The relationship of locus of control, self-esteem, and level of social play

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF LOCUS OF CONTROL, SELF-ESTEEM, AND LEVEL OF SOCIAL PLAY

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Teacher Education
and the
Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment
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by

Patricia A. Knudsen

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THESIS (OR THESIS EQUIVALENT PROJECT)
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Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF LOCUS OF CONTROL, SELF-ESTEEM, AND LEVEL OF SOCIAL PLAY

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a relationship among children's internal or external locus of control, self-esteem, and level of social play. The study, conducted early in the year to minimize the effect of the classroom environment on test results, included 39 children enrolled in either the morning or afternoon sections of the author's kindergarten class. Eight days after the start of school the following instruments were administered individually to each child by trained volunteers: the Preschool and Primary Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Control Scale (PPNS-IE) by Stephen Nowicki, Jr., and Marshall P. Duke to assess locus of control and the Preschool Self-Concept Picture Test (PSCPT) by Rosestelle B. Woolner to assess self-esteem.

After school was in session for 10 days, trained volunteers observed and coded children's play behavior on a rating scale in which values were assigned to the following behavior categories: unoccupied behavior, solitary play, onlooker behavior, parallel play, associative play, and cooperative play. In addition, a scale reflecting negative, positive, and neutral affect was used. The schedule for coding was arranged so that each child was observed twice
during a 60 minute play period on 4 different days over a 2 week interval.

The variables in this study included self-esteem, locus of control, play category, affective category, age in years, and sex of child. The relationship among the variables was assessed in two ways, correlational analysis and analyses of variance. Results of this study indicated that there were no significant relationships among locus of control, self-esteem, and level of social play. However, correlations were found between play category and age, play category and affective category, and sex of child and self-esteem. A two-way analysis of variance using self-esteem scores, with sex of child and age group as factors, revealed that age group was highly significant and sex of child by age group interaction was also significant. The ANOVA of the play category scores, with sex of child and age group as factors, revealed that age group was nearly significant. In the analysis of self-esteem scores, with sex of child and locus of control group as factors, sex of child was significant.
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Chapter I: The Problem

Children are at risk in American society. In 1991, almost 25% of youngsters age 5 and under in the United States were living in poverty. Many lack attentive, loving caretakers, adequate health services, safe places to live and play, clean water, and nutritious food (Children's Defense Fund, 1992). The deficits caused by these conditions may negatively impact children's self-esteem, locus of control, and level of social play. These, in turn, may negatively affect children's academic success (Rogers & Ross, 1986; Sheridan, 1991).

Educators need to consider what they can do to provide every student the opportunity to make the most of his or her abilities. It is important, therefore, to examine possible ways to improve the educational process and to take advantage of research results which may point the way. Because both locus of control and self-esteem are shown by the literature to be related to school success, these qualities of the individual learner are worthy of further exploration to provide some insight related to increasing students' academic achievement.

Purpose and importance of the study

The purpose of this study will be to determine whether there is a relationship among a child's internal or external
locus of control, self esteem, and level of social play. Locus of control refers to a child's expectation concerning whether his or her behavior will secure reinforcement or have a desired effect (Phares, 1976; Rotter, 1966). Self-esteem is the personal regard or respect the child has for himself or herself which includes the ability to control or influence others, the sense of being accepted by others, the sense that one can succeed in meeting the achievement demands of others, and a sense that the child is able to adhere to values, standards and rules of conduct (Coopersmith, 1967). Social play refers to play in a social context, be it solitary play, that is, playing alone, or play involving some form of social exchange (Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg, 1983).

This study is important because internal locus of control and self-esteem are related to academic success, and if it can be shown that they are also related to levels of social play, then it is at least possible that enhancing social play will enhance locus of control and self-esteem, thereby increasing academic competence.

The review of literature will indicate the following: Children who succeed in school are more likely to have an internal locus of control. Children who lack such success are more likely to have an external locus of control (Lewis & Lawrence-Patterson, 1989; Walden & Ramey, 1983). Children with high self-esteem are more likely to succeed in school,
and children with low self-esteem are less likely to fulfill their potential for scholastic success (Harter, 1983; Phillips, 1984). Children with internal locus of control have better peer relationships and social competence (Lepore, Kiely, Bempechat, & London, 1989; Swink & Buchanan, 1984). Children with good peer relationships have better self-esteem (Hymel, Rubin, Rowden, & leMare, 1990; Grunebaum & Solomon, 1987).

If it can also be shown that locus of control, self-esteem, and social play are related, then it is at least possible that enhancing social play will enhance locus of control and self-esteem, thereby increasing academic competence. Perhaps an educational environment could then be designed to facilitate such a result.

Delineation of the research problem

The major hypothesis proposed for this study is as follows: There is a positive relationship among locus of control, self-esteem, and level of social play.

Testing of hypotheses

The investigation will be broken down to focus upon the following hypotheses:

Self-esteem

1a. There is a relationship among self-esteem, sex of child, and age.

1b. There is a relationship among self-esteem, sex of child, and locus of control.
Play Category
2a. There is a relationship among play category, sex of child, and age.
2b. There is a relationship among play category, sex of child, and self-esteem.
2c. There is a relationship among play category, sex of child, and locus of control.

Affective Category
3a. There is a relationship among affective category, sex of child, and age.
3b. There is a relationship among affective category, sex of child, and self-esteem.
3c. There is a relationship among affective category, sex of child, and locus of control.

Locus of control
4a. There is a relationship among locus of control, sex of child, and age.
4b. There is a relationship among locus of control, sex of child, and self-esteem.

These issues were investigated in a study including 39 children enrolled in either the morning or afternoon sections of the author's kindergarten class at West Ward School in Wahoo, Nebraska. The children were tested early in the school year to minimize the effect of the classroom environment on the test results. The Preschool and Primary Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Control Scale and the
Preschool Self-Concept Picture Test were administered individually to each child by trained volunteers. After school was in session for 10 days, the trained volunteers observed and coded children's play behavior on a rating scale during 4 different 60 minute play periods on 4 different days. During this observation time each child was permitted to play alone or with other children in any area of the room with materials of his or her own choosing.

All of the scores on the tests were statistically analyzed to determine if any relationship existed between locus of control, self-esteem, and level of social play.

Definition of terms

Locus of control is defined as one's expectation concerning whether one's behavior will secure reinforcement or have a desired effect.

Internal locus of control is one's perception of having influence over the source or timing of reinforcement so that events are viewed as a consequence of one's actions and, therefore, under one's own control.

External locus of control is one's perception that one has no influence over the source or timing of reinforcement; therefore, events are believed to be caused by external agents, such as chance, fate, or the behavior of others, and not under one's own control.

Self-esteem is the personal regard or respect one has for one's self which includes the ability to control or
influence others, the sense of being accepted by others, the sense that one can succeed in meeting demands of others to achieve, and a sense that one is able to adhere to values, standards, and rules of conduct.

**Self-concept** is the idea one has of oneself and one's capabilities; such knowledge includes awareness of one's self-esteem.

**Social play** is play in a social context, be it solitary play, that is playing alone, or play involving some form of social exchange; such play is characterized by self-motivation, self-chosen rules, internal control, a focus on process, and active involvement.
Chapter II: Review of Related Literature

Overview

Chapter II discusses the concept of locus of control by describing how children perceive their personal power to control events and by indicating some of the effects this perception has on their peer relationships, performance, and self-esteem. The relationship between locus of control and self-esteem is discussed. An analysis of some of the effects of peer relationship and academic achievement on self-esteem is presented. Changes in locus of control brought about by environmental factors, instructional intervention, and therapy are presented. A classroom environment for children in which a sense of internal control, a positive orientation towards academic achievement and increased self-esteem is described.

Literature Review

Locus of control

In generalizing on the implications for research on locus of control, Lefcourt (1982) stated that the way individuals judged causality made a difference in the way life experiences were approached. If the individual believed events were controllable, he or she would try to actively exert an influence on them. If the individual
believed events were not controllable, her or his response would be different and would include withdrawal or apathy.

The locus of control concept emerged from the framework of social learning theory, which stressed that personality is studied by examining the interaction of the individual and the individual's environment. Social learning theory further claimed that personality is consistent and unified, that social behavior is learned, that there are broad traits that account for behavioral consistency in different situations, and that human behavior is purposeful and determined by expectations that certain behavior will lead to certain goals (Phares, 1976). By looking at behavior in different situations, it is possible to infer personality consistency. Locus of control is a personality characteristic that, along with other social learning theory variables, may be used to prognosticate social behavior in humans. It is both a situation specific expectancy and a broad, generalized expectancy. As a specific situational expectancy, it helps clarify behavior variations which appear in highly structured situations (Phares, 1976).

A pioneer in locus of control research, Julian Rotter (1966), stated that an individual who has an external locus of control believes reinforcement is unpredictable and not dependent upon his or her own actions but is, instead, dependent on fate, luck, or powerful others. On the other hand, an individual who believes that reinforcement resulted
from her or his own characteristics and behavior has an internal locus of control. According to Rotter, such belief about the relationship between consequences and behavior affects many choices which people make in a variety of situations.

If a person saw reinforcement as dependent upon his or her own behavior, then a positive reinforcement would strengthen a behavior and a negative reinforcement would weaken it. If the person thought reinforcement depended upon fate or other factors outside the individual, then the behavior is likely to remain unchanged. The person's beliefs about how reinforcement was controlled denoted internal or external control. Rotter (1966) hypothesized that the generalized expectancy that an individual's behavior would affect the environment was measurable and predicted rational behavioral construct referents. He also asserted that an internally controlled individual would be aware of environmental information for future behavior, try to improve conditions of the environment, value achievement and skill reinforcements, manifest concern about ability and personal failure, and resist attempts of others to exert influence.

**Locus of control and age**

Age and development may influence locus of control. In the Lifshitz (1973) study of kibbutz children, change of locus of control appeared to be related to development. In
a study of locus of control and at risk children in grades kindergarten through 5, Payne and Payne (1989) found that internal locus of control increased with age. Another researcher (Richaud de Minzi, 1991) agreed with this conclusion. In an investigation of beliefs about ability, effort, luck, powerful others, and unknown causes, Skinner (1990) found that children made finer distinctions among many internal and external causes during middle childhood. On the other hand, Hegland and Galejs (1983) found contradictory evidence concerning the relationship between age and locus of control orientation and concluded that their results did not confirm the actuality of a developmental trend from externality to internality.

**Change of locus of control in adults**

A variety of environmental factors and special instructional interventions, however, can change locus of control. Noel, Forsyth, and Kelley (1987) found that students failing a college course improved performance when they shifted from external to internal causal attributions. In a study of patients involved in a crisis situation it was found that locus of control scores became more internal as the crises neared resolution (Smith, 1970). As they gained more experience, individuals ranging in age from 19 to 50 who worked in their own community organizations believed they had more control over what they could do for themselves
and showed changes towards more internal control (Gottesfeld & Dozier, 1966).

Senior female nursing students who received brief training in lay counseling skills scored higher in internality on Rotter's locus of control scale (Martin & Shepel, 1974) as did college freshman who received counseling which attempted to help them understand behavior-effect contingencies (Reimanis, 1974). An encounter group experience resulted in increased internal locus of control for two groups of graduate students (Diamond & Shapiro, 1973). In a study of university students Dua (1970) found that persons who changed their actions also changed their attitudes and saw themselves as more internally controlled.

Change of locus of control in adolescence

Inner-city teenagers who experienced a week long structured camp program became more internal in their locus of control orientation (Nowicki & Barnes, 1973) as did 74 boys and 35 girls who attended an 8 week sports fitness camp (Duke, Johnson, Nowicki, 1977). Rational Emotive Education proved to be a successful intervention strategy for 60 learning-disabled adolescents age 14 to 18, enhancing their self-concepts and increasing internal locus of control orientation (Omizo, Lo, & Williams, 1986). Rosenbaum, McMurray & Campbell (1991) found that rational emotive therapy increased internality of locus of control of 36
randomly assigned girls with a mean age of 9 years 1 month. Although counseling and operant conditioning changed the locus of control of 173 pupils in grade 6, counseling, which enabled children to analyze outcomes resulting from their behavior, resulted in greater change towards internality (Charlton, 1986).

**Change of locus of control in children**

Internal locus of control of 53 fifth grade children increased when they participated in a sociodramatic social living class. The children saw their own behavior rather than external causes as more related to occurrences in their lives. In order for change to occur, however, the role playing had to be integrated with the social living class (Swink & Buchanan, 1984).

In a study of 183 children ages 9 to 14 who were reared in different kibbutz movements, Lifshitz (1973) indicated that maturity increases children's ability to take responsibility for successes and failures. Also, situations permitting freedom of self-organization and providing reinforcement for independent behavior in the educational atmosphere were found to be associated with assuming more responsibility for results, an element associated with internal locus of control.

Reimanis (1974) studied children placed in first and third grade classrooms where teachers were encouraged to change classroom procedures by using a reinforcer important
to each child to point out behavior-effect contingencies. The purpose was to help the children feel more internally controlled. These children showed greater change toward internal locus of control than those not in the experimental group. The children in the experimental group appeared to be more interested and knowledgeable about what they were doing, to be more fully engaged in class activities, and to be more dependable. Teacher opinions indicated that these children put forth more effort than they did before the treatment.

Locus of control changed significantly in a study of 53 first grade children in an enriched educational program. Children came to see themselves as being capable of acting on and changing the environment. This study indicated that locus of control was possibly an important variable in setting up programs for the disadvantaged (Shore, Milgram, & Malasky, 1971).

When 65 kindergarten and first grade children thought to be high risk for experiencing academic failure were involved in a 5 year effectiveness oriented program, their beliefs about their own control over academic performance changed to be about the same as ideas held by their low risk classmates. When the children's internal locus of control increased, so did their academic achievement (Walden & Ramey, 1983).
Though Mantzicopoulos (1990) found no relationship between locus of control and an academic failure situation, other researchers have found a relationship between internal locus of control and academic achievement in children (Bar-tal & Bar-zohar, 1977; Chapman, 1988; Lewis & Lawrence-Patterson, 1989; Phares, 1976). In a study by Gama and de Jesus (1991), children who often failed attributed their achievements to external and uncontrollable causes. Payne and Payne (1989) found that elementary students identified as at risk by their teachers had a significantly higher tendency to attribute their achievements and life experiences to external influences and forces.

**Locus of control and peer relationships**

In a study about strategies used for coping with stress, Kliewer (1991) found that children in middle childhood who possessed an internal locus of control and were rated as having better social competence used better coping behaviors. They used cognitive avoidance, described as a passive coping response, as one means of coping with stressful situations and observable avoidant actions as another means of dealing with stressful situations. Avoidant actions might include walking away from conflict or from hostile situations. Girls with an internal locus used cognitive avoidance more frequently than boys, who may have been taught to encounter trouble directly. Girls with an external locus seldom used cognitive avoidance. Kliewer
speculated that children using cognitive avoidance may have been attempting to reestablish control or may have been trying to deal with a situation which they could not control anyway.

Hegland and Galejs (1983) showed that the preschool children they studied developed an internal or external locus of control through social interaction with others, including peers, parents, and teachers. This orientation then exerted an influence on the child's social relationships, motivation for achievement, and ability to stay on task. It appeared to the writers that most children possessed a single locus of control orientation with which they approached both positive and negative social events.

Supplementing the aforementioned study, Galejs, Hegland, and King (1985) reported that middle class preschool children had high internal locus of control scores in both negative and positive social interactions. The researchers speculated that the middle class environment may be responsible. These children felt they had more control over fathers, mothers, and teachers, less control over peers, and even less control over themselves. The authors explained that perhaps the children were simply more adept at interpreting and responding to the wishes of parents and teachers than they were those of peers. Self-control involved controlling one's own feelings, something which the children were less capable of doing.
Swink and Buchanan (1984) found that the degree of internal locus of control increased for black fifth grade students who participated in a sociodramatic social living class. Role playing social situations helped these children to see the effect their actions had on their peers, to interpret peer responses, and to try alternative approaches. When the students' perceptions of their internal control increased, they saw occurrences in their lives as more contingent upon their own behavior instead of upon external forces. This finding, the researchers concluded, indicated that role playing is an effective method of helping children develop belief in their personal control in social relationships.

Locus of control and social competence

Geist and Borecki (1982) found that university students who rated high on the Social Avoidance and Distress scale had a tendency to see themselves as externally controlled. Because of this belief, the students would see social situations as increasing their feelings of powerlessness and as something to be avoided. As the following attests, the same could be said of younger children.

To arrive at the information concerning locus of control and social competence in children, it is necessary to examine the link between social attribution theory and locus of control theory. Some information relating locus of
control and social competence has its source in research on attribution theory as it relates to learned helplessness.

According to Corsaro (1981) who studied 50 nursery school children ranging in age from 2 years 11 months to 4 years 10 months, peer interaction in the nursery school is fragile, and rejection often occurs as a child attempts to enter ongoing peer interaction. Using social attribution theory, Lepore, Kiely, Bempechat, and London (1989) postulated that repeated rejection, which often happens to young children as indicated by the Corsaro study, may result in learned helplessness in social situations, that is, in coming to believe that social failure is brought about by relatively stable, uncontrollable, unchangeable causes residing within the individual, such as one's own social incompetence. Children who make this kind of attribution show helpless behavior patterns in response to rejection. They withdraw or continue maladaptive patterns of behavior.

One who attributes failures to internal causes which are perceived as insurmountable and beyond one's control or ability to change could be described as being similar to a person with an external locus of control. Such a person also believes that events are not under one's control. One who attributes causes of social rejection to factors which are surmountable and controllable, such as misunderstanding on the part of the rejector, could be described as being similar to a person with internal locus of control. Such a
person also believes that events are a consequence of one's actions and, therefore, under one's control.

The different uses of the words internal and external in locus of control theory and social attribution theory require explanation to avoid confusion. Persons with internal locus of control believe that one has influence over the source or timing of reinforcement so that events are viewed as a consequence of one's actions and, therefore, under one's own control. In attribution theory, persons who make internal attributions see the source as internal, for example, the result of one's incompetence, but also see that internal source, in this instance, incompetence, as beyond the person's control or ability to surmount or change. Therefore, such persons do not believe one can influence the causes of events. It that sense, persons who make internal attributions possess an external locus of control. They differ, however, from persons with an external locus of control in that they do not attribute events to be caused by uncontrollable external agents, such as chance, fate, or the behavior of others, but rather to be caused by uncontrollable internal personal qualities. Locus of control and social attribution theories, therefore, may complement one another regarding social competence provided one keeps in mind the differences in word usage.

External or internal locus of control beliefs and internal or external attributions are manifested by
differences in the responses of individuals to a rejection experience. Individuals with an external locus of control would exhibit a response similar to those individuals who make internal attributions, considering the rejection to be beyond their control to change and would, therefore, withdraw or perseverate in the same maladaptive approach. Similarly, individuals with an internal locus of control and those with external attributions would change their responses to the rejection event and would persist in trying to achieve their social goal, for example, entrance into a group.

In an investigation of fourth and fifth grade children, Goetz and Dweck (1980) studied children's causal attributions regarding their social rejection. Every attribution except lack of social ability, an internal attribution, presented the possibility of changing behavior and thus changing the rejection. The researchers found that those who attributed the rejection to their own social incompetence, showed the most severe reaction to rejection. After a rejection experience, they withdrew or continued to repeat the maladaptive behavior which brought about the rejection, showing little change in strategy. These children who felt helpless after a rejection experience responded maladaptively, regardless of whether or not they were perceived by peers as popular. Conversely, children who believed rejection was brought about by controllable
factors external to themselves persisted in trying to achieve their social goal (Goetz & Dweck, 1980).

Fincham and Hokoda (1987), upon analyzing the Goetz & Dweck data cited above, observed that rejected and neglected children were alike in that they ascribed their social rejection to their own social incompetence more frequently than did popular, average, or controversial children. Separating the reactions of rejected and neglected children, Fincham and Hokoda concluded that neglected children, because they see themselves as incompetent and expect rejection, may not be willing to take the risk of asserting themselves to try again but instead adopt a passive mode. On the other hand, rejected children may ineffectually persist in order to avoid admitting to failure.

In a study of fifth and sixth grade children, Lepore et al. (1989) found that those who believed that their social abilities were not under their control and were not likely to change, responded with helplessness to rejection. However, the more children believed that they could control social outcomes the more they would persist in trying to achieve their social goals. The researchers surmised that earlier experiences of rejection, brought about by lower social competence, may have brought about such beliefs. Nevertheless, results of the investigation suggested that beliefs about social abilities and status were capable of
being changed and interventions might be geared in that direction.

In a study of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade children who were attending a summer camp, Stein (1976) found that locus of control combined with age and sex factors predicted social acceptance but that there was no positive correlation between social acceptance and externality or internality of control. However, in a longitudinal study of children who were studied in second grade and again in fifth grade, Hymel, Rubin, Rowden, and LeMare (1990) identified social withdrawal as a risk factor and found that social withdrawal predicted subsequent low self-regard.

It may be said, therefore, that the results of the cited studies, except for Stein's, indicate a relationship between locus of control, social competence, and self-esteem.

Locus of control and self-esteem

Self-esteem and locus of control have appeared in earlier studies to be related in many ways. Harter (1983) cited several previous studies indicating that there was a strong relationship between locus of control and self-esteem, that children with high self-esteem believed they were more responsible for successful outcomes than children who failed, and that a favorable self-concept and responsibility for success, but not for failure, were significantly related. She found in one of her earlier
studies that the less children were aware of what controlled their failures and successes in school, the lower their self-perceived competence.

Harter (1985) suggested that attention needs to be paid to the relationship between children's assessment of personal responsibility for success and for failure. As elementary and junior high students developed, the tendency to attribute internal causes for failure decreased. However, these students did not blame others more than themselves for their failures. This pattern, Harter declared, may be an adaptation strategy used in the academic domain to protect their self-esteem because many events leading to failure may, in fact, be beyond their control.

Following a literature review on loneliness and self-esteem, Grunebaum and Solomon (1987) concluded that lonely people saw themselves as unimportant and valueless, reflecting the opinion they thought others had of them. In addition, lonely people believed that their personalities were incapable of changing and not under their personal control, an indication of an external locus of control.

In college age students Geist and Borecki (1982) found a strong relationship among self-esteem, locus of control, and social interest. Students who saw themselves as externally controlled showed a low level of self-esteem and exhibited a high level of social distress and avoidance, but those who saw themselves as internally controlled showed a
high level of self-esteem and social interaction. Those whose scores were moderate on the social avoidance scale also scored moderately on internality-externality.

The researchers concluded that higher levels of self-esteem would encourage students to become more involved in social situations because such situations would not appear to be so threatening. Low self-esteem would result in feeling less able to relate with others and would, therefore, lead to avoiding social situations. Persons who believed that control of situations resided outside themselves would find social interactions more frightening because of increased feelings of powerlessness than would those who believed that the control of the situation resided within themselves.

Differing from other researchers, Burns, Boals, and Throesch (1985), in a study of kindergarten children, found no relationship among self-concept, internal or external attributions, and locus of control. One year later, though, the same authors found that high self-concept kindergarten males made external attributions for success while lower self-concept second grade females made internal attributions. Nevertheless, most of the children's attributions were external. This was more evident in kindergarteners than in second graders. Self-concept exerted very little influence on causal attributions and
locus of control exerted no influence on causal attributions (Burns, Boals, & Throesch, 1986).

However, in a study of preschool and kindergarten children Friedberg and Dalenberg (1990) discovered that the children saw themselves as possessing control over their surroundings. They also attributed internal causes for their successes and external causes for their failures thereby, perhaps, disassociating themselves from their failures to protect their self-esteem.

**Self-esteem and academic achievement**

A review of past literature by Harter (1983) indicated that achievement and academic ability influenced self-esteem and that there was a causal relationship between academic achievement and self-concept. Phillips (1984) studied fifth grade children who were considered highly competent on the basis of their achievement test scores. She found that children with low perceptions of competence had lower, less demanding achievement expectancies, saw effort rather than ability as the source of success, and saw lack of effort as the cause of negative outcomes. Strong abilities did not ensure that children would feel personally adequate.

**Self-esteem and peer relationships**

Self-esteem and peer relationships have been seen as two sides of the single phenomenon of the person in the social world. Peer relationships and self-esteem have influenced each other. Grunebaum and Solomon (1987) stated
that individuals with low self-esteem were likely to have poor peer relationships and those with high self-esteem were likely to have good peer relationships. Good relationships with friends, associates, and family were usually necessary for feeling good about oneself. The writers postulated that individuals have a basic sense of self-esteem including physical, social, and academic components as well as self-esteem's equivalent phenomenon, the quality of peer relationships. These components have different degrees of importance to different individuals.

Duck (1983) comments that children with high self-esteem dealt with rejection more effectively and continued to initiate relationships. Low self-esteem children tended to withdraw to protect themselves from the hurt of rejection, became more socially isolated, initiated fewer friendships, and developed ways to psychologically defend themselves using, for example, aggressive or avoidant strategies. Through being rejected they learned that others placed a low value on them. Low self-esteem youngsters thereby recognized their own poor social assets. This process led to a negative self-image which reduced their willingness to initiate friendships or social activity.

Grunebaum and Solomon (1987) contended that the sense of self was so depleted from such experiences that entering into friendships became impossible, contributing to and preserving serious emotional deficits. The writers also
noted that by first grade children with learning
disabilities had lower self-esteem and were less able to
develop good social relationships. In adolescence and
preadolescence, relationships with peers became even more
important in the validation of a new self-image. In order
to disengage from parents, the adolescent needed good peer
relationships to prevent her or his parental relationship
from becoming overburdened and finally pathological.

Connolly, White, Stevens, and Burstein (1987) found in
adolescents a correlation between psychological well-being
and social relationships with peers. Socially competent
students had more frequent social activity, a greater sense
of social effectiveness, and higher self-esteem. This study
emphasized the importance of the contribution peers make to
social well-being. However, Walker and Greene (1986) found
that peer relationships predicted self-esteem only in girls
but not in boys. They wondered if differences occurred
because boys valued school performance as an indicator of
self-worth while girls valued popularity. Also, girls may
have had more and better peer relationships. These
researchers speculated that self-esteem and perceptions of
peer relationships influenced each other.

Hymel et al. (1990) conducted a longitudinal study of a
sample of 87 children in second and fifth grades. Children
who were unpopular in both grades were seen as aggressive by
their peers and as exhibiting hostility, aggression,
delinquency, and other antisocial behavior by their teachers. The presence of these characteristics in second grade were predictive of their presence in fifth grade. Socially isolated behavior, as assessed by peers, remained stable from second grade through fifth grade. Early indications of social withdrawal were related to later self-perceptions of social incompetence, peer rejection, and loneliness. Aggression, however, was not indicative of negative self-regard. Negative self-perceptions and peer assessments of social isolation in second grade were predictors of negative social self-perceptions and social isolation in fifth grade. Early social withdrawal appeared to predict subsequent lower self-regard. The researchers observed that such withdrawal possibly resulted in the unsuccessful development of adequate social skills and, as such, represented a risk factor which should not be ignored in future research.

Similarly, Pellegrini and Glickman (1990) studied 35 children for two years, kindergarten and first grade. They concluded that kindergarten children's peer relationships were predictive of social competence. Kindergarten children whose interactive behavior was passive or aggressive had social problems in first grade.

Locus of control, self-esteem, and educational environment

Rosenholtz and Wilson (1980) used 15 classrooms in grades 5 and 6 to investigate the consistency among peer,
self, and teacher ratings of reading ability, which in their study is the equivalent of perceived academic competence. The researchers noted that in high resolution classrooms, defined as classrooms where tasks were very similar, narrow in scope, and required the same skills to be used over and over, children had fewer choices of ways to demonstrate their competence in reading. Peers could, therefore, come to a consensus regarding the reading competence of individuals in the class. In low resolution classrooms, defined as classrooms where children were showing competency in a variety of ways, peers could not agree as easily on who was demonstrating high or low ability. It was the consensus of peer and teacher evaluations which shaped the individual's self-evaluation. High resolution classrooms, it appeared, exerted a powerful influence on children's subjective identities and self-perceptions of ability.

Stipek and Daniels (1988) found that kindergarteners were more optimistic about their future competence than fourth graders. Kindergarten children's assessment of their competency was related to the feedback they received in the educational environment. Kindergarteners in classrooms where normative, public, and frequent evaluations were deemphasized perceived their competence to be higher than did kindergarten children who were in classes in which evaluation was frequently emphasized. The researchers suggested that the decline in children's perceptions of
competence over the years might be partly explained by the classroom environment and the nature of instruction.

Classroom environments which allowed children to work with a large variety of materials, provided for a wide range of abilities, and supported children's autonomy by allowing them to have choices had a positive effect on self-esteem and sense of competency (Marshall, 1989; Sheridan, 1991). In self-initiated learning, children gained a sense of personal control, an element of internal locus of control. This sense of control contributed to self-esteem. Marshall stated that the ability to be successful in accomplishing tasks was related to perceived competence which, in turn, was related to self-esteem. Preschoolers judged themselves as competent on the basis of being able to do something.

According to Sheridan (1991), if children experienced repeated failure they developed an external locus of control, felt powerless to act, had a low sense of competency, and developed a low sense of self-esteem. Mantzicopoulos (1990), cited earlier in this chapter, further suggested that a school environment which encouraged children to successfully problem-solve and deal with negative emotions would be helpful to children.

After citing a series of studies, Bar-tal and Bar-zohar (1977) concluded that changing the educational setting could influence disadvantaged students' perceptions of locus of control, bringing these perceptions toward a more internal
orientation. The writers of the article contended that those who believed they were capable of influencing the environment would make an effort to do so in order to reach desired goals. Since control orientations may be determined by the situations in which individuals find themselves, changing the environment may modify the perceptions of control.

Younger children valued the opinions of significant adults (Marshall, 1989). Kostelnik, Stein and Whiren (1988) emphasized that verbalizations by teachers and other adults be used to enhance self-esteem rather than detract from it. If what children heard about themselves attested to their worthiness and competency, then it contributed to a positive self-evaluation. Adults could establish a verbal environment which helps children develop high self-esteem and enhance their sense of self-worth.

Rogers and Ross (1986) asserted that adults can also help children build successful relationships with peers by observing children and by using sociometric measures to determine which social skills are needed by each child. Necessary skills included the child's being able to determine what is taking place in a social situation, being aware of and able to interpret needs and actions of others, and being able to choose an appropriate course of action. Rogers and Ross suggested that teachers help children learn how to interact with others in the process of group play and
help promote appropriate social behavior by grouping socially competent children with those who are less so. This could be done in an environment which allows children to interact with each other as independently as possible.

**Social play levels**

Play is a social activity which allows children to build social skills in the classroom. Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg (1983) identify six factors which define play. They include self-motivation, more interest in the process rather than the results, internal instead of external locus of control, actions for themselves rather than as means to an end, rules not imposed from the outside, and active involvement.

Supporting Rubin, the criteria of play as defined by Neumann (1971) include intrinsic motivation, internal reality, and internal locus of control. The single most important standard for play, according to Neumann, is internal locus of control. If the play is controlled by the child together with other children, then cooperative locus of control takes place. To gain control of self and world, the child needs to manipulate the environment in her or his own way. Using Rubin's and Neumann's criteria, one can make a connection between locus of control and play, especially social play.

In each level of play as described by Parten (1932), the control of what the child does and does not do rests
within himself or herself. Parten, after observing several children at play, developed categories of social play. A child participating in unoccupied behavior is not playing or interacting with others but is observing whatever passes into view. The body language of an unoccupied child indicates some detachment. The onlooker is another child who is not openly entering into play. This child differs from the unoccupied child because he or she is purposefully and actively watching others. She or he is mentally engaged although he or she is not physically involved.

The child engaging in solitary play is playing alone, using materials which are different from those used by nearby children. This child is making no effort to interact with other children nearby but is, instead, focusing on her or his own activity. In parallel play the child is using similar or the same materials as those children who are close by. He or she does not, however, try to interact with nearby children, preferring to play beside them rather than with them.

In Parten's (1932) next level, associative play, children are playing together and interacting with each other in a loose association which is fluid and changeable. While the conversation concerns a common activity, each child acts as she or he wishes. What she or he does is not dependent on actions of other children. In cooperative play, children organize for the purpose of accomplishing a
mutually agreed upon goal. A child either does or does not belong to the group. Roles are assigned and rules are agreed upon together.

**Summary**

Locus of control, achievement, relationships with peers, and self-esteem were all interrelated, according to the literature review. How children perceived the control they had in determining outcomes of academic efforts and of relationships with others was related to their self-esteem, relationships with peers, and academic achievement. Beliefs that their efforts were not effective produced negative consequences in terms of peer relationships, academic achievement, and self-esteem. Beliefs that their efforts made a difference had a positive effect on peer relationships, academic achievement, self-esteem. Therefore, some of the researchers suggested that teachers arrange the classroom environment to promote the development of internal locus of control and self-esteem and to assist children in their peer relationships and in their academic achievement. Social play enables children to develop an internal locus of control, establish positive peer relationships, and develop self-esteem. By encouraging social play in the classroom, teachers may enable children to become more internally controlled and assist them in developing higher self-esteem and greater social competence.
Chapter III: Methodology and Procedures

Introduction

This chapter will describe the methodology and procedures to be used in this study.

Subjects

Participants in the study were enrolled in kindergarten in the Wahoo Public Schools, Wahoo, Nebraska. Wahoo, a small town of less than 4,000 people, is located approximately 30 miles north of Lincoln and 35 miles west of Omaha. The public school district includes one elementary school which has two half-day kindergarten classes taught by the author of this study. A total of 39 children, 17 males and 22 females enrolled in the two kindergarten classes, participated in the study. Only one child, a foster child whose foster parents could not legally give permission, did not participate. Both groups of children were used in the study in order to increase the number of children participating.

A control group was impossible because the only other kindergarten class in Wahoo is in a parochial school and meets for three full days, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, of each week. It has an academic focus in which children are expected to work in their seats doing pencil and paper activities instead of participating in social play. It
would be impossible, therefore, to adequately measure their level of social play because social play is not a part of that curriculum. In addition, there are differences in the amount and duration of time spent in the classroom, with the parochial class meeting all day on Monday, Wednesday and Friday of each week and the public school classes meeting for one-half day every school day.

After permission for the study was obtained from the school district, a letter explaining the purpose and method of the study was sent to parents. Parents completed and returned an informed parent consent form (see Appendix A).

**Instrumentation**

**Self-esteem**

To assess self-esteem the Preschool Self-Concept Picture Test (PSCPT), a nonverbal picture-type measure developed by Rosestelle B. Woolner (1966), was individually administered. A child was shown a set of 10 plates with paired pictures representing characteristics that children recognize and commonly attribute to themselves, such as clean-dirty, strong-weak, and sharing-not sharing. The characteristics, needs, concerns and developmental tasks of children in the age range of 2 to 5 years provided the basis for the 10 plates. The child was instructed to pick the plate which she or he is and the one which he or she "would like to be." A self score, the child's real or actual evaluation of the self, an ideal self score, what the child
would like to be, and a score reflecting the disparity between a child's real or actual evaluation of the self and a child's idealized self was obtained. This last score reflected a child's dissatisfaction with self.

According to Woolner (1966), if the answer on Part I, measuring self-concept agreed with the answer on Part II, measuring ideal self-concept, a 1 was placed in the Agree column. If the answers on Part I and Part II disagree, a 1 was placed in the Disagree column. By adding each scoring column and converting the total scores to percentages, the amount of satisfaction and dissatisfaction the child had with herself or himself could be determined. Woolner asserted that the degree of difference between the real self score and ideal self score for children who have poor self-concepts was 30% or less, for disturbed children was 20% or less, and for emotionally healthy children was 80-100%. Woolner reported that after three testing periods, the test-retest reliability coefficients for the self and ideal self scores were, respectively, $r=.94$ and $r=.80$. For the purposes of my study, the percentage reflecting the degree of satisfaction was used.

**Locus of control**

To assess locus of control the Preschool and Primary Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Control Scale (PPNS-IE) by Stephen Nowicki, Jr., and Marshall P. Duke (1974) was individually administered. This scale was described as a
downward extension of the Children's Nowicki Strickland Internal-External Control Scale (CNS-IE) and was determined to be suitable for children from 4 to 8 years of age. The test used a cartoon format consisting of 26 questions in which children were expected to mark "yes" or "no." Instead of the original format, I chose to have testers ask the questions and circle the child's answer. The items were keyed and scored toward the direction of externality, with 13 keyed "yes" and 13 keyed "no," to show the external direction. The total score was the number of questions the child answered indicating belief in external control (the higher the score the more the child was oriented toward external control).

Nowicki and Duke (1974) gave the PPNS-IE to 240 randomly selected children ages 5 through 8. To evaluate the measure's stability 60 children who were 7 were given the scale twice, with a 6 week interval. The reliability coefficient was .79, (p<.001). They tested several hypotheses to assess construct validity. To see if the scores were significantly related to the CNS-IE, that scale was administered to 60 children age 8 following administration of the PPNS-IE. This resulted in a correlation of .78, (p<.001).

**Level of Social Play**

To assess the level of social play, categories of social participation based on those developed by Mildred B.
Parten (1932) were used to create a play behavior rating scale. Unoccupied behavior included not playing or interacting with others while still observing whatever passed into view. The body language of an unoccupied child indicated some detachment and the expression in the eyes alternated between being bright and engaged and glazed over and detached. At another level of play, the onlooker, while still physically unengaged, was purposefully and actively watching and observing others.

The child in solitary play was playing alone, using different materials, and making no attempt to interact with other children. In parallel play the child was participating in the same activity or playing with the same or similar materials as those children who were close by. However, the play was individual and did not depend upon what other children did. Sometimes the use of the materials was similar or matched to that of children playing nearby.

In associative play, children were in a loose association which was fluid and changeable as they played and interacted together. While the conversation concerned a common activity, each child acted independently and roles were not assigned beforehand or during play. In cooperative play, children organized to accomplish a mutually agreed upon goal. A child either did or did not belong to the group. Roles were assigned and rules were agreed upon.
together. If a child with a key role left the group, play stopped.

In addition to the categories of social play, scales for the affective category and the initiation of activity category were devised by me in consultation with my adviser. The affective categories which showed negative, neutral, or positive feelings on the part of the child being observed were coded. Negative feelings included showing anger, fear, sadness or other unfavorable feelings expressed by the target child or another child involved in the play exchange. Positive feelings included laughter, smiling, or other affirmative feelings expressed by the target child or another child involved in the play exchange. Neutral feelings involved neither positive or negative feelings shown by the children involved in the play exchange. The affect shown by the children would have an effect on the self-esteem of the children involved and would give an indication of how the child was seen by some of his or her peers.

Initiation of activity category was related to who started the activity. Activity was coded if play was already in progress, if the observer did not see the initiation take place, if the initiation was not started by the target child, that is, the child being observed, if the play was started physically by the target child, and if the play was started verbally by the target child. This would
provide some information about whether children initiated 
play physically or verbally and whether many or few children 
were seen initiating play during the time of the 
observeration.

In the classroom, observers took a time sample of a 
child's play for a period of 5 minutes, making 3 
observations during that period by observing 1 minute and 
marking 3 values, 1 for play behavior, 1 for affect, and 1 
for the initiation of activity category during the next 
minute, then observing for 1 minute, marking for 1 minute, 
observing 1 minute, marking 1 minute. Later in the same 60 
minute play period the child was observed for the second 
time.

Values were assigned to each play behavior category. 
Zero value was assigned for unoccupied behavior and solitary 
play; 1 was assigned for onlooking behavior, 2 for parallel 
play, 3 for associative play and 4 for cooperative play. 
Affective category values included 1 for negative affect, 2 
for neutral affect and 3 for positive affect. Initiation of 
activity category included 0 if play were already in 
progress at the onset of each observation or if initiation 
of activity was not observed, 1 indicating that initiation 
was not by the target child, 2 if the activity was initiated 
physically by the target child and 3 if the activity was 
initiated verbally by the target child.
The numbers obtained from each observation over the 4 day testing period were then totaled for each category and expressed as a percentage of the highest possible score that could have been obtained in each category had the highest value been assigned in each observation. For example, in the play behavior category, 4 for cooperative play was the highest possible marking for each observation. Therefore, for the 24 observations over the 4 days in which observations took place, 96 was the highest possible score. If a child scored 55 out of the possible 96, the percentage score was 57.292.

**Procedures**

The five observers involved in the study, along with an individual to serve as back-up should anyone become ill, attended a 3 hour training session during which the directions for administering the tests were discussed and clarified, as were ways to approach the children. After an examination of the play behavior rating scale and the printed explanation, observers watched selected video segments of playing children taken in my 1992-93 class and in a previous kindergarten class. Observers practiced coding with the video, discussing why a particular code was chosen, and reaching agreement on the most appropriate code to use.

Five individuals administered the Preschool and Primary Form of the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale for
Children and the Preschool Self-concept Picture Test 8 days after the start of the school year. Subjects were identified by first names printed on headbands which they were wearing; first names had been printed on the response sheets in advance. The study was done in a small town where complete anonymity is impossible; therefore, first names were used to identify children in order to increase their comfort level with the testers. In the present study the test was read to each child individually by an adult. It was decided to provide the adults with typed questions next to which the child's response of "yes" or "no" was circled by the adult.

Observations of play behavior took place over a 2 week period beginning 10 days after the start of school. Observers coded each child in the morning and afternoon classes on 4 different days. The schedule for coding was arranged so that each child was observed twice during the 60 minute play period. Children had been in school 10 days prior to the beginning of the observation and were accustomed to my observing them; however, they had not been in school long enough for the environment of my classroom to exert an influence on their social play behavior.

Research Design and Method

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, (SPSS-X user guide), 3rd edition (Chicago: 1988) on the U.N.O. VAX mainframe computer. The
SPSS-X sub-routines ANOVA and CORRELATION were used for the data analysis.
Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

The variables in this study included self-esteem (SE), locus of control (LOC), play category (PLAYCAT), affective category (AFCAT), initiation of activity category (INITCAT), age in years (AGE), sex (SEX). The relationship among the variables was assessed in two ways, correlational analysis and analyses of variance.

Correlation

The following correlations are reported and summarized on Table I. There was no significant correlation between locus of control and each of the following: self-esteem, play category, affective category, age, and sex of child; or between play category and the following: self-esteem, locus of control, and sex of child. No significant correlation existed between affective category and each of the following: locus of control, age, and sex of child, or between age and the following: self-esteem, locus of control, affective category, and sex. Also, no significant relationship was found between sex and each of the following: self-esteem, locus of control, play category, affective category, and age. However, play category and age were significantly correlated ($r = .3333$, $p<.05$) as were play category and affective category ($r = .6670$, $p<.01$),
while sex of child and self-esteem were negatively correlated \( r = -.36, p < .05 \) (see Table I).

**Analyses of Variance**

The hypotheses proposed in this study were addressed by two-way analyses of variance (ANOVA). Age groups were formed by using age decimals and collapsing them into 3 groups to establish 3 age categories. The locus of control group and the self-esteem group were formed by a median split on the locus of control scores and the self-esteem scores.

Hypothesis 1a, which refers to the relationship among self-esteem, sex of child, and age, was addressed by forming age groups. Sex of child was not significant. Age group was highly significant \( F = 5.508, p = .009 \). In addition, there was significant sex of child by age group interaction \( F = 3.936, p = .029 \) (see Table II).

The relationship among self-esteem, sex of child, and locus of control, as referred to in hypothesis 1b, was investigated. For this ANOVA, children were grouped by locus of control. Locus of control group was not significant. However, sex of child was significant \( F = 5.259, p = .028 \) (see Table III).

Age groups were formed for the analysis of the relationship among play category, sex of child, and age, referred to in hypothesis 2a. Sex of child was not
TABLE I
Intercorrelation Matrix Among Major Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>LOC</th>
<th>PLAYCAT</th>
<th>AFCAT</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>SEX</th>
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<td>SE</td>
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<td>LOC</td>
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<td>.6670**</td>
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*p<.05  **p<.01
TABLE II

ANOVA: Self-esteem by Sex and Age Group

<table>
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<tr>
<th>S.V.</th>
<th>d.f.</th>
<th>M.S.</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig. of F</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2329.195</td>
<td>3.936</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>591.766</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>S.V.</td>
<td>d.f.</td>
<td>M.S.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig. of F</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>928.340</td>
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significant. Age group was nearly significant \( (F = 2.578, p = .091) \) (see Table IV).

Hypothesis 2b, which refers to the relationship among play category, sex of child, and self-esteem, was evaluated. This hypothesis was analyzed by forming self-esteem groups. There was no significance in either the main effects or interactions (see Table V). No significance was found in either the main effects or interactions when hypothesis 2c, which refers to the relationship among play category, sex of child, and locus of control, was evaluated by forming locus of control groups (see Table VI).

The relationship among affective category, sex of child, and age, as referred to in hypothesis 3a, was addressed by forming age groups. There was no significance (see Table VII). Analysis of variance yielded no significance when hypothesis 3b, which refers to the relationship among affective category, sex of child, and self-esteem, was tested. For this analysis self-esteem groups were formed (see Table VIII). No significance in either the main effects or interactions were found when hypothesis 3c, which refers to the relationship among affective category, sex of child, and locus of control was investigated by forming locus of control groups (see Table IX).

Hypothesis 4a, which refers to the relationship among locus of control, sex of child, and age, was addressed by
TABLE IV

ANOVA: Play Category by Sex and Age Group

<table>
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<th>S.V.</th>
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<th>F</th>
<th>Sig. of F</th>
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<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
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<td>576.766</td>
<td>2.578</td>
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<td>2-Way Interactions</td>
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<td>Sex X Age Group</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Total</td>
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TABLE V
ANOVA: Play Category by Sex and Self-esteem Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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TABLE VI

ANOVA: Play Category by Sex and Locus of Control Group

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TABLE VIII

ANOVA: Affective Category by Sex and Self-esteem Group

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TABLE IX
ANOVA: Affective Category by Sex and Locus of Control Group

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forming age groups. No significance was found (see Table X). The relationship among locus of control, sex of child, and self-esteem, referred to in hypothesis 4b, was investigated by forming self-esteem groups. No significance was found in either the main effects or interactions (see Table XI).

When it was observed that a breakdown by sex consisted of 1 male and 9 females within one of the age groups, the age groups were collapsed into 2 groups instead of 3 to create a more even distribution by sex. The results of subsequent ANOVA's using the collapsed age groups were substantially the same and therefore not reported.
TABLE X
ANOVA: Locus of Control by Sex and Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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TABLE XI

ANOVA: Locus of Control by Sex and Self-esteem Group

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Chapter V: Discussion

Introduction

Although some of the variables assessed were not found to be related, this chapter discusses the implications of the findings and the possible reasons why no relationships occurred or were discovered.

Conclusions

Because children usually derive pleasure from play, the relationship between play category and affective category was expected. Although a negative correlation existed between play category and initiation category, that measure was not considered to be reliable because of an artifact of the scoring method whereby observers would often begin to observe an ongoing play situation in which initiation had already occurred and would score the initiation of activity category as zero resulting in an uneven application of the scoring codes. Also, as the play category became more complex, there was less and less initiation activity coded. This appeared to be contradictory because more complex play is more social. For these reasons, the initiation of activity category was dropped from the analysis. One could reasonably assume that the significant relationship between play category and age
was valid because play complexity increases as children become older.

According to these data there were no significant relationships among self-esteem, locus of control and level of social play. Perhaps the data proved to be invalid because of lack of randomization which would have helped eliminate extraneous variables. In addition, although there were no pretests, the measures used in testing were obtrusive because subjects were taken out of the room to be individually interviewed for the self-esteem and locus of control measures, an event which had not occurred prior to the testing. The strangeness of the situation could have changed the children's reaction to the event.

In giving the locus of control and self-esteem instruments, testers may have given subjects different cues as the testers became more proficient or bored with the data collection. The individual differences of the testers may have had an unequal effect on the children's responses. There was no formal interrater reliability established to equalize tester performance.

Subjects were observed by individuals not normally in the classroom. Although the children were somewhat accustomed to my observing them prior to the experiment, there were some children who were very aware of being the focus of an observation. It is likely that they may have changed their behavior because they felt self-conscious,
believed that they needed to perform for the observers, or in some way attempted to comply with their beliefs about observer expectations. Perhaps subjects were influenced by other factors taking place during the school day or at home.

As the observers became more accustomed to the situation and gained more experience, their manner of scoring the play scale could have changed. The five observers may have scored play events differently despite the fact that observer agreement seemed to have been reached during the practice session. Had the situation allowed, it may have been helpful to have two individuals observing the same child at the same time so that they could have compared their conclusions.

The instrument for self-esteem was not correlated adequately with other measures which predicted self-esteem nor was there enough evidence gathered to identify to what extent self-esteem was measured by this particular test. Thus, it may have been an inadequate instrument. It was selected because there appeared to be no other alternative to use with children in the age group being tested.

According to Marshall (1989) there were few instruments available for measuring self-concept, of which self-esteem is one aspect, for children younger than age 8 partly because young children had difficulty discussing and understanding abstractions and internal processes. Also, young children's self-concepts varied over time because how
they felt about themselves was influenced by events of the moment thus making the indicators of self-concept appear unstable. Harter (1985) asserted that young children's self descriptions were unstable, global, and often overgeneralized. They did not distinguish between what they were and what they wished to be. As they developed, children were better able to differentiate between the two.

The fact that this research did not show statistical significance among locus of control, self-esteem, and level of social play does not necessarily mean that a relationship does not exist. Perhaps more adequate instruments could be developed or secured for use in further research where a control group and random sampling are carried out. Also, since sex role is a salient part of early experience, a difference in results may have occurred if aspects of sex role had been measured in view of the negative correlation found between sex and self-esteem and the significance of sex in the analysis of variance when self-esteem scores were run, with sex and locus of control group as factors. In addition, observers and testers with more professional training could perhaps be found were another study to be made.
References


of stability and relations to social adjustment. 
Journal of Adolescence, 10, 83-95.


attributions in young children. Child Study Journal, 
20, 139-151.
Hymel, S., Rubin, K. H., Rowden, L., & LeMare, L. (1990). Children's peer relationships: Longitudinal prediction


APPENDIX A
Child's Name

# Play Behavior Rating Scale

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<td>Initiates</td>
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## Assigned Values:

### Play Behavior Categories:
- 0...unoccupied behavior
- 0...solitary play
- 1...onlooker behavior
- 2...parallel play
- 3...associative play
- 4...cooperative play

### Affective Categories:
- 1...negative
- 2...neutral
- 3...positive

### Initiation of Activity Categories:
- 0...already in progress
- 0...while coding didn't observe
- 1...not by target child
- 2...physically by target child
- 3...verbally by target child
APPENDIX B
August 1992

Dear Parent(s):

I am conducting a study at West Ward School for my Master of Arts thesis in elementary education. The purpose of my study is to further our understanding of how the children's expectations and the learning environment affect their social behavior. Scales will be individually administered at the beginning of the school year, and observations will take place in class over a period of two weeks. I would like to use the kindergarten classes that I am teaching this year for my study. I am planning to ask volunteers to assist.

I have talked with Dr. Brennan, the superintendent, and Mr. Schiermeyer, the principal, concerning this study and have their permission to undertake it. I can assure you that your child will not be affected negatively by the process nor will your child's name be connected with his or her responses to questions or observations. Neither will your child be negatively affected if you refuse permission. Confidentiality will be respected. No findings will affect your child's school records because only group data will be used.

Please indicate your permission for your child to participate by signing below. I appreciate your time and cooperation and will be happy to discuss my study with you at any time.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Knudsen

cc: Robert Schiermeyer, Principal
    John Brennan, Ph.D., Superintendent

I give permission for my child to participate in this study.

Parent/Guardian Signature ________________________________
Date____________