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The Relationship Between Gender, Ethnicity, Grade Level, Lunch Status and Self-Concept Scores of Selected Elementary Students

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER, ETHNICITY, GRADE LEVEL, LUNCH STATUS AND SELF-CONCEPT SCORES OF SELECTED ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

by

Katherine Jo Solomon

A DISSERTATION

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The Relationship Between Gender, Ethnicity, Grade Level, Lunch Status, and Self Concept Scores of Selected Elementary Students

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GRADUATE COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

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Katherine Jo Solomon, Ed.D.
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Advisor: Robert C. O'Reilly

The purpose for conducting this study was to examine the relationship between gender, ethnicity, grade level, lunch status, and self-concept. This study was designed to investigate the self-concept of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students in selected elementary schools within the Omaha (NE) Public School District.

Self-concept of students was indicated through the responses given to the 80 items on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. Grade level, ethnicity, gender, and lunch status were collected from the same student respondents who provided answers to the Piers-Harris. The sample popluation included 562 students in eight elementary schools with counselors.

Analysis of variance in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to determine if significant differences existed between the dependent variable of self-concept score and the independent

variables of gender, ethnicity, grade level, and lunch status respectively. In this study, there was no statistically significant relationship between gender and self-concept, ethnicity and self-concept, grade level and self-concept, and lunch status and self-concept.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose for conducting this study was to examine the relationship between gender, ethnicity, grade level, lunch status, and self-concept. This study was designed to investigate the self-concept of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students in selected elementary schools within the Omaha (NE) Public School District (OPS).

Context of the Problem

A central concern of self-concept research has been the relationship between students' self perceptions and their academic performance levels; researchers have generally reported confirmation or refutation of the signficance of that relationship (Osborne & LeGette, 1982). Often in the course of investigating the self-concept and its correlation with scholastic achievement, researchers have discovered differences in self-concept scores according to the gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or grade level of their study participants. These findings could have important implications within educational settings.

From their study of the stability of self-concept between and within groups over a ten-year period, Barnes and Farrier (1985) found that females had a

lower self-concept than males. Kohr, Coldiron, Skiffington, Master, & Ross (1988) in their study of the influence of race, class, and gender on self-esteem for fifth, eighth, and eleventh graders found gender differences were statistically significant for all analyses except within high socioeconomic schools at grade 5. In all instances, females had higher scores than males. Kohr, et.al. (1988) citing Wylie's review of the self-concept literature in relation to gender, reported that, of the many studies using the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, virtually all showed no differences between boys' and girls' self-concept or were ambiguous because of methodological problems. None of the research done with well known self-concept scales demonstrated male-female differences of any significance. Thus, there do seem to be differences in research conclusions concerning gender roles and self-concept.

Similar ambiguity exists in research related to ethnicity differences and self-concept. In citing Rosenberg's work, Madhere (1991) reported that young African Americans expressed above-average levels of self-esteem that were often higher than those of white youngsters of the same age. According to Osborne & Legette (1982) the findings of Chaplin, Stenner, and Katzenmeyer and Wylie suggested that

Blacks tended to have significantly lower self-concepts than whites. Thompson & Yaskey (1983) maintained the need to provide plans and procedures to develop Hispanic bilingual children's self-concepts. Mitchum (1989) reported that although little difference has been found in the level of self-esteem between preschool Native Americans and white children, the situation changes when American Indian students experience conflicts after entering school. The discrepancy continues through elementary school, culminating in junior high when Native Americans begin demonstrating high rates of absenteeism, discipline problems, and low motivation.

Conflicting data were also reported in studies of social class differences. Osborne & Legette (1989) maintained that evidence suggested a correlation between socioeconomic status and self-concept, but whether that relationship was positive or negative was not clear. In citing the work of Brookover and Wylie, Osborne and Legette reported less positive self-concepts for students from lower social classes. However, in citing the work of Cicirelli, Soares and Soares, and Trowbridge, Osborne and Legette reported that the self-concepts of students from disadvantaged socioeconomic environments actually surpassed those of their more affluent classmates.

Marsh (1989) in reviewing age effects in levels of self-concept summarized that researchers suggested a decline in self-concepts during preadolescent years. Not all of the studies he reviewed reported a decline and none reported an increase during preadolescence. The results of a study by Montemayor and Eisen (1977) supported the finding that with the increase of age an individual's self-concept becomes more abstract and less concrete. The children in their study primarily described themselves in terms of conrete, objective categories such as their address, physical appearance, possessions, and play activities, while adolescents used more abstract and subjective descriptions such as personal beliefs, motivational and interpersonal characteristics. Osborne and Legette (1982) found no significant differences in global self-concept when self-concept scores were compared to grade levels.

This study investigated differences in the self-concept scores of a group of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students by their gender, ethnicity, grade level, and lunch status. Because of evidence suggesting that such variations do not consistently occur, four null hypotheses were proposed.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose for conducting this study was to examine self-concept of students in selected Omaha

Public Schools. The research was designed to investigate the relationship between gender, ethnicity, grade level, lunch status, and self-concept.

Hypotheses

This study on self-concept yielded results on four null hypotheses.

1. There is no significant difference of self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence between males and females.

2. There is no significant difference of self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence between Hispanics, Caucasians, Native Americans, and African Americans.

3. There is no significant difference of self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence between fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students.

4. There is no significant difference of self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence between students with free lunch status, reduced lunch status, and full price lunch status.

Operational Definitions

Self-Concept. A relatively stable set of self attitudes reflecting both a description and an evaluation of one's own behavior and attributes. (Piers,1984)

Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale. An 80-item, self-report questionnaire designed to assess how children and adolescents feel about themselves. Items on the scale are scored in either a positive or negative direction to reflect the self-evaluative dimension. A high score on the scale suggests a positive self-evaluation, whereas a low score suggests a negative self-evaluation. (Piers, 1984)

Lunch Status. Those students whose family income falls within guidelines established by USDA may be eligible for reduced-price or free breakfast and lunch. The guidelines are based upon a federally defined poverty level and the number of persons in a household. The guidlelines change each year and eligibility must be reestablished each year. All full time students, K-12, are eligible to participate in federally subsidized programs. (Omaha Public Schools Food Services Division, 1992 - Appendix D) In studies by Butler and Handley (1989), Phelps (1990), Andrews (1986), and Sletsema (1989) socioeconomic status was based on student eligibility for free and reduced lunch programs. The Omaha Public Schools use lunch

status as a measurement of socioeconomic status. In this paper, lunch status was a measurement of socioeconomics.

Elementary School Counselor. A counselor working as a member of the professional staff of an elementary school, with the responsbility for working with students, teachers, and parents. The counselor's major concern is the developmental needs of all students.

Guidance. The totality of services and activities of the counselor to help the individual to a greater and fuller life.

Limitations

1. This study was limited to fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classrooms according to their availability in the school counselor's schedule.

2. This study was limited to those elementary schools in the Omaha Public School District that have elementary school counselors. The schools included in the study were: Field Club, Spring Lake, Indian Hill, Bancroft, King Science Center, Ashland Park, Druid Hill, and Belvedere. 562 students and 8 counselors were involved in the study.

3. The study results are not to be generalized to fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students in the Omaha Public School nor fourth, fifth, sixth graders at large.

4. This study was limited to identifying relationships between the dependent variable, self-concept and the independent variables of gender, ethnicity, grade level, and lunch status.

5. This study was limited by the weaknesses inherent in this research design.

Assumptions

1. The findings reflect accurately the perceptions of those students who were administered the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale.

2. The statistical procedures used for inferential measurement were valid and appropriate to this study.

3. The findings of this study will add to the literature on the topic of self-concept and the impact of gender, ethnicity, grade level, and lunch status.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant for students, teachers, administrators, and elementary school counselors.

The major purpose of the guidance and counseling program in the Omaha Public Schools is to provide a system designed to anticipate and facilitate the educational, career, and personal/social needs of students. A curriculum approach to providing services focuses on the prevention of problems by providing all students with appropriate age level skills and guidance information.

Williams and Leonard (1989) contend that since there is evidence that early intervention can improve the self-concepts of at-risk students, guidance services should be extended so more children can be counselled, and counselors should help elementary school teachers plan and implement effective activities to foster positive self-concepts among at-risk students. Dobson, Campbell, & Dobson (1982) believed guidance programs were developed in schools to personalize the learning experiences and to facilitate individual development. They maintained that with the concern of developing positive self-concepts, counselors and teachers are becoming increasingly aware that establishing positive student attitudes toward school is an important objective for schools. In citing Epstein and McPartland, they stated that positive attitudes toward school can (a) increase the likelihood of children remaining in school, (b) encourage the development of a commitment to life-long learning, and (c) promote the advantageous use of school time and offerings. At the very least, higher satisfaction with school, greater commitment to schoolwork, and more positive student-teacher relationships mean more enjoyable and stimulating hours spent in the school setting. (Dobson, Campbell, & Dobson, 1982)

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to assist the reader in developing an expanded understanding of (1) self-concept, (2) self-concept development, (3) the relationship of gender, ethnicity, grade level, and lunch status (socioeconomics) on self-concept, (4) The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, and (5) enhancing student self-concept.

Self-Concept: Defining the Term

Phillips (1983) stated self-concept involves one's beliefs, attitudes, and feelings toward one's abilities and disabilities: it includes one's positive and negative character descriptions, ideas, attitudes, values, and commitments. Bailey (1987) in citing Thomas wrote that self-concept is formed through experiences with the environment, interaction with significant others, and attributions of one's own behavior. Thus, self-concept plays an important role in the child's relationships with teachers, classmates, and other individuals in the academic as well as non-academic environment.

Strickland and Campbell (1982) defined positive self-concept as "what I am". "I believe this is me, therefore it is me. I recognize my strengths and deficiencies and work from my strengths to

improve my deficiencies with a reasonable expectation of success. But I am able to accept a less than, perfect success with the belief that I am still a person of worth." Chapman (1988) in citing Byrne defined self-concept as the perception of ourselves involving our attitudes, feelings, and knowledge about our skills, abilities, appearance, and social acceptability. Beane and Lipka (1984) defined self-concept as the description an individual attaches to the self. The self-concept is based on the roles one plays and the attributes one believes the individual possesses.

Oblakor (1985) believed self-concept includes self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-ideal and can be measured in relationship to physical maturity, peer relations, academic success, and school adaptiveness. (a) Self-knowledge is a subset of self-descriptive behaviors that describe the individual's characteristics or qualities. This includes descriptions of physical appearance, behavior, abilities, and cognitive patterns. Self-knowledge includes self-descriptions that indicate an evaluation of characteristics but does not include statements that indicate self-valuations. (b) Self-esteem is the subset of self-descriptive behaviors that indicate self-valuations. In this instance, the individual

evaluates certain self characteristics relative to how those characteristics are valued. (c) Self-ideal is the subset of self-descriptive behaviors that indicate self-qualities that the student desires to achieve or maintain through the expenditure of personal efforts. (d) Physical maturity is the relative maturity of the child within the classroom group. A more physically mature child in this test is one who looks older, is taller, or is stronger than classmates. (e) Peer relations is the child's acceptance or rejection by the peer group. The accepted child is portrayed as being included in a variety of group activities or as having many friends. The rejected child is portrayed as being rejected, left out, or as not having many friends. (f) Academic success is the child's relative success at academics within the classroom group. The more successful child is portrayed as a more able learner, one who knows the answers to teacher questions, does not need help from the teacher, and makes relatively few mistakes on school work. (g) School adaptiveness is the child's ability to exhibit those behaviors typically expected within the classroom environment. The school adaptive child is the student who does the work during the designated time, works quietly when expected to, and does not distract others inappropriately.

In this study, self-concept was defined as a relatively stable set of self-attitudes reflecting both a description and an evaluation of one's own behavior and attributes. (Piers, 1984)

Development of Self-Concept

Two main accepted theories in regard to how self-concept develops were summarized by Alawiye and Alawiye (1984). The first theory, that is supported by psychologists and psychiatrists, is the notion of "developmental self." The theory of "developmental self" views self-concept as a process of maturation, the interaction between the individual and the environment. The second school of thought is the "social self" supported by the environmentalists. Within the environmentalists are the behaviorists and the phenomenologists. The behaviorists view self-concept development as a learned reaction to external stimuli. The phenomenologists base self-concept development on perceptions from other's responses.

Johnson (1982), in citing Combs and Courson, noted that as a person develops positive self-concept, the individual becomes more open to experiences, does not distort the environment that is being perceived, and thus can be more able to learn about self. At the same time, since the individual is then able to receive

stimuli from all sources with less distortion, experiencing the world more fully, the person becomes more able to learn effectively in an academic setting.

During the early years of development, each child is surrounded by countless signal systems. "Inviting" or "disinviting" messages inform the child of the abilities, values, and autonomy, or the lack thereof. Every experience the child has and every interpretation the individual makes of that experience influences the development of the child's self-concept, positively or negatively. By the time a child reaches school age, the self-concept is already developed and functioning. All school experiences will be filtered through this self-concept. As the filtering takes place, the self-concept itself is gradually altered, for good or ill. As vital as early preschool experiences are in creating self-concept, school experiences should not be underestimated. When children enter school, they are expected to undertake a major new identity, and they assume this identity with greater or lesser success. The result is an often overlooked aspect of self-concept theory: self-concept as learner. Self-concept as learner is that part of a person's "global self", all the attitudes, opinions, and beliefs that a person holds to be true of the personal existance, that relates most directly to

school achievement (Purkey, Raheim, & Cage, 1983).

Rihl, Burgan, & Christenberry (1988) maintained that what students believe about themselves vitally affects every aspect of their behavior and learning. An individual's self-concept is developed as a result of the experiences the person has had. By the time a child reaches school age, the self-concept is quite well formed. The reactions to learning and to the school success or failure will be determined by the beliefs and attitudes the individual has about self. The most important ideas that an individual will ever possess are those that are about self.

Pottebaum, Keith, & Ehly (1986) suggested that research conducted on self-concept and achievement stems from the apparent belief that children's feelings about themselves are key factors in school achievement. They stated that the assumption of many theorists seem to be that the child's developmental needs, including positive self-concept, should be the basis for educational progress.

As children enter school, the major roles played by parents, siblings, and self-chosen playmates in self-concept development are strongly complemented by teachers and classmates (Winne, Woodland, & Wong,1982). Because the school and its environment communicate that academic achievement is one, if not the most important

tasks to be approached, Winne, et. al. (1982) stated it is reasonable to predict that students' views of their academic standing, as communicated by various forms of evaluation and teachers' structuring of class activities, strongly influence students' self-concept.

Crosby (1982) believed any efforts to develop self-concept must be based on the humanistic assumption that humans are basically good and inherently self-actualizing. Given that humans will strive toward greater levels of being, Crosby concluded non-constructive attitudes and behavior to be of strivings gone astray. The development of self-concept will aid and direct a student's strivings in a constructive manner throughout the life cycles. Crosby delineated three possible positions of self-concept: How I perceive me, how I perceive others perceive me, and how I really am.

The following external factors related to the development of self-concept were contributed by Marshall (1989). (1) Responsiveness of caregivers. The quality, consistency and timing of adults' responses to infants may carry messages about trust, caring, and the value of the infant. Caregiver responsiveness may also convey information about the developing child's capacity to become competent and to control the environment. When caregivers respond

positively and consistently to infants' cues, infants may come to learn that they are of value and that they can influence their social environment. This may contribute to beginning feelings of self-worth, personal control, and competence. (2) Physical environment. If we make developmentally appropriate materials (those that provide both challenge and success) easily accessible to young children for exploration in an encouraging environment, these children are likely to acquire feelings of competence and confidence in approaching new materials. Mirrors and similar light-reflecting surfaces provide opportunities for very young children to learn not only about their physical characteristics but also about themselves as independent agents who can make things happen. (3) Parental attitudes and childrearing practices. Marshall (1989) cited Sears who found that parents who were warm and accepting when their children were young (age 5) had children with high self-esteem measured at age 12. Parents who use an authoritative pattern are also more likely to have children with high self esteem. These parents make reasonable demands that are accepted by children, but they do not impose unreasonable restrictions and they allow their children some choice and control. (4) Expectation. Teachers' and parents' expectations may influence children's

self esteem both (a) directly through opportunities adults provide for children to learn and become competent and (b) indirectly through more subtle cues that children eventually come to perceive. (5) Classroom environments. Classroom structure and teachers' control orientations may influence children's self-concepts. Whether teachers support children's autonomy or tend to control children through external means also affects children's perceptions of competence and self esteem. (6) Peers. Some research suggests peer interactions may have an influence on self-esteem and social self-concept earlier than previously believed. Social self-concept may influence peer relationships, or peer relationships may influence social self-concept, or knowledge of interpersonal skills may affect peer relationships and/or social self-concept.

Influences of gender, ethnicity, grade level, and socioeconomics on self-concept

Several studies were found in an ERIC search in which the authors used free and reduced lunches as a measurement of socioeconomics. Goodwin and Goodwin (1989) described an extensive survey of educators in a large metropolitan school district in terms of their perceptions of the unmet health needs of elementary school children in the district. Since the district

participated in the federal sponsored free and reduced-cost lunch program with qualifications based on family income and size, Goodwin and Goodwin (1989) decided to use data from the program as a proxy for socioeconomics.

Jones and Mandeville (1990), in determining the degree of association of age at school entry with reading failure, used the Basic Skills Assessment Program to analyze reading test scores of students in Grades 1, 2, 3, and 6. The researchers examined the relative importance of age and the factors of race, sex, and socioeconomic status. The lunch-payment status of each student was used as an indicator of socioeconomic status. Those who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches were characterized as lunch-assisted, others as full-paying.

In a three year study, Andrews (1986) investigated the relationship between teachers' perceptions of the principal as instructional leader and average gain scores of students in 67 elementary schools in Seattle. Scores were disaggregated by student ethnicity and student free lunch status as a surrogate measure of socioeconomic status. Phelps (1990) had sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students complete a Rural School Success Inventory and the Learning Styles Inventory. The study explored differences

between low socioeconomic status and middle/high socioeconomic status. Cumulative frequencies and percentages were grouped by SES as determined by free and reduced lunch status. Sletsema (1989) in studying the characteristics of the 55 largest public elementary and secondary school districts based socioeconomic status on the percentage of students eligible for free lunch programs. In a study on differences in achievement for first grade students taught in small classes, eligibility for federal free lunch programs was the criterion used by Butler and Handley (1989) to evaluate socioeconomic status. In this research study, eligibility for free and reduced price lunches was the criterion used for socioeconomic status.

To investigate differences in the self-concept scores of a group of adolescents by the sex, race, grade level, and social class of the study participants, Osborne and Legette (1982) used three self-concept instruments. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, and the Self-Concept of Ability Scale were administered to study participants. There were no signficant differences in the global self-concept mean scores between males and females. There were race differences in all academic self-concept scores. There

were no significant differences in global self-concept when self-concept scores were compared by grade level. There were socioeconomic differences in global self-concept.

A study by Kohr, Coldiron, Skiffington, & Ross (1988) researched the influence of race, class, and gender on self-esteem for fifth, eighth, and eleventh grade students in Pennsylvania Schools. A number of consistent findings were observed for self-esteem across grade levels. In the following description it should be noted that on the self-esteem scale, a high score was indicative of a positive self-esteem. Significant student socioeconomic main effects were found for all analyses at grades 5, 8, and 11. Uniformly, means increased as student SES increased regardless of whether students attended low or high SES schools. Gender differences were statistically significant for all analyses except within high SES schools for grade 5. In all instances, females had higher scores than males. A significant race effect occurred only for low SES schools at grades 5 and 11. Interestingly, fifth grade white students had higher scores than their black counterparts; however, at eleventh grade, black students manifested higher scores than white students. None of the interaction effects demonstrated significant differences. The pattern of

mean self-esteem scores just described suggested an interaction between grade level and race that was confirmed through a special two-way analysis of variance. This finding suggested an interesting developmental trend in which black students attending low SES schools exhibited slightly lower self-esteem scores at the elementary level that become indistinguishable from white students at the middle school or junior high level. By high school, black students displayed higher self-esteem scores than their white counterparts in low SES schools.

A longitudinal study of the self-concept of low income youth was conducted by Barnes and Farrier (1985). Children in grades five and six were interviewed in 1969 and a follow-up phase was conducted in 1978 using those children who had answered the 1969 phase and who were now out of high school. The purpose was to determine the stability of self-concept over a decade, and to investigate changes or differences that occurred within and between groups over time. Data were analyzed using self-concept as the dependent variable. The independent variables measured in relation to self-concept were sex, race, and place of residence. Pearson product-moment correlations and paired t-tests indicated that the majority of youth undergo minimal changes during this age span.

In a study on self-concept in American Indian and white children, Rotenberg and Cranwell (1988), reported that seventy-one American Indian and 149 white children from grades 3 through 6 were tested on an open self-description measure and a transformational measure of self-concept. American Indian children referred more frequently to kinship roles, traditional customs and beliefs, and moral worth in their open self-descriptions than did white children. Developmental changes in the organization of self-concept were found in white as well as in American Indian children; external orientation (possession, resources, physical, self and body image, name, territoriality, citizenship) decreased with age, whereas internal orientation (interpersonal and psychic style and personality) increased with age on the transformational measure only. In comparison to white children, however, American Indian children showed (a) greater external orientation on both measures, and (b) greater orientation on the open self-description and lesser orientation on the transformation measure.

Richman, Clark, & Brown (1985) in a study assessed the effects of gender, race, and social class on the general and area-specific self esteem of high school students. One hundred and ninety-five high school students served as subjects in a 2 (gender: male,

female) x 2 (race: black, white) x 3 (social class: low, middle, and high) factorial design. The Rosenberg General Self-Esteem Scale, the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, and the Brookover General Self-Concept of Ability and School Achievement Scale were the measures of either general or specific self esteem. Females, white, and lower social class adolescents were consistently lower in their self-esteem scores than were males, blacks, and upper social class teenagers, respectively.

Self-concept development from childhood to adolescence was studied by Montemayor and Eisen (1977) from a cognitive-structural perspective. The responses of subjects to the question "Who Am I?" were analyzed by means of a 30-category scoring system. Between childhood and adolescence, there was a significant increase in self-conceptions categorized as follows: occupational role-- existential, individuating; ideological and belief references; the sense of determination; the sense of unity; interpersonal style; and psychic style. A decrease occurred for self-conception based on territoriality, citizenship; possessions, resources; and physical self, body image. The results for self-concept development suggested that cognitive developoment proceeds from a concrete to an abstract mode of representation.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale

In examining the dimensionality of self-concept, Wendler (1984) had 485 school age children (248 females 237 males) complete the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, that included an assessment of six subareas: behavior, intellectual and school status, physical appearance and attributes, anxiety, popularity, and happiness and satisfaction. The responses were factor analyzed using a hierarchial factor analysis procedure. Results indicated the presence of a general, dominant factor of self-concept. In addition, several secondary factors emerged, providing support for the multidimensionality of the general construct of self-concept as measured by the Piers-Harris.

An investigation of the differences in self-concept for a group of clinic and non-clinic children using the Piers-Harris was undertaken by Gulton and Zachary (1984). It was the authors' hypothesis that lowered self-concept would be associated with children exhibiting problems such as delinquency or childhood depression. The clinic sample reported considerable lower self-concept than the non-clinic sample, a finding that provides additional evidence of the criterion-validity for the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale as a measure of children's

self-concept.

Madonna, Bailey, & Wesley (1987) sought to further examine the relationship between locus of control and self-concept. Fourth and fifth grade students were administered the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Nowicki Strickland Locus of Control Scale for Children in a group format. The results indicated a non-significant negative relationship between the Nowicki Strickland Total Scale and the Piers-Harris. These results, although non-significant, suggested a trend toward high self-concept in internal oriented children.

The six cluster scales of the Piers-Harris were examined by Cooley and Ayres (1988) for reliability and independence. Half of the 155 sixth to eighth graders completing the scale were receiving some special education services. Results suggested the cluster scales showed adequate reliabilites with alphas ranging from .74 to .83, but the scales were quite highly intercorrelated with a mean interscale correlation of .54. Removal of all overlapping items from the cluster scales reduced the correlation mean to .44, with only a small drop in internal consistency.

Kugle and Clements (1981) examined the relationship of stability of self esteem to academic variables among elementary students. The hypotheses were concerned

with the relationship between: (1) stability of self esteem and accuracy of self-described ability, (2) level and stability of self esteem and achievement, and (3) level and stability of self esteem and disruptive behavior. Stability and level of self esteem were measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Dickstein Self Esteem Inventory, completed by third, fifth, and seventh graders on two occasions. Results indicated that level and stability of self esteem were not related to one another. However, accuracy in estimating their academic performance, neither self esteem dimension was related to disruptive behavior. Both level and stability of self esteem were positively related to academic achievement.

Enhancing Positive Self-Concept

Elementary and secondary schools must regard their role as including tasks beyond educating individual students. Schools will have to provide certain functions that were traditionally provided by the home and community. Based on this premise, Coleman (1985) believed when a society changes outside the school, it is necessary for the schools to change also. School success has traditionally been associated with strong families and strong communities. Coleman (1985) maintained that changing social situations have

lessoned the community's ability to provide support for the schools; therefore, schools must modify their activities. Schools can either strengthen and rebuild the supporting social structure, or they can provide school activities that build compensatory social structures. There is a need to create and strengthen relations among parents of children in the schools. There is a need to get parents involved in the schools.

Sensitive parents and teachers may be better able to assess a child's self-concept than researchers. Differences in definitions and dimensions make it difficult to compare and synthesize studies, but a child with a good self-concept radiates it (Marshall, 1989). Marshall (1989) believed teachers' and parents' expectations may influence children's self-esteem, both (a) directly through opportunities adults provide for children to learn and become competent and (b) indirectly through more subtle cues that children eventually come to perceive. If adults believe that certain children can learn or do more than others, they may furnish additional materials for these children. In this way, they provide more opportunities to become competent in more areas and thus directly influence the children's perceived competence.

In addition, teachers' and parents' expectations influence self-concept in more subtle ways as children

gradually become more adept at "reading" environmental cues. Young children are not very accurate in judging adults' expectations for them. They generally hold higher expectations for themselves than their teachers hold for them (Marshall, 1989). The discrepancy between young children's expectations and those of their teachers may be due to their underdeveloped ability to take the perspective of others. Young children may also have less need to focus on what their teachers expect of them because most pre-school and kindergarten classrooms do not emphasize evaluation. However, even at the kindergarten level, if teachers make their evaluations of children salient- such as pointing out the children's best work- children's self evaluation can show some consistency with those of the teacher (Marshall, 1989).

Leonard and Gottsdanker-Willekins (1987) stated that educators can significantly influence the child's views of self and must work to provide experiences that develop a sense of competence and worth. Self esteem can be modified by experiences and by the responses of important persons in the child's life. Leonard and Gottsdanker-Willekins (1987) cite the work of Pearlman and Pearlman who found that younger students' (grades 1 - 3) self-concepts were more easily changed than those of older students (grades 4 - 6). Leonard and

Gottsdanker-Willekins (1987) hypothesized that the younger children had experienced fewer defeats than the older students and were able to maintain higher levels of self-confidence. It is also possible that younger children are more easily influenced by authority figures such as teachers and parents and are, therefore, more responsive to efforts by these persons to enhance self-concept than are older children. Accordingly, Leonard and Gottsdanker-Willekens (1987) advised the investment of effort by the elementary school staff in programs that will enhance self-concept.

Major areas for general self-concept intervention are teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward students, general classroom atmosphere, and incorporation of affective strategies into specific curricular areas. Leonard and Gottsdanker-Willekens (1987) offered the following suggestions for teachers, citing the ideas of Burns and Broman, Ekwall and Shanker, Purkey, Spache, Tiedt, and Quancet.

1. Teacher's beliefs and attitudes toward students. The teacher should accept the students as a valid contributor of ideas and a participant in activities in the classroom. This can be accomplished by accepting the student's ideas and contributions to class activities even if the student's efforts fall

short of the teacher's goals for the students. The student should believe that the contributions are recognized as valid; the teacher can then help the student to identify and develop plans to overcome observed weaknesses. Furthermore, the teacher should be aware of possible subjectivity in evaluation, particularly in areas of study involving creative expression (such as creative writing, art, drama, and music) and endeavor to evaluate the student's contributions as objectively as possible.

2. Classroom atmosphere. The teacher should provide a classroom atmosphere in which differences among students are acknowledged and accepted. This atmosphere can be achieved by using cooperative rather than competitive types of individual activities, by varying the basis for membership in student groups, and by planning activities so that each student in the group is able to participate successfully. In addition, the teacher should be sure that classroom rules are clear and are enforced equally for all students. In developing assignments for students on an individualized basis, the teacher should ensure that students are both challenged and can be successful. For individualized assignments, students are directed to accomplish tasks at a variety of ability levels, and the tasks may vary both in complexity and in the time

needed to complete the task. The teacher should be sure that use of a differentiated assignment system does not make the less able student feel set apart, that the student is both stimulated by and is able to accomplish the assignment, and that the student is able to attain the appropriate instructional goal.

3. Specific curricular-based strategies. Curricular areas such as reading and writing can provide a wealth of opportunities for self-concept intervention and enhancement. The student has numerous possibilities for reading and writing about self-worth. Students can read materials related to their culture and heritage, read about people from other cultures or with different values, write about the advantages of being oneself and write about one's personal conflicts, abilities, and efforts. The teacher can have an active role in helping students develop high levels of self-esteem.

A plan to help students develop more positive self-concepts was offered by Fuller (1984).

1. Make a list of the positive characteristics of the child with a negative self-concept--adult perceptions are easily converted into self conceptions. What are the "adult perceptions" that you are transmitting?

2. Help children experience, recognize, and enjoy success on a consistent basis.

3. Create a warm classroom environment that communicates respect, acceptance, and concern.
4. Do not leave change to chance or intermittent action but rather develop a specific plan of action.
5. Allow children to participate in decision making. Decision making skills encourage feelings of confidence.
6. Create a democratic environment that encourages students to interact with one another in positive ways and consequently results in feelings of power within that environment.
7. As part of the curriculum include activities that help children feel good about themselves.
8. Provide consistent and constant positive feedback that helps to clarify self-concept and values.
9. Examine your own self-concept. Are you modeling self acceptance and appreciation? Enjoy who you are; if you will not do it for yourself, do it for your students.

Thompson (1987) developed the following seven guidelines as suggestions to improve the effectiveness of leaders of any motivational program.
1. Believe in yourself. You are capable of motivating your students, assisting them in developing their skills and abilites, and modeling positive attitudes for them.

2. Believe in your students and make it obvious. Demonstrate confidence in your students. Provide as much positive reinforcement as possible, especially in the beginning, and show them how they can reinforce themselves.

3. Be sensitive and practical in your presentation. Your program should be sequential and developmental. Allow students to see how each activity or concept fits into your plan for the unit; help them to notice the future purpose of your current presentation.

4. Provide a model for enthusiasm. In many ways, you are trying to sell your students a product (self-improvement) for which they will have to pay a considerable price (practice and hard work). If you want to motivate your students, you must show them that the end result will be worth their efforts. Visible belief in your program and enthusiasm for it can easily elicit belief and enthusiasm from your students.

5. Involve others. Communication with parents and teachers is essential and is an excellent source for feedback and suggestions.

6. Structure experiences for success. Carefully planned exercises and activites, featuring achievable challenges can help the student become a more successful individual, one who is less defensive toward

future challenges.

7. Have fun. If you can develop and use methods that students will enjoy, you will get greater participation from them and will provide them experiences that they will more readily remember and build upon.

A plan of action for those who work with children (teachers, principals, bus drivers, school workers, and others) to foster positive self-concept of children was given by Strickland and Campbell (1982).

1. Become aware of what the term "positive self-concept" means. Self-concept is "what I am. I believe this is me. I recognize my strengths and deficiencies and work from my strengths to improve my deficiencies with a reasonable expectation of success. But I am able to accept a less-than-perfect success with the belief that I am still a person of worth."

2. Examine your influence as teacher on children's self-concepts. Your role as teacher is basically that of helping children to develop positive self-concepts through: a) conscious, deliberate guidance - teaching, discipline, education, reeducation; b) unconscious guidance - your personality, your attitudes and feelings toward yourself, children, and others, your outlook on life, your usual way of acting.

3. Identify concepts related to effective guidance.

All behavior is caused; it does not just happen. Behavior, both "good" and "bad", is a striving toward growth, self-fulfillment and independence. Discipline is any kind of effort aimed at helping children learn to deal with environmental demands that go against their own wishes or feelings. The aim of discipline is not to punish or eliminate freedom but to provide children freedom within limits that they can manage.

4. Analyze your own feelings of self worth.
5. Accept children as individuals.
6. Allow for increasing freedom.
7. Allow children opportunities to take responsibility for their own actions and feelings.
8. Analyze your own school setting.

Purkey (1970) believed it was difficult to overestimate the need for the teacher to be sensitive to the attitudes that are expressed toward students. Even though teachers may have the best intentions, they sometimes project distorted images of themselves. What a person believes can be hidden by negative habits picked up long ago. Purkey (1970) stated that teachers need to ask themselves:

1. Am I projecting an image that tells the student that I am here to build, rather than to destroy, the student as a person?
2. Do I let the student know that I am aware of and

interested in each individual as a unique person?

3. Do I convey my expectations and confidence that the student can accomplish work, can learn, and is competent?

4. Do I provide well-defined standards of values, demands for competence, and guidance toward solutions to problems?

5. When working with parents, do I enhance the academic expectations and evaluations that they hold of their child's ability?

6. By my behavior, do I serve as a model of authenticity for the student?

7. Do I take every opportunity to establish a high degree of private and semi-private communciation with my students?

The above questions are samples of how the teacher may check to see if the conveying of beliefs is being done in an authentic meaningful fashion.

Wardle (1988) believed that the teacher is the central, value transmitter in a school or child-care program. Therefore, to have a program that supports the individual differences of each child, we must have teachers who support each child's right to self-concept development. Program administrators must set the expectations that each teacher support each child. The program needs to provide training for the

staff. Each teacher must examine personal fears, uncertainties, prejudices, and limitations. Teachers must then honestly confront areas where they do not support a child with a certain individual difference.

In supporting gender differences in the classrooms, Wardle (1988) suggested that teachers provide ways to contradict biases children bring to school; provide opportunities for new ways of thinking. This can be done by intervening in children's conversations, correcting statements by children, suggesting new play activities, inviting community people into the classroom, reading books and using puppets. Wardle (1988) also believed teachers can support racial/ethnic differences in the classroom. Teachers can provide an open, supportive environment where children can ask questions and receive accurate answers. Teachers may explain individual ethnic and racial differences using three perspectives: a) the child's parents and grandparents, b) the national heritage of relatives: N. Europe, Africa, Mexico, and West Indian, and c) stress that all individual differences are beautiful. Teachers can also provide a wealth of multicultural materials and activities in the classroom: books, dolls, posters, photos, music, dance, art, artifacts, visitors, and field trips.

Oblakor and Alawiye (1990) maintained that it is

important that educators involved with the enhancement of Black children's self-concepts endeavor to:

1. Emphasize accuracy of self-concept in the identification of specific strengths and weaknesses of Black children's self-concepts.
2. Avoid labels and categorizations that force Black children to internalize negative options.
3. Modify the external contingencies that impinge upon Black children's self-concepts (e.g. environments, teachers, teaching strategies, assessment tools and interpretations).
4. Provide novel situations that can challenge Black children. The sensitivity to needs should be emphasized, and being unnecessarily sorry should be deemphasized.
5. Inspire Black children to control their lives by allowing them to make goal-directed decisions. Failure should not be regarded as a deterent - it should be an inspiration for Black students to work harder.
6. Design programs which will help Black children to a) understand who they are, b) love themselves for who they are, and c) be willing to expend efforts to achieve their goals and objectives in life.
7. Understand and appreciate different cultures, and relate their ideas of self-concept to cultural values, beliefs, and history.

8. Deemphasize deficit assumptions that hamper the education of Black children, and emphasize developmental aspects of education.
9. Design programs that facilitate cooperative community involvement.

Cultural enrichment activities for parent involvement are provided by Kirkland-Holmes and Federlein (1990).

1. Have a "Back to School" Cultural Enrichment Classroom Open House. (Have a listing of planned activities for the year - discuss how parents can help.)
2. Family Trees - Send home family trees- have as many family members as possible help trace the family history.
3. Send home a tape recorder, have the students interview their parent(s) about their childhood. Have students share with the class.
4. Have a pot luck of favorite African American family dishes. Have parents share a recipe, if desired. Publish cultural recipes in a book to be distributed to the families.
5. Have an African American authors' celebration.
6. Have parents interview their child. Make available a list of questions to see how children feel about themselves.

7. Have special "family sharing day." The child's family members may come to school or send items about a favorite cultural activity, souvenirs, and collections.
8. Hold a special African American Cultural Dress-up Day. Children and parents can share favorite outfits, hairstyles, and make-up. Have a hairbraider, storyteller, or seamstress available for demonstrations and activities.

Obtainable goals and objectives for schools that could enhance the self image of black elementary students were given by Marchant (1990).

1. Black urban elementary students may require extra efforts to promote self-regulation in their learning. Teachers need to help students establish their own goals and guide students in ways that encourage self-monitoring of success.
2. Black urban elementary students may need early encouragement and specific examples that highlight the relevance of doing well in school. Teachers should present the "why" of learning along with the "what" and "how."
3. Black urban elementary students may not find the pursuit of challenging work socially desirable. Teachers need to find ways to reward motivated students in a manner that encourages socialization.
4. Black urban elementary students that trust their own

Judgments but do not perceive themselves as being scholastically comptetent may have more attendance problems. Since this relationship is likely to play an increasing role in attendance and achievement as the student matures, teachers need to find a way to provide students with choices that the student can succeed at in school.

5. Black urban elementary students may find improving their standard English vocabulary socially undesirable. Teachers and communities need to find ways to encourage and reward the practice of learning English vocabulary in order to facilitate communication in school and outside of a restricted urban area.

6. Black urban elementary students may rely on the performance and value systems of their peers in order to evaluate their own performance and self-worth. Teachers need to strive for academic standards and educational values that are not dependent upon a small racial/cultural reference group. At the same time, teachers need to be aware and respect the local belief systems.

7. Black urban elementary students must be shown that they can succeed in school and in life. The rewards of "real" achievement will lead to a more positive, more complete self-concept. Nothing succeeds like success.

Spencer and Markstrom-Adams (1990) believed that

alternative identity-focused intervention and prevention efforts for African Americans, Hispanic, and American Indian youth and their families overlap somewhat and move them to present several prescriptions.

1. Methods should be proposed to keep minority youth in schools and academically oriented since their lack of education continues to serve as a condition that virtually guarantees a life course of socioeconomic disadvantage.
2. Efforts are required to heighten health consciousness (chronic health problems confound identity processes).
3. The importance of constructive social networks and support systems should be affirmed.
4. Methods should be proposed to support parenting efforts as cultural transmitters.
5. Proposals are needed to offer a compensatory (mediafocused) cultural emphasis that affirms group identity for all youth and thus enhances ego-identity processes and group pride.
6. Methods to promote the teaching in schools of native languages and cultures (particularly for American Indian tribes who appear most at risk of losing their heritage) are needed.
7. Providing a mechanism for the special training of

teachers of ethnic minority students is critical.

8. Child-rearing support by way of teaching parenting skills that promote the parents' sense of ethnic pride and enhance "home-school partnership bonds" is essential.

9. Improved methods of training for mental health workers who specifically serve an ethnic minority population should be required.

10. From a theory-generating and empirical research perspective, an alternative, ongoing, and developmental approach to the life-course experiences of minority youth should provide information of several types to be used for multiple purposes. For example, research would afford information for: a) generating more comprehensive theories, b) reformulating developmental models of risk and coping, c) proposing and implementing programs of intervention, and d) increasing efforts aimed at equity in a more overt or concrete manner. Minority youth generally (and male minority youth specifically) should from the early toddler and preschool years, believe that they can have positive impact on the world.

The belief that the implementation of programs designed to foster the self-esteem of African American children must also include provisions for the evaluation of such effort is maintained by Locke

(1989). The success of such programs can best be determined by observing how students behave. Affective behavioral outcomes are crucial to any program designed to foster development of self-esteem. Counselors should identify the specific student outcomes desired and the observable behavioral indicators of such outcomes.

Counselors can be of the greatest help to Native-American children by incorporating the unique values of their culture into the counseling process (Mitchum, 1989). Cooperation within the group, harmony, respect for authority through lack of direct eye contact, and preference for nonverbal techniques all can be incorporated into group counseling. Positive change for the group rather than for individuals within the group may be a solution to the problems of low self-esteem in Native American children.

The counselor, as consultant to the teacher, can help the teacher positively modify the self-concept of students in a classroom setting. Counselor-coordinated inservice presentations and staff development activities can be used to develop teacher expertise in the identification and remediation of students' self-concept problems, the creation of psychologically healthy learning environments, and the incorporation

of affective strategies into specific curricular areas (Leonard & Gottsdanker-Willekens, 1987; Dobson, Campbell, & Dobson, 1982; Williams & Leonard, 1989).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter was designed to describe the methods that were used in this research project to identify self-concept of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. The research design, the sample population, the data collection, the survey instrument, and the analysis of the data are discussed.

Research Design

The design of this study utilized the descriptive research method. Students participating in the study were requested to respond to the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale.

Self-concept of students, the dependent variable, was indicated through the responses given to the 80 items on the Piers-Harris. The independent variables were grade level, ethnicity, gender, and lunch status. These data were collected at the same time and from the same respondents who provided answers to the Piers-Harris.

Sample Population

Omaha Public elementary schools with grades 4, 5, and 6 and with school counselors participated in the study. The eight schools included were Field Club, Spring Lake, Indian Hill, Bancroft, King Science

Center, Ashland Park, Druid Hill, and Belvedere. This was a structured population of 562 children.

The departments of Instruction, Special Education, General Administration, Human Community Relations, and Student Personnel work together to determine which Omaha Public Schools will have elementary school counselors. The criteria used to determine counselor placement in a building are: low academic achievement, low attendance, high economically disadvantaged, high enrollment, high mobility, high pupil - teacher ratio, high reported child abuse, high special education staffings, and high substance abuse.

During the 1991-92 school year, the following seventeen elementary schools had counselors:

1. Ashland Park : 1 counselor for 1 year
2. Bancroft : 2 counselors for 3 years
3. Belevedere : 2 counselors for 3 years
4. Conestoga : 1 counselor for 3 years
5. Druid Hill : 1 counselor for 1 year
6. Field Club : 2 counselors for 3 years
7. Franklin : 1 counselor for 1 year
8. Indian Hill : 2 counselors for 2 years
9. Kellom : 1 counselor for 3 years
10. Kennedy : 1 counselor for 3 years
11. King Primary: 2 counselors for 2 years
12. King Science: 1 counselor for 3 years
13. Marrs : 1 counselor for 2 years
14. Miller Park : 1 counselor for 3 years
15. Saratoga : 1 counselor for 3 years
16. Spring Lake : 2 counselors for 3 years
17. Wakonda : 1 counselor for 3 years

The eight schools involved in the study were selected because they had fourth, fifth, sixth grade levels

that are the appropriate age levels for the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale. These schools were also selected because they have elementary counselors to administer the Piers-Harris. Primary Centers with grades kindergarten through third grades or elementary schools without counselors were not included in the study. (See Appendix A for background information on the schools involved in the study. See Appendix B for lunch status forms.)

Dr. Irving Young (Omaha Public Schools Research Department) and Dr. Stan Mallszewski (Omaha Public Schools Student Personnel Department) were contacted for their permission to conduct the study. (See Appendix C for the letter of permission.)

Data Collection

Each elementary counselor was mailed a letter explaining the project and what was requested of the counselor. (See Appendix D for Letter to Counselor.) The on-site counselor selected a fourth grade, a fifth grade, and a sixth grade classroom, according to the availability of the counselor's schedule, to complete the Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale. The counselor was the administrator of the Piers-Harris. After test administration, counselors sent the completed tests to the Research Department of the Omaha Public Schools to be scored by computer. The

counselors, upon receiving the raw scores, completed the informational sheets that included student participants' gender, grade level, ethnicity, lunch status (full price, reduced price, free) and raw score. The counselors then mailed the informational sheets back to the researcher. (See Appendix E for data sheets.)

Care was taken to protect the privacy and anonymity of schools, counselors, and students participating in the project. Respondents and counselors were assured that student responses to the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale would be confidential and used solely for the intended purposes of this study.

Instrumentation

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, subtitled "The Way I Feel About Myself," is a brief, self-report measure designed to aid in the assessment of self-concept in children and adolescents. Self-concept, as assessed by this instrument, is defined as a relatively stable set of self-attitudes reflecting both a description and an evaluation of one's own behavior and attributes. Items on the scale are scored in either a positive or negative direction to reflect this self-evaluative dimension. A high score on the scale suggests a positive self-evaluation. The Piers-Harris focuses on children's conscious

self-perceptions rather than attempting to infer how they feel about themselves from their behaviors or the attributions of others. (Piers, 1984)

The Piers-Harris is an 80 item self-reporting questionnaire that may be administered either individually or in groups. For this research project, the elementary counselor read the 80 statements aloud to an intact classroom. The students were asked to indicate whether each statement applied to them using dichotomous "yes" or "no" responses.

The responses were computer scored to evaluate both general and specific dimensions of self-concept. An overall assessment of self-concept is reflected in three summary scores: a total raw score, a percentile score, and an overall stanine score. For this research project, the total raw score was used.

The Piers-Harris appears to be a highly reliable instrument. Test-retest reliability coefficients range from .42 to .96 and internal consistency estimates for the total score range from .88 to .93. The reliability figures compare favorably with other measures used to assess personality traits in children and adolescents. (Piers, 1984)

Estimates of the content, criterion-related and construct validity of the Piers-Harris have been obtained from a number of empirical studies. These

studies have used a variety of approaches including item analysis, intercorrelations among the scales and items, and comparisons of the reponses of various criterion groups. Finally, the Piers-Harris has been compared to other scales designed to measure similar constructs (Piers,1984). (See Appendix F for a copy of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale.)

Data Analysis

Grade level, gender, ethnicity, lunch status, and the Pier-Harris Self-Concept Scale Raw Score for each student respondent was placed on computer scan sheets. Dr. Frank Hartranft of the UNO Academic Campus Computing Office agreed to work with the researcher. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for computer data analysis. This program was capable of doing the necessary ANOVA procedure. ANOVA tests the null hypothesis that two or more population means are equal. A ratio of two variance estimates is computed, and this ratio has as its sampling distribution the F distribution determined by two degrees of freedom. The F ratio needs to be large enough so that its probability of occurring if the null hypothesis were true is less than the researcher's chosen level of significance of .05. (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1985 & Wiersma, 1991). By using the ANOVA in this study, the investigator was

able to determine the relationship between gender and children's self-concept, the relationship between ethnicity and children's self-concept, the relationship between grade level and children's self-concept, and finally, the relationship between lunch status (socioeconomics) and children's self-concept.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This chapter was designed to present the analysis of data related to the relationships of gender, ethnicity, grade level, lunch status, and children's self-concept. Eight Omaha Public Elementary Schools with grade levels of 4, 5, and 6 and with elementary counselors were involved in the study.

Specifically this study was designed to test the following four hypotheses.

1. There is no significant difference of self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence between males and females.

2. There is no significant difference of self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence between Hispanics, Caucasians, Native Americans, and African Americans.

3. There is no significant difference of self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence between fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students.

4. There is no significant difference of self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence between students with free lunch status, reduced lunch status, and full price lunch status.

Instrumentation

Counselors in the selected eight Omaha Public Elementary Schools were asked to administer the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale to a fourth grade, a fifth grade, and a sixth grade classroom in their buildings. Table 1 displays the schools with the number of fourth, fifth, and sixth graders participating in the study.

Table 1

Number of Student Respondents in Participating Schools

School	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	
Ashland Park	19	20	21	
Bancroft	24	22	22	
Belvedere	20	18	31	
Druid Hill	22	22	21	
Field Club	30	29	30	
Indian Hill	24	24	22	
King Science Center	26	24	23	
Spring Lake	25	22	21	
Total	190	181	191	= 562

The counselors used the data information sheets found in Appendix E to record gender, ethnicity, grade level,

lunch status, and self-concept raw score. The informational sheets were then sent to the researcher.

Results

The four hypotheses of this study were analyzed through the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Using analysis of variance, the significant F statistic was computed. To be significant, the F statistic must be at least at the .05 level which would indicate a relationship between the dependent variable of self-concept score and the independent variables of gender, ethnicity, grade level, and lunch status respectively.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference of self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence between males and females.

Using ANOVA with score by gender, the significant F statistic was computed to be .970. No significant difference was found between genders on the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale. (see Table 2) No relationship was found between gender of students and self-concept scores.

Table 2

Self-Concept Scores by Gender

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig of F
Main Effects	.372	1	.372	.001	.970
GENDER	.372	1	.372	.001	.970
Explained	.372	1	.372	.001	.970
Residual	149382.788	560	266.755		
Total	149383.160	561	266.280		

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference of the self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence between Hispanics, Caucasians, Native Americans, and African Americans.

Using ANOVA with score by ethnicity, the significant F statistic was computed to be .405. (see Table 3)

Table 3

Self-Concept Scores by Ethnicity

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig of F
Main Effects	1069.449	4	267.362	1.004	.405
ETHNICITY	1069.449	4	267.362	1.004	.405
Explained	1069.449	4	267.362	1.004	.405
Residual	148313.711	557	266.272		
Total	149383.160	561	266.280		

No significant difference was found between races on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. No relationship was found between students' ethnicity and self-concept scores.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference of self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence between fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students.

Using ANOVA with score by grade, the significant F statistic was computed to be .304. No significant difference was found between grade levels on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. These intermediate grades are shown as an aggregate on Table 4. No relationship was found between grade level of students and self-concept scores.

Table 4

Self-Concept Scores by Grade Levels

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig of F
Main Effects	635.105	2	317.553	1.193	.304
GRADE LEVELS	635.105	2	317.553	1.193	.304
Explained	635.105	2	317.553	1.193	.304
Residual	148748.055	559	266.097		
Total	149383.160	561	266.280		

Hypothesis 4

There is no significant difference of self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence between students with free lunch status, reduced lunch status, and full price lunch status.

Using ANOVA with score by lunch, the significant F statistic was computed to be .414. No significant difference was found between free, reduced, or full price lunch status of students on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. (see Table 5) No relationship was found between students' lunch status and self-concept scores.

Table 5

Self-Concept Scores by Lunch Status

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig of F
Main Effects	470.370	2	235.185	.883	.414
LUNCH	470.370	2	235.185	.883	.414
Explained	470.370	2	235.185	.883	.414
Residual	148912.790	559	266.391		
Total	149383.160	561	266.280		

To give the reader an idea of the Piers-Harris Raw Score ranges and the descriptors of self-concept the following table has been provided. (Piers, 1984)

Table 6

Raw Score Ranges and Descriptors of Self-Concept

Raw Score	Descriptor
76 - 80	Very much above average
71 - 75	Much above average
67 - 70	Above average
61 - 66	Slightly above average
45 - 60	Average
36 - 44	Slightly below average
28 - 35	Below average
20 - 27	Much below average
Less than 19	Very much below average

The following tables report the mean self-concept scores of the independent variables (gender, ethnicity, grade level, and lunch status) in this study.

Table 7

Total N and Mean Raw Scores for Gender

Gender	N	Mean Raw Score
Male	274	54
Female	288	54

Table 8

Total N and Mean Raw Scores for Ethnicity

Ethnicity	N	Mean Raw Score
African American	177	56
Caucasian	327	53
Asian	6	51
Native American	12	50
Hispanic	40	58

Table 9

Total N and Mean Raw Scores for Grade Level

Grade Level	N	Mean Raw Score
Fourth	190	53
Fifth	181	54
Sixth	191	55

Table 10

Total N and Mean Raw Scores for Lunch Status

Lunch Status	N	Mean Raw Score
Free	315	53
Reduced	59	56
Full price	188	55

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose for conducting this study was to examine the relationships between gender, ethnicity, grade level, lunch status, and children's self-concept scores. This study investigated the self-concept of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students in selected elementary schools within the Omaha (NE) Public School District. Specifically the study was designed to test the following four null hypotheses.

1. There is no significant difference of self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence between males and females.

2. There is no significant difference of self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence between Hispanics, Caucasians, Native Americans, and African Americans.

3. There is no significant difference of self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence betweem fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students.

4. There is no significant difference of

self-concept scores as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale at the .05 level of confidence between students with free lunch status, reduce lunch status, and full price lunch status.

In testing the above hypotheses, the researcher sought to identify relationships between the dependent variable, self concept, and the independent variables of gender, ethnicity, grade level, and lunch status.

The professional literature related to defining self-concept, self-concept development, and enhancing self-concept was reviewed. In this study, self-concept was defined as a relatively stable set of self-attitudes reflecting both a description and an evaluation of one's own behavior and attributes. (Piers, 1984) Rihl, Burgan, & Christenberry (1988) maintained that what students believe about themselves vitally affects every aspect of their behavior and learning. An individual's self-concept is developed as a result of the experiences the person has had. By the time a child reaches school age, self-concept is quite well formed. The child's reactions to learning and to school success or failure will be determined by the child's beliefs and attitudes.

The most important ideas that an individual will ever

possess are those about self. Marshall (1989) believed teachers' and parents' expectations may influence children's self-esteem, both (a) directly through opportunities adults provide for children to learn and become competent and (b) indirectly through more subtle cues that children eventually come to perceive. If adults believe that certain children can learn or do more than others, they may furnish additional materials for these children. In this way, they provide more opportunities to become competent in more areas and thus directly influence the children's perceived competence. Attention was given to areas of gender, ethnicity, grade level, and socioeconomics and their relationship to self-concept. In the majority of studies cited (see Chapter 2), differences were found among gender, ethnic groups, grade levels, and socioeconomic levels on self-concept.

The instrument used for this study was the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. The purpose of this 80-item self-reporting questionnaire was to assess how children feel about themselves. Data sheets of respondent information were used to record children's gender, ethnicity, grade level, lunch status, and self-concept scores by the participating school counselors.

The data collected were computer analyzed through

the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Analysis of variance was used to determine whether significant differences existed between gender, grade level, ethnicity, lunch status, and children's self-concept scores.

In this study there was no statistically significant relationship between gender and self-concept scores. These results concurred with the findings of Osborne and Legette (1982). However, the results contrasted with the findings of Kohr et al. (1988) and Richardson et al. (1985) who found significant differences in self-concept between males and females.

There was no statistically significant relationship between Hispanics, Caucasians, Native Americans, Asians, African Americans and self-concept scores in this study. The studies of self-concept by Rotenberg & Cranwell (1988), Osborne and Legette (1982), and Richman et al. (1985) found significant differences between the self-concept of races that differed from the results of this study.

In this study there was no statistically significant relationship between lunch status (socio-economics) and self-concept scores. These findings contrasted with the findings of Kohr et al. (1985) and Osborne and Legette (1982) who found

positive self-esteem increased as student socioeconomics increased and with Richman et al. (1985) who found lower social class adolescents were consistently lower in self-esteem scores than were upper class teenagers.

In this one time study, there was no statistically significant relationship between students' grade level and self-concept scores. These findings concurred with those of Osborne and Legette (1982). Other studies cited in the review of literature had various designs such as one time, longitudinal, multi-instrument, and random selection.

There are several possible reasons why the findings of this study contrasted with the majority of studies cited in the review of literature. The sample population in the study was unique. This study was limited to elementary schools with school counselors. These counselors teach developmental and preventative classroom guidance lessons. They work with children, in an equitable manner, in small groups and individually on topics such as self-esteem, getting along with others, and decision making. Counselors work with parents and teachers to foster positive self-concept in children. The results of the study are not generalizable to all fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students because these findings are associations and

this study does not identify causal relations.

Recommendations

Although there were no significant relationships found between children's self-concept scores and gender, ethnicity, grade level, and lunch status in this study, the status variables related to a student's positive self-concept are certainly worth further exploration and investigation. These status variables could be indicators of where resources should be more appropriately placed in the schools. Looking back in Chapter 3 at the criteria used by the Omaha Public Schools to determine which buildings are considered to receive elementary school counselors in itself mirrors the "at-riskness" of today's students. Low academic achievement, high economically disadvantaged, reported child abuse, and substance abuse daily threaten the student's positive self-concept. Societal problems and negative characteristics of society greatly affect the self-concept of children.

The studies reviewed and cited in this study have shown differences in self-concept between male/female students, between ethnic groups of students, between grade levels of students, and between students of different socioeconomic background.

There is a need to continue to further the

research of children's self-concept. The comparison of student self-concept scores in buildings with elementary counselors versus buildings without elementary counselors would well be worth the investigative time. The tracking of a kindergarten class through the eighth grade and the measurement of self-concept over the years might also bring a wealth of insight to further self-concept literature.

The investigative effect of an elementary counselor program on the separate criteria used by the Omaha Public Schools to place counselors would be worthwhile research. Eleven of seventeen Omaha Public Elementary Schools had counselors for three years. Perhaps a "matched sample" study investigating self-concept would reflect some helpful information such as a personality type of counselor with blacks vs. whites, specific guidance activities with females vs. males, and self-concept related to attendance.

There is also a need for educators to publish interventions and strategies that have been successful for them in promoting positive self-concept of students.

As we approach the 21st century, the time is now and the need is great for all children to feel self-respect, self-confidence, and self-worth.

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APPENDIX A

Background Information Of Schools

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

SCHOOL NAME	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	PUPIL/ TEACHER RATIO	% OF STUDENTS FREE/REDUCED LUNCH	CAT TOTAL BATTERY 4	5	6	AMER. INDIAN/ ALASKAN NATIVE	ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER	BLACK	CAUC.	HISP.	MOBILITY FACTOR %
Ashland Park	385	21.9	57.0	58	50	58	1.5	.3	11.2	82.9	4.1	26.05
Bancroft	896	25.1	78.7	51	63	64	3.5	1.0	12.3	68.0	15.1	32.16
Belvedere	700	18.7	81.1	47	42	32	1.0	0.0	70.0	28.0	1.0	39.07
Druid Hill	460	22.4	70.5	56	60	61	2.4	0.4	60.5	34.7	2.0	33.74
Field Club	924	23.5	70.0	56	59	53	6.0	1.3	12.1	75.0	5.6	41.26
Indian Hill	563	20.4	81.1.	67	51	49	3.1	0.4	33.8	52.6	10.2	32.66
King Science	386	24.5	38.1	81	78	85	.3	1.0	34.2	63.2	1.3	7.61
Spring Lake	596	21.6	67.2	59	54	59	1.5	0.5	11.0	71.6	15.3	33.13

APPENDIX B

Guidelines for Eligibility for Free or Reduced Meals

OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FOOD SERVICE DIVISION
AUGUST, 1992

ADMINISTERING THE SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAM
for the 92-93 School Year

The Food and Nutrition Services of the United States Department of Agriculture controls and regulates the Child and Nutrition Programs which includes school lunch, school breakfast and special milk programs. These regulations are very specific and failure to comply can result in fines to the district, the Food Service Division and to the school. If criminal intent to defraud is found, the act may be punishable by $10,000 fine and/or 10 years in jail.

The Federal government supports the Child Nutrition Program in each school district by reimbursing the school's Food Service Division for each meal served to a child. This reimbursement and the prices that are charged to the students and staff are the only income sources for the Food Service Division.

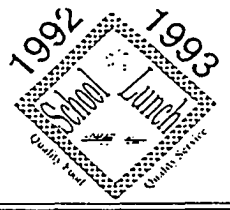
ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

All full-time students, K-12, are eligible to participate in the federally subsidized programs. (Half-day kindergarten students may participate in the Special Milk program only.)

Those students whose family income falls within guidelines established by USDA may be eligible for reduced-price or free breakfast or lunch. The guidelines are based upon a federally defined poverty level and the number of persons in a household. The guidelines change each year and eligibility must be reestablished each year.

CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS
INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES
JULY 1, 1992 - JUNE 30, 1993

Household Size	Free Meals			Reduced Price Meals		
	Annual	Monthly	Weekly	Annual	Monthly	Weekly
1	8,863	738	171	12,699	1,060	243
2	11,947	996	230	17,002	1,417	327
3	15,041	1,254	290	21,405	1,784	412
4	18,135	1,512	349	25,808	2,151	497
5	21,229	1,770	409	30,211	2,518	581
6	24,323	2,027	468	34,614	2,885	666
7	27,417	2,285	528	39,017	3,252	751
8	30,511	2,543	587	43,420	3,619	835
For Each Additional Family Member Add:	3,094	258	60	4,403	367	85



OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
CONFIDENTIAL APPLICATION FOR

USE BALLPOINT PEN-PRESS HARD

STUDENT NO: _____

☐ DO NOT WISH TO APPLY

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read all parts of this application before completion. If you need help with this form, contact the school. An application for milk benefits cannot be approved unless it contains "DOCUMENTATION" of eligibility information. ANY OMISSION WILL DELAY PROCESSING.

LAST	STUDENT NAME FIRST	BIRTHDATE	H/R	GRADE	STUDENT NO

PREVIOUS MEAL	SCHOOL BUILDING NAME	HOME PHONE	STUDENT ADDRESS

Complete this part and sign the application in Part 4. A foster child is the legal responsibility of a welfare agency or court. If this foster child, please check here ☐ Child's personal use monthly income $ _____ Write "0" if child has no personal use income

- Complete this part and sign the application in Part 4.

FOOD STAMP CASE NUMBER ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

AFDC CASE NUMBER ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

- If you did not write a Food Stamp number or AFDC case number, complete this part and sign the application in Part 4.

LIST ALL HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

NAME: LAST	FIRST	LIST SCHOOL FOR EACH CHILD	MONTHLY INCOME: TOTAL MONTHLY EARNINGS FROM WORK (BEFORE DEDUCTIONS)	MONTHLY WELFARE PAYMENTS CHILD SUPPORT ALIMONY	MONTHLY PAYMENTS FROM PENSIONS RETIREMENT SOCIAL SECURITY	JOB 2 OR ALL OTHER MONTHLY INCOME RECEIVED
			$	$	$	$
			$	$	$	$
			$	$	$	$
			$	$	$	$
			$	$	$	$
			$	$	$	$
			$	$	$	$
			$	$	$	$
			$	$	$	$
			$	$	$	$

* Section 9 of the National School Lunch Act requires that, unless your child's food stamp or AFDC case number is provided, you must include the social security number of the adult household member signing the application or indicate that the household member does not have a social security number. Provision of a social security number is not mandatory, but if a social security number is not given or an indication is not made that the signer does not have such a number, the application cannot be approved. The social security number may be used to identify the household member in carrying out efforts to verify the correctness of information stated on the application. These verification efforts may be carried out through program reviews, audits, and investigations and include contacting employers to determine income, contacting the food stamp or welfare office to determine current certification for receipt for food stamps or AFDC benefits, contacting the employment security office to determine the amount of benefits received and checking the documentation provided by the household member to prove the amount of income received. These efforts may result in a loss or reduction of benefits, administrative claims, or legal actions if incorrect information is reported.

(An adult household member must sign the application before it can be approved.)

PENALTIES FOR MISREPRESENTATION: I certify that all of the above information is true and correct and that the Food Stamp AFDC number is correct or that all income is reported. I understand that this information is being given for the receipt of Federal funds; that school officials may verify the information on the application; and that deliberate misrepresentation of the information may subject me to prosecution under applicable State and Federal laws.

_____

_____ _____
DATE SIGNED

_____ _____
HOME ADDRESS ZIP CODE

_____ _____
HOME TELEPHONE WORK TELEPHONE

WHITE - [illegible] YELLOW - [illegible]

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY - DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE

☐ FOSTER CHILD

☐ FOOD STAMP AFDC HOUSEHOLD

☐ INCOME HOUSEHOLD Total household monthly income _____ Household size _____

Application approved for: ☐ Free Milk

Temporary approval Until _____ Until _____ Until _____

Application denied because: ☐ Income over allowed amount

☐ Incomplete income(s)

☐ Other _____

Date notice sent _____

Signature of determining official _____ Date _____

PINK - School Copy

APPENDIX C

Letter of Permission

OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DIVISION OF RESEARCH
3215 CUMING STREET OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68131-2024 (402) 554-6251

December 22, 1992

Kathy Solomon
Kellom Primary Center
1311 North 24th Street
Omaha, NE 68102-4098

Dear Kathy,

Your proposal to pursue a research project in the Omaha Public Schools in conjunction with doctoral program studies at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln has been reviewed and approved. Permission is herewith granted to proceed with your research as outlined.

It is our understanding that your study will examine factors such as gender, ethnicity, grade level and economic status relative to self-concept, as measured by Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale.

Please continue to coordinate your efforts with Dr. Stan Maliszewski, Staff Assistant in charge of districtwide Counseling Services.

If we may be of further assistance, please contact the Research Offices. We wish you a very successful completion of your doctoral study.

Sincerely,

Irving G. Young
Coordinator of Research

cc: Dr. Stan Maliszewski

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APPENDIX D

Letter to Counselors

KELLOM PRIMARY CENTER
JOAN GAYLE CHAPIN, PRINCIPAL
1311 NORTH 24TH STREET
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68102

March , 1992

Dear ,

I am currently working on my doctoral dissertation proposal in the area of Administration, Curriculum and Instruction. I would like to investigate any significant difference of self concept scores between fourth, fifth and sixth graders as measured by the Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale. Dr. Paul Malcom from the Omaha Public Schools Research Department has given his permission for me to pursue this research study. Dr. Stan Maliszewski, Supervisor of Counselors, has indicated his support.

I would like to include the following schools in my study: Ashland Park, Bancroft, Belvedere, Druid Hill, Field Club, Indian Hill, King Science Center at Mann and Spring Lake. The Piers-Harris would need to be administered to a randomly selected fourth, fifth and sixth grade classroom in each school during the first two weeks of May.

When the standard scores are returned to you during the week following test administration, the three attached informational sheets would need to be completed which would include sex, grade level, race, lunch status and the standard score.

When reporting results in the study, no school would be listed individually; test scores from all schools would be combined. For example, it might be shown that fourth grade Hispanic females have a high self concept. Names of students participating in this study will remain anonymous and will be known only to the test administrator.

I realize that this is a busy time of the year for everyone, but I would greatly appreciate your effort in helping me gather the test data. I believe this study could give elementary counselors some insights on factors relating to positive self concept.

I will be in contact with you in the next few days to determine your willingness to participate and to answer any questions or concerns.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Katherine Solomon
Guidance Counselor
Kellom Primary Center

APPENDIX E

Data Sheets of Respondent Information

PIERS-HARRIS SELF CONCEPT SCALE RESULTS

SCHOOL _____

FOURTH GRADE

	SEX		RACE					LUNCH STATUS			RAW
	M	F	B	C	A	I	H	FREE	REDUCED	FULL	SCORE
1.											
2.											
3.											
4.											
5.											
6.											
7.											
8.											
9.											
10.											
11.											
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27.											
28.											
29.											
30.											

Example:

1.											
2.											

KEY: B = Black
C = Caucasian
A = Asian
I = Native American
H = Hispanic

PIERS-HARRIS SELF CONCEPT SCALE RESULTS

SCHOOL _____

FIFTH GRADE

	SEX		RACE					LUNCH STATUS			RAW
	M	F	B	C	A	I	H	FREE	REDUCED	FULL	SCORE
1.											
2.											
3.											
4.											
5.											
6.											
7.											
8.											
9.											
10.											
11.											
12.											
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22.											
23.											
24.											
25.											
26.											
27.											
28.											
29.											
30.											

Example:

1.											
2.											

KEY: B = Black
C = Caucasian
A = Asian
I = Native American
H = Hispanic

PIERS-HARRIS SELF CONCEPT SCALE RESULTS

SCHOOL _____

SIXTH GRADE

	SEX		RACE					LUNCH STATUS			RAW
	M	F	B	C	A	I	H	FREE	REDUCED	FULL	SCORE
1.											
2.											
3.											
4.											
5.											
6.											
7.											
8.											
9.											
10.											
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30.											

Example:

1.											
2.											

KEY: B = Black
C = Caucasian
A = Asian
I = Native American
H = Hispanic

APPENDIX F

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale