who put too much emphasis on drill and perfection while excluding the pleasurable aspects of reading for enjoyment. Material that is either too difficult or uninteresting may also cause students to lack motivation. Interestingly enough, many of the techniques for motivating students during reading that are contained in this article have also been found in articles written to help improve self-concept. For example, teachers should give positive reinforcement, children should be made to feel that they are accepted and belong. They should have successful experiences and should have a voice in planning activities and selecting reading materials. Charting individual progress and flexible grouping were also suggested by Briggs as ways to help motivate remedial students. Finally, Briggs commented that a teacher who is enthusiastic about reading generally has students who reflect this enthusiasm.

Deeds, Bonnie. "Motivating Children to Read Through Improved Self-Concept." In Motivating Reluctant Readers. Ed. Alfred J. Ciani. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, Inc., 1981, 78-89. ED 198 491

Deeds stated her firm belief that a positive self-concept is just as essential in learning to read as word attack, comprehension, and vocabulary development. She said one of the single most important strategies for improving self-concept is providing repeated opportunities for success. Deeds commented that being successful in an area which the child highly rates will result in increased self-confidence in other areas. Deeds stated that teachers should capitalize on a child's strengths in any area and involve students in activities which are relevant to their world and have personal meaning. She concluded with ideas for building on a student's interests and tips for using photography, cartoons, comic books, and drawing to boost self-concept.

Artley, A. Sterl. "Putting Remediation into Remedial Reading."
English Education 8 (1977): 103-110.

In this article, Artley commented on the notion that in spite of teachers' efforts and intentions, the results of remedial reading instruction are often disappointing. He argued that this may be true because teachers focus primarily on students' problems and fail to relate instruction to the real world. He proposed a number of suggestions that may help remedial teachers. First, he addressed motivation saying that unless the learner wants to learn or sees a need to learn, learning is not likely to take place. He stated that remedial readers are usually in remedial classes not because of their own desire to learn, but because a teacher or counselor sent them; therefore, any existing motivation would be extrinsic rather than intrinsic. Artley encouraged teachers faced with this problem to postpone remedial efforts for awhile and concentrate on finding out students' interests then relate those interests to reading. He argued that then the student will become aware of the need for learning to read and remediation can then begin. Second, Artley recognized that many remedial students have already experienced two or three years of failure and may have developed a low self-concept. He described the vicious circle that often exists where learners think they can't succeed and then approach activities expecting to fail. When failure is indeed the result, they confirm their low opinion of self. Artley's suggestions for improving a low self-concept were to avoid putting the child in situations where failure is probable, establish realistic, short-term goals, assess goals regularly, and generously praise the child for goals that are reached. In general, Artley encouraged teachers to apply less pressure, use fewer tests, do fewer drills, and substitute more fun, more interest, and more success.

Sanacore, Joseph. "Reading Self-Concept: Assessment and Enhancement." The Reading Teacher 29 (Nov. 1975): 164-168.

As a community college instructor and reading coordinator in New York, Sanacore has authored many articles on reading improvement. His approach to reading in this article was geared toward improving self-concept. He called the teacher a continuous observer and included a checklist of behaviors to help assess a student's self-concept. His suggestions for building self-concept included complimenting students for what they are able to do, providing them with materials on their independent or instructional level, allowing students to select their own materials, directing students toward obtainable goals, providing repeated opportunities for success, and frequently evaluating goals and objectives with students. Sanacore believed that evaluating and building self-concept are important to promoting mental health and contended that self-concept can be improved by repeated, successful learning experiences.

Warncke, Edna W. "Can Disabled Readers With Emotional Problems Win?" Journal of Research and Development in Education 14.4 (Summer 1981): 35-40.

Warncke briefly cited research studies which portrayed disabled readers as lacking academic success, having low self-esteems, and experiencing emotional stress. Warncke stated that we typically place the disabled reader in circumstances that would be fine for good or average readers, but merely intensify the problems of the disabled reader. Such circumstances include asking them to read orally, giving them reading material too young for their age, telling them their performance is poor, placing them in reading material that is too difficult, and requiring them to reread something they had previously read poorly. When teachers notice the disabled reader has a negative reaction to these circumstances, a change in strategy is imperative. Warncke believed one of the biggest problems for the disabled reader is the school's failure to properly diagnose their strengths and weaknesses. Increased attention in this area should lead to a more specific description of their difficulties so that remediation will prove more successful. Home and family reactions were discussed at length, recognizing their importance, but also realizing they are not so easily manipulated as are educational circumstances. Warncke concluded with a number of suggestions for teachers who deal with disabled readers: convey a positive attitude, set realistic and obtainable goals, choose or write suitable reading material that is neither insulting nor too difficult, award honest, positive reinforcement, and provide opportunities where success is practically guaranteed.

Swartz, Stanley L., and Swartz, Janet M. "Counseling the Disabled Reader." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Illinois Council for Exceptional Children. Chicago, Nov. 1985. ED 265 689

This report described a study conducted to show the effects of a counseling program on self-concept and reading achievement. The sample consisted of 22 students in three elementaries. All students qualified for Chapter 1 remedial reading services. A variety of strategies were used: individual counseling sessions, play therapy, group counseling sessions, role-playing, and several commercially designed materials and kits. Each strategy was specifically intended to enhance self-concept and facilitate classroom adjustment. In addition, consultation was provided to remedial reading teachers and classroom teachers. The students were pretested in September and posttested in May. Tests utilized were the Self-Concept and Motivation Inventory, the Goodenough-Harr's Drawing Test, and the Gates MacGinitie Reading Tests. The results of the posttesting revealed an overall increase in total self-concept scores and reading achievement scores. Swartz and Swartz recognized that a standard of proof had not been met because a control group was not used. However, they felt that stable growth with students accustomed to failure was evidence that counseling services can be an integral part of a remedial reading program.

Sanders, Mary Ellen, and Heim, Kathy. "Students' Perceptions of Remedial Reading." Reading World 23.1 (Oct. 1983): 54-59.

The purpose of this study was to determine student attitudes toward the remedial reading program at an elementary school. A survey was developed and administered to 338 first- through fifth-graders by an elementary guidance counselor. The questions were read aloud by the counselor to all students so that reading ability would not affect the results. The responses indicated that remedial students have a positive view of themselves and their ability to read. Ninety percent said they have "a lot of friends", 84% thought of themselves as "good readers", and 74% believed they could "read as well as most of the kids in their class". In addition, 86% thought the remedial reading program made reading fun and 90% said it was a good class to go to. Sanders and Heim were surprised when the results of their survey conflicted with research indicating that remedial readers often have poor self-concepts and poor attitudes about reading. Therefore, they attributed their results to an emphasis on developing positive self-concepts currently being given in their remedial reading program. They continued by listing several projects and activities they had incorporated into their program specifically to develop strong self-concepts. The authors felt that these projects and activities have significantly influenced the remedial readers' attitudes about themselves and their reading ability.

Summary

Overall, the research presented here has shown a positive relationship between self-concept and reading achievement. Thomson and Hartley (1980) found that dyslexic children had overall lower levels of self-esteem than classmates reading at or above grade level. Vereen (1980) reported similar findings in her study of fifth-grade boys and girls: those students scoring higher on reading achievement tests also obtained a higher rating on measures of self-concept. Those students whose reading scores were lower represented themselves as having lower self-concepts.

One study examined this relationship in light of the social comparison theory and found that when class rank was not a factor, there were no significant differences in self-concept scores among good, average, and poor readers. However, when class standing was included in the analysis, good readers had high self-concept scores while poor readers had low self-concept scores (Rogers, Smith, and Coleman, 1978).

Other researchers investigated the self-concept/achievement relationship and concluded that poor readers often exhibit characteristics of learned helplessness. Butkowsky and Willows (1980) studied fifth-grade boys and found that poor readers were less persistent and less confident than good or average readers and they attributed failure to personal incompetence rather than to lack of effort or bad luck. Poor readers again showed evidence of learned helplessness in a study of boys aged nine to twelve (Johnson, 1981). Failing readers held low self-concepts, attributed

success to factors outside of self, and attributed failure to personal incompetence.

Judging by the studies examined so far, a persistent, positive relationship between self-concept and reading ability has emerged. However, several researchers have addressed the issue of causality. In attempting to answer the question, "Which comes first--low self-concept or poor academic performance?", several studies have been conducted. Some researchers concluded that self-concept is determined by reading performance. Marklund and Hanse (1984) followed a group of underachievers from first to sixth grade, testing for self-image development at various intervals. Results showed that the poor readers always maintained a more negative self-image than the reference group. Furthermore, when students overcame their reading difficulties by sixth grade, they had developed a more positive self-image, implying that reading performance influences self-concept. Thai (1982) concluded the same when findings indicated that as reading ability increased, self-concepts subsequently improved in Vietnamese students.

Reading achievement and self-concept were again positively related in a study of second-graders (Revicki, 1981). Based on the magnitude of the relationship, Revicki concluded that achievement more strongly influenced self-concept than self-concept influenced achievement.

On the other hand, Wattenberg and Clifford (1964) studied children at the beginning of kindergarten and again at the end of second grade and inferred that self-concept was predictive of

reading success. This conclusion was supported by another study of four- and five-year-old children by Paquita McMichael (1977). McMichael agreed that children already possess high or low self-concepts before schooling even begins, therefore reading problems do not cause low self-concepts. However, Paquita confessed that reading failure is apt to reinforce an already low self-esteem.

Rather than expending efforts to determine the cause and effect of this relationship, it would appear logical to accept the notion that it is a two-way street, ". . . a continuous interaction between the self and academic achievement, and that each directly influences the other" (Purkey, 1970, p. 23).

In addition to maintaining low self-concepts, research has shown that disabled readers often lack motivation and exhibit poor attitudes toward reading and that these characteristics are often an outgrowth of a negative self-image. Zimmerman and Allebrand (1965) concluded that with fourth- and fifth-graders, poor readers held feelings of hopelessness and discouragement and appeared to be less motivated and less persistent than good readers. A more recent study of fifth-graders demonstrated a positive relationship between self-concept, reading achievement, and attitude toward reading (Claytor, 1979). This relationship was upheld by a study of third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders when results of a reading attitude inventory and a reading achievement test were analyzed. A significant, positive relationship was found between attitude toward reading and reading success

(Lewis, 1980). Briggs (1987) voiced his belief that self-concept has an impact on attitudes which directly affects the amount of effort applied to reach educational goals. He identified the classroom teacher as the one who must strive to improve students' self-concepts, ". . . which, in turn, will enable the children to develop positive attitudes" (p. 205).

Unfortunately, very little research was found on the effectiveness of specific strategies for improving self-concepts. Most of the literature available was written by college professors, reading specialists, reading teachers, or counselors. However, they provided a number of techniques for teachers who desire to improve their students' self-concepts. Furthermore, the suggestions remained quite consistent from author to author and rarely, if ever, contradicted one another. Because of this consistency and the lack of formal research in this area, these suggestions have been presented as possible methods for enhancing self-concept.

Much of the literature on enhancing self-concepts centered around developing a positive classroom climate. Most writers identified the teacher as the one most responsible for creating such a climate. Maintaining certain attitudes was one way teachers could do this. Purkey (1978) stated a teacher's primary role is to see students in a positive way so that they in turn will see themselves as able and valuable. In an earlier book, Purkey (1970) remarked that teachers greatly influence their students when they hold themselves in high regard and hold high expectations for their students.

Being warm and accepting was another desirable teacher attitude. Quandt and Selznick (1984) stated that teachers need to be accepting of weaknesses and mistakes in themselves as well as in their students and should make attempts to reduce negative remarks or actions among classmates.

Using positive reinforcement was another way to create a positive classroom climate and was repeatedly suggested by professional educators. Meredith and Steele (1985) encouraged teachers to give positive feedback that is very specific in light of what they have accomplished and that this praise be given on an individual basis while being as close to the student as possible. They further urged teachers to give negative feedback, when necessary, in private to avoid embarrassment in front of peers. Noland and Craft (1976) even suggested giving a tangible reward in addition to verbal reinforcement for their accomplishments.

Thirdly, many writers indicated that allowing for more student decision-making promotes a positive classroom climate. Beane and Lipka (1986) called this "locus of control" and encouraged schools in general to move away from a custodial climate to a more humanistic climate which would allow students to help make decisions that ultimately affect them. Including students in developing classroom rules is merely one way to do this (Beane, Lipka, and Ludewig, 1980). Others suggested that teachers let their students help plan classroom activities and select their own reading materials (Briggs, 1986; Noland and Craft, 1976).

By far, the most frequently suggested way to improve self-concepts through a positive classroom climate was to offer students countless opportunities for success. Deeds (1981) wrote that allowing students to succeed in one area will help them feel more confident in other areas, thereby improving their self-concepts. Artley (1977) recognized the detrimental effects of failure when he stated that many disabled readers have failed for so long that they soon feel success is unobtainable and approach tasks expecting to fail. Therefore, he urged teachers to avoid putting these students in situations where failure may likely be the result. When disabled readers do experience success, making their success public may further serve to improve their self-concepts (Quandt and Selznick, 1984).

Improving self-concept through instructional strategies was also suggested by many educators. Choosing suitable materials for remediation was considered vital to improving self-concept. Material which capitalizes on students' strengths would be considered appropriate according to Quandt and Selznick (1984) and Deeds (1981). For example, a student having difficulty with phonics should not be given reading material which has been written phonetically as failure and frustration would likely result. Instead, they argued that students should be given material which allows them to use the skills they know the best so that a successful reading experience will be more probable.

In addition to capitalizing on a student's strengths, several authors noted the importance of choosing reading material.

based on the interests of the student. Briggs (1986) commented that interest and ability must be present for a child to be motivated to read and that material which they feel is uninteresting may cause a poor attitude toward reading. Artley (1977) suggested that when motivation is a problem, remedial efforts should be delayed until the teacher is able to determine the child's interests. Then the teacher can relate those interests to reading, thus helping the student see the need for learning to read.

A final suggestion for choosing appropriate materials for remediation involved difficulty. Sanacore (1975) proposed that students be given material at their independent or instructional level. Warncke (1981) believed that teachers often intensify the problems of disabled readers by giving them material which is too young for their age (thus insulting them or embarrassing them) or too difficult (thus frustrating them). Therefore, she suggested that when suitable reading material is not available, teachers may need to write it themselves.

A second instructional strategy for enhancing self-concept involved goal setting. Most educators agreed that establishing realistic, short-term goals would help improve self-concepts by making success more likely (Artley, 1977). In addition to setting goals, Beane et al. (1980) recommended that both students and teachers evaluate progress on a regular basis and adjust goals when necessary.

Grouping for instruction denoted another strategy for improving self-concept. Quandt and Selznick (1984) recognized that

ability grouping can often damage a child's self-concept merely because of the manner in which the teacher treats the groups. Therefore, they recommended that teachers avoid comparisons and competition among reading groups and avoid referring to groups as fast, slow, ahead, behind, etc. Most professionals were aware of the need to group for instruction and suggested flexible grouping instead of eliminating it altogether. Meredith and Steele (1985) proposed that groups be formed not only by ability, but according to work habits, interests, social skills, etc. They further recommended changing groups often to avoid labeling.

A final instructional strategy for enhancing self-concept was to provide students with ample time for recreational reading. Briggs (1986) believed that remediation is often unsuccessful because teachers tend to focus on drill and perfection while placing little emphasis on reading for fun. Noland and Craft (1976) also emphasized the role of recreational reading in the remedial program. When disabled readers realize that reading can be fun, their attitude may change dramatically.

While all of these suggestions for improving self-concept appeared to helpful, it is questionable whether or not they are truly effective. As mentioned previously, little research was found on the effectiveness of programs aimed at enhancing self-concept. However, one study and one survey were able to report favorable results because of an emphasis on self-concept improvement.

Swartz and Swartz (1985) found that both reading achievement

scores and self-concept scores increased as a result of a counseling program for elementary remedial readers. This program emphasized self-concept and classroom adjustment.

Emphasis on self-concept was again considered a major factor when results of a survey conflicted with recent research implying that remedial readers often have poor self-concepts. Sanders and Heim (1983) attributed the favorable results of their survey to the emphasis on developing positive self-concepts in their remedial reading program.

Although these two studies alone cannot serve as standard of proof for the effectiveness of self-concept enhancement, they have been included in this paper because they lend credibility to the use of such programs and practices in the remedial reading classroom.

Conclusions

The research presented has clearly indicated a persistent, positive relationship between self-concept and reading achievement although cause and effect has not been established. Studies have shown that disabled readers often exhibit a poor attitude toward reading, a negative self-concept, and feelings of hopelessness and discouragement. Disabled readers also tend to lack motivation and persistence in relation to reading activities. Teachers, however, can play a vital role in helping students improve their self-concepts. In view of the present literature, teachers can take steps to create a positive classroom climate and implement

instructional strategies which ensure successful reading experiences. Hopefully, by following strategies presented in this paper, self-concept may be enhanced.

Recommendations

In light of the research presented in this paper, the following are suggestions which might be considered when conducting further studies on self-concept and reading. It is recommended that:

- 1) a more concise description of self-concept be included in each study.
- 2) researchers be more consistent in the type of assessment devices used to evaluate self-concept.
- 3) more research be conducted to examine the effectiveness of strategies aimed toward improving self-concept.
- 4) the use of matched control groups be used as often as possible.

Based on the research studies and the suggestions made by professional educators and counselors, it is recommended that teachers:

- 1) become more aware of the symptoms of a poor self-concept by reading current literature on the topic.
- 2) familiarize themselves with the various tests, inventories, and observation techniques used to assess self-concept.
- 3) make an effort to develop positive self-concepts in their students by following the suggestions presented in this paper.

- a) View students positively.
- b) Be accepting of mistakes and weaknesses.
- c) Allow for student participation and decision-making.
- d) Positively reinforce accomplishments.
- e) Provide repeated opportunities for success.
- f) Choose materials based on a student's ability, strengths, and interests.
- g) Guide students toward obtainable goals.
- h) Practice flexible grouping.
- i) Provide students with many opportunities for recreational reading.

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Student Qualifications

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I. Educational Background

- A. Tippecanoe Valley High School; Mentone, IN; 1980.
- B. Manchester College; North Manchester, IN; 1980-82.
- C. IUSB; South Bend, IN; 1984; B.S. in Elementary Education with Reading Minor. Plan to receive M.S. in Elementary Education and professionalize Reading Minor in May 1988.

II. Employment Experience

- A. Madison Elementary; Warsaw, IN; 1984-87.
(First Grade)

III. Reasons for Undertaking this Study

As a first grade teacher for three years, I have been privileged to help many students along the pathway to reading success. However, I have also been confronted with students who, for various reasons, develop problems in reading. To these young children who have come to school to learn to read, reading becomes a drudgery. They become frustrated with the printed word and, eventually, themselves. Their overall negative attitude often intensifies their reading problems and a vicious circle begins.

Because reading is such a vital part of everyday life, it is imperative that these students succeed in reading or at the very least master the bare essentials of the reading process. However, along with treating specific reading problems, we must help children deal with their frustrations and help them develop positive attitudes about themselves and reading.

Although I am currently taking a leave of absence from teaching to raise my family, I do intend to enter the teaching profession again and when I do, I would like to do so as a remedial reading teacher. I believe that researching this topic has enabled me to deal more effectively with the remedial reading students I may have in the future.