

Maternal Self-Concept and Children's Academic Achievement

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Introduction:

If we take a look at the literature dealing with the various theories of self-concept, we may notice that there is a common agreement that:

(1) The individual's conception of himself emerges from social interaction and, in turn, guides or influences the behavior of that individual.

(2) The individual's self-concept is based on his perception of the way others are responding to him.

(3) The actual responses of others to the individual will determine the way he sees himself.

(4) The self-concept is that organization of qualities that the individual attributes to himself.

The purpose of this study is to discuss in some detail the theories of self-concept, which will be presented in the last part of this paper. The first part of this study deals with an attempt to investigate the family and school influences on the child's self-concept and its impact upon his academic achievement.

Family Influence:

(1) It appears likely that for most children, the way in which they are treated by parents is of overriding importance in determining their perceptions of themselves.

(2) Kagan believes that children with high self-concept tended to have parents of high self-concept. Interactions between the parents of high self-concept children tended to be marked by greater compatibility and ease. These parents tended to have high expectations of their children, they also provided sound models for them and gave their children great encouragement and support.

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(3) Zimet maintains that mothers of children high in self-concept are more accepting of their children. These mothers believe that children would be happier and better behaved if parents would show an interest in their affairs. In contrast, Zimet thinks that mothers of children low in self-concept are likely to withdraw from their children. Low self-esteem mothers are likely to depreciate their children and to treat them as a burden. Their emotional responses to their children tended to range from hostility to indifference.

(4) In a word, it appears that the kind of maternal practices promote desirable social behavior also promote a confident self-image in the child. It is not surprising that high self-concept has also been found to be positively related to academic achievement and learning difficulties.

School Influence:

(1) The self-concept grows from the child's social experience. This means that, in addition to his family, it is shaped by the second most powerful social influence in his life, that is, the school.

(2) Backman thinks that it is possible that either the child's self-concept or his school performance could have been the causal factor, but a third possibility is that the two developed together from unfavorable experiences and learning situations. The self-concept and school performance are closely related, but as Backman suggests, it may be fruitful to view them as growing out of a larger social process than to attempt to determine "chicken - and - egg fashion" which came first.

(3) Tanner prefers to conceptualize the relationship between self-concept and academic performance as a reciprocal one. If this is the case the goal of mothers and teachers should be to break a downward reciprocal relationship by working on both factors simultaneously.

(4) Havinghurst notes that a depressed self-concept at a primary-school level can put a low ceiling on the child's achievement throughout the school years, indeed throughout his whole life. In other, words not only is self-concept related to past academic achievement, but also affects future performance.

(5) Morse states "for the young child mother is a secure, supporting source with regard to his mental health".

But he believes that as the child grows older confidence diminishes if mother cannot maintain the mutual trust among her children.

From the above we may see how deep the impact of mothers upon their children's self-concept, and how it affect their academic performance.

In the following pages an attempt will be made to explain some major theories of self-concept.

In psychological discussions the word "self" has been used in many different ways. Two chief meanings that emerge, however, are the self as subject or agent, and the self as individual who is known to himself (English and English, 1958). The words "self-concept" have come into common use to refer to the second meaning (Wylie, 1961). Much of the self-terminology in the literature is being used interchangeably. The result is unfortunate confusion. Before focusing on the terms "self-concept" and "self-esteem" I am going to refer briefly to some of the most common self terms.

Diggory (1966) states: "that the locus of our self-evaluation lies in our purposive action." (p. 94). Freud (1918) writing of the self-depreciation of melancholics said that "whoever holds, or expresses to others such a low opinion of himself is ill whether he is speaking truthfully or being unfair to himself." (In Diggory 1966; p. 107). Coleman (1964) defines self-evaluation as "The way in which the individual views himself -- his worth, adequacy, ..." (p. 670).

Self-actualization -- Maslow (1954) states that self-actualization:

refers to man's desire for self-fulfillment, namely to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming. (p. 91-2)

Self-acceptance -- Allport (1961) defines self-acceptance as "the degree to which a person accepted (liked) himself." (p. 17). Wylie (1961) believes self-acceptance to be associated with the acceptance of others.

Self-consistency -- Self-consistency is credited to Lecky (1945) and defined as the nature of the totality which the individual believes he is.

Self-consciousness -- Heidenreich (1970) states that self-consciousness is "the awareness of one's self, especially in social reactions, where such awareness may have embarrassing effects." (p. 160).

Self-identity -- Erikson (1959) defines self-identity as "... all those experiences in which a sense temporary self-diffusion was successfully contained by a renewed and ever more realistic self-definition and social recognition". (p. 149).

Self-image -- Heidenreich (1970) defines self-image as "the picture of opinion that an individual has of himself." (p. 161).

Self-perception -- Heidenreich (1970) defines self-perception as "the perception and awareness the individual has of himself. It differs from self-consciousness in that it may take the form of object self-appraisal". (p. 161).

Most of the preceding definitions of self-prefixed terminology are closely related in one way or another as indicated by the forthcoming discussion of "self-concept" and "self-esteem".

Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

When one reads the empirical literature pertaining to self-concept and self-esteem theories, one finds that a bewildering array of hypotheses, measuring instruments, and research designs have been used. As a consequence, one cannot prepare a simple presentation of these theories. In view of this situation, it seems necessary to focus to some extent on one or two major theories.

Self-concept theories maintain that one cannot understand and predict human behavior without knowledge of the individual's conscious perceptions of importance of people influential in his environment. Because of this central role accorded to conscious perceptions, cognitions, and feelings, these theories have often been labeled "**phenomenological**." This is one of the two major theories that will be discussed. Another theory which has some common features of the phenomenological theory is "psycho-cybernetics" which emphasizes the importance of "feedback". Before dealing with these two schools of thought, it would be rewarding to mention several additional viewpoints of self-concept.

Heidenreich (1970) defines self concept as:

The self-concept encompasses the self-image, how a person sees himself, the self-ideal or the "self" he **thinks** he **ought** to be. (p. 160).

Coleman (1964) defines self-concept as "The individual's assumptions about his identity and worth as a person." (p. 670).

LeBenne and Greene (1969) define self-concept as:

The person's total appraisal of his appearance, background and origins, abilities, resources, attitudes and feelings which culminate as a directing force in behavior. (p. 10)

Knight (1969) defines self-concept as: "A mediating hypothetical construct devised to help account for the continuing effect of **past** experience on **present** behavior". (p. 143).

Wylie (1961) states that self-concept is "An organized configuration of perceptions of the self which are admissible to awareness." (p. 7).

Stanford (1965) suggests that "All data coming to the individual formulates the self-concept." (p. 444).

Now, let us discuss in some detail the phenomenological and the psycho-cybernetic theories of self-concept.

The Phenomenological Theories

Human behavior may be observed from at least two very broad frames of reference: from the point of view of outsiders or from the point of view of the behavior himself (Combs and Snygg, 1949). Looking at behavior in the first way, we can observe the behavior of others and the situations we have seen him operating in. "This is the objective, or external, frame of reference." (Combs and Snygg, p. 11). The second approach seeks to understand behavior by making its observations from the point of view of the "behavior himself." It attempts to understand the behavior of the individual in terms of how things "seem" to him. This frame of reference has been called the "perceptual", "personal", or "phenomenological" frame of reference. This approach seeks to understand the behavior of the individual from his own point of view. It attempts to observe people not as they seem to outsiders, but as they seem to themselves.

Raimy (1943), Lecky (1945), Rogers (1951), Combs and Snygg (1949) are known as phenomenologists. This school of psychology is interested in the behavior characteristics that formulate and influence the self. The most important variable in understanding or predicting a person's behavior is dependent upon knowledge of the individual's conscious perceptions of his particular environment.

Raimy (1948) states that "the self-concept theory postulates that a person's notion of himself is an involved complex and significant factor in his behavior." (p. 154). Raimy is convinced that the self-concept is formulated or organized as a result of past or present behavior and the individual uses the (self-concept) past or present experiences in facilitating a better understanding of himself. Raimy (1943) believes "... the self-concept not only influences behavior but is itself altered and restructured by behavior." (p. 333).

Combs and Snygg (1949) mention that "the self is the most stable portion of the individual's phenomenal field and is the point of reference for everything he does." (p. 122). Combs and Snygg agreed that self-perceptions portrayed a tremendous role in determining every behavior.

According to Combs and Snygg (1949) the perceptual field includes all of a person's perceptions, including those about himself and those about things quite outside himself, and not self, as it is shown as Square C in Figure 1. Within the total perceptual field we may think of a second and a smaller Square B, including all those perceptions which an individual has about himself regardless of their importance to him. This encompasses all those perceptions of self in a particular situation which Combs and Snygg have called "phenomenal self". They state that "the phenomenal self is the self in a given situation." (p. 123). Square A of Figure 1 represents those perceptions about self which seems most vital or important to the individual himself. This organization is called the self-concept. In this way an individual may extract from the phenomenal field those particular concepts of self which are such fundamental aspects of his phenomenal self that they seem to him to be "he" in all times and at all places.

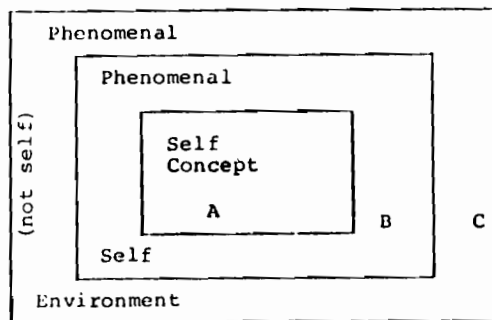


Figure 1

From Combs and Snygg (1949) (p. 126) with some modification. The perceptual field.

From Combs and Snygg (1949) (p. 126) with some modification. The perceptual field.

Rogers (1951) maintains that as soon as the infant begins to interact with his environment, he begins to be aware of himself as an entity separate from the events around him. He begins to notice or attend to and think about attributes of himself and the things he does. Events become symbolized in an awareness in images and words. Rogers (1951) calls awareness of such events self-experience. These awarenesses are the "raw material" out of which habitual patterns of thought about the self Rogers refers to as "concept or self", one of his major constructs. It includes not

only thoughts such as "I am tall" or "I am smart", but thoughts relating oneself to others, such as "other people like me", and thoughts identifying one's relationship with other kinds of events, such as "I am a skillful water skier."

Some of the most crucial difficulties seem to center around the degree to which self-concept theorists in general wish to be, and can fruitfully be, consistently, phenomenological. Indeed, many examples of this unresolved dilemma can be found in the writings of phenomenological theorists. Wylie (1961) illustrates this point choosing some quotations from Rogers' publications. Wylie states:

At some points Rogers seems to imply that "only" when a feeling or item of information about the self or environment comes at least dimly into awareness will it influence behavior. "The self-concept" or self-structure may be thought of as an organized configuration of perceptions of the self which are admissible to awareness. It is composed of such elements as the perceptions of one's characteristics and abilities; the percepts and concepts of the self in relation to others and to the environment; the value qualities which are perceived as associated with experiences and objects; and goals and ideals which are perceived as having positive or negative valences.

(Rogers, 1951, p. 136; In Wylie, 1961 p. 7)

However, it becomes obvious in other places that processes such as drives, unconscious motivation, repression, and denial are at least tacitly assumed to occur and to determine behavior. For example, "While these concepts are non-verbal and may not be present in consciousness, this is no barrier to their functioning as guiding principles.

(Rogers, 1951, p. 498; In Wylie, 1961, p. 7)

How People Can Help Themselves Under the Phenomenological Theories of Self-Concept

According to the phenomenological theories perceptions are selected by individuals in the light of their fundamental need for adequacy. The fact of this selectivity makes possible a measure of control by the self over its own destiny (Combs and Snygg, 1949).

The individual basic need for adequacy requires a stable perceptual field. Changes in the self come about only slowly and over a considerable period of time. This does not mean, however, that there is not room in the perceptual field for movement and change to occur. As a matter of fact, the self is in constant process of change throughout its existence.

According to this "conscious" theory, there are three kinds of perceptions typical of the adequate personality: (1) an essentially positive regard for self, (2) the capacity for acceptance of self and of others, and (3) the ability to identify broadly with other people. Each of us has it within his capacities to seek the kinds of experiences which will open and enrich his perceptual field and keep it essentially fluid and free. Each of us, too, can learn to avoid the kinds of experience and events which narrow, restrict, or make the perceptual field more rigid. It is possible to seek experiences which will help us to feel more fully and completely, and it is, of course, possible for us to identify more closely with larger groups of people if it seems important for us to do so.

Ways in Which We Can Extract Some Control Over Our Own Achievement of Adequacy

(1) **Maintaining a healthy organism.** One of the most obvious ways in which we can contribute to our own adequacy is through care of our physical being. Most of us already know a good many things we could do to improve our physical condition. We are aware of the importance of diet, frequent checkups, exercise, and the like. So, the problem is not a lack of awareness or information but a matter of valuing health sufficiently to make it seem desirable and enhancing to apply what we know to our own situations.

(2) **Creating opportunities for perceiving.** Since perceptions are the product of experience, there is no more fruitful way of affecting or changing perception than through the medium of some kind of new experience. It is rare that we are successful in changing perceptions either in ourselves or others simply by a process of telling. Perceptions do not change simply by "willing" unless this process is accompanied by some kind of experience as well. Although individuals can seldom change their perceptions directly, it is possible for us to make changes in the way in which we perceive through the kinds of experiences we seek. This can be done in two ways. In the first place, it is possible for us to change perception by exploring our old experiences to discover new meanings from them. This often happens in some kinds of group discussion. Secondly, perceptions can be changed as a consequence of seeking new

kinds of experience which will produce new kinds of perceiving. Perhaps one of the most important ways in which individuals can assure new perceptions is through the deliberate breaking out of accustomed patterns.

(3) **The development of positive goals and values.** Certain kinds of values seem to contribute to the achievement of greater adequacy, and new possibilities for self help seem open to us when such values become part of the individual's organization. There are a number of such positive values (as Combs and Snygg maintain) which have an effect upon the selection of perceptions in such a way as to be more likely to produce greater adequacy than others. Some of these are listed by Combs and Snygg (1949, p. 359-360):

- (1) The individual who values the testing of his own perceptions is far more likely to achieve changes in his goals and values that will lead to greater adequacy than the individual who holds his perceptions as a sacrosanct preserve which must be kept intact at all costs. An attitude of "willingness to look" is, itself, a first important step in the achievement of better, more satisfying values.
- (2) An open, fluid perceptual field is an essential to the achievement of maximum adequacy, and the first essential in developing such a field, it appears, is the possession of an attitude that it is important to do so.
- (3) Individuals who value acceptance highly are far more likely to be open to their experience. Similarly, the individual who values identification with his fellow men is much more likely to achieve this than one who finds it necessary to cut himself off from his fellows.
- (4) The individual who has determined which of his values and goals are most important to him and which are of lesser value has taken an important step forward in the achievement of adequacy.

The Phenomenological Theories of Self-Concept as Related to the Goals of Education

According to the phenomenological theories, if we are to deal effectively with behavior we must consider what our students **think of themselves**. Here, the primary responsibility of education is to help the students to perceive themselves in ways that will be more satisfactory to them and, through the resulting behavior, to others. Therefore, the main goal of education is the development of an adequate self by each student.

The ways in which the schools can assist their students in the development of satisfactory and desirable self concepts cannot be planned (according to Combs and Snygg) as a rigid syllabus of experiences or activities because the experiences and the achievements which give them enhancement and confidence to a person at one stage of his life may be profoundly unsatisfactory to another person or to the same person at another time. Combs and Snygg illustrate this point by giving an example that praise from the teacher can represent either self-enhancement or humiliation to different children or in different circumstances.

The phenomenological theory provides us with some assumptions about the general technique that would be used by schools which deliberately set out to develop adequate self-concepts in their pupils. The following are the major of these assumptions.

(1) Such schools would provide each pupil with every possible opportunity to think of himself as a responsible citizen and a contributing member of society. They would see that he has the widest possible chance to identify with and be accepted by the socially desirable individuals and groups which he admires, so that he will feel accepted by and acceptable to society.

(2) Such a school would provide its pupils with a wide variety of opportunities for success and appreciation through productive achievement. Under these conditions, children would not only be able to gain self-enhancement, but would also be encouraged to discover their weaknesses and inadequacies under conditions in which they would feel adequate enough to acknowledge and deal with them.

(3) Such a school would provide its pupils with a maximum of challenge and a minimum of threat. It would stimulate and encourage the exploration of new fields of human thought, as Combs and Snygg state "for nothing is quite as satisfying a contribution to personal feelings of adequacy than challenge successfully met and conquered."

The Psycho-Cybernetics Theories

Introduction

The term "cybernetics" is derived from the Greek word "kybernetes" meaning "steerman" and thus calls attention to the principle of feedback control. In general, the term feedback is used to describe a reciprocal interaction between two or more events, in which one activity generates a secondary action which in turn redirects the primary action (Smith and Smith, 1966). Since World War II, the feedback principle has been identified especially with control systems known as servo-mechanisms such as are used to guide a ship or gunsight on a defined path in terms of a recorded error signal.

A feedback-control system incorporates three primary functions: it generates movement of the system toward a target or in a defined path; it compares the effects of this action with the true path and detects error; and it utilizes this error signal to redirect the system. Smith and Smith illustrate this point as it is shown in Figure 2.

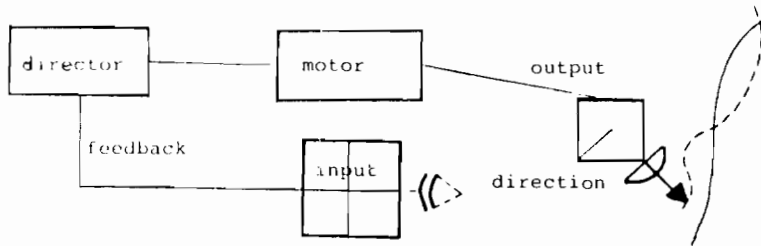


Figure 2. (from Smith and Smith, 1966; with some modification, p. 203).
The three functions of a feedback control system.

In the cybernetic analogy, (according to Smith and Smith, 1966), the behaving individual is looked on as a course of action and then redirects or corrects that action by means of feedback information. So, psycho-cybernetics means simply the principles of cybernetics as applied to the human brain.

Psycho-Cybernetics and Self-Concept

In psycho-cybernetics a constant flow of positive feedback, really a series of checks and balances by the subject, indicates the individual is "on course". Correction, when miscalculation occurs, is accomplished by negative feedback, utilizing just enough counter-action to correct one's course.

According to this theory, the so-called "subconscious mind" is not mind at all, but a mechanism -- a goal-striving "servo-mechanism" consisting of the brain and nervous system, which is used by and directed by the mind. In other words, man does not have two "minds" but a mind or consciousness which "operates" an automatic, goal-striving machine.

Maltz (1960) believes that the creative mechanism within ourselves is impersonal. It will work automatically and impersonally to achieve goals of success and happiness or unhappiness and failure, depending upon the goals which we ourselves set for it. If we present it with "success goals" it will function as a "success mechanism". Present it with negative goals and it will operate just as impersonally, and just as faithfully as a "failure mechanism". "Like any other servo-mechanism," says Maltz (1960), "it must have a clear-cut goal, objective, or 'problem' to work upon." (p. 12).

The goal that our creative mechanism seeks to achieve (according to Maltz) are mental images or mental pictures which we create by the use of imagination. The key-goal-image is our self-image.

Like any other servo-mechanism, our creative mechanism works upon information and data which we feed into it (our thoughts, beliefs, interpretations). Through our attitudes and interpretations of situations, we "describe" the problem to be worked upon.

Maltz and Powers (1960) maintain that if we feed information and data into our creative mechanism to the effect that we ourselves are unworthy, inferior, undeserving, incapable (a negative self-image), these data are processed and acted upon as any other data in giving us the "answer" in the form of objective experience. Like any other servo-mechanism, our creative mechanism makes use of stored information, or "memory" in solving current problems and responding to current situations.

In his book **Psycho-Cybernetics and Self-Fulfillment** (1970) Maltz states:

Your actions hinge on your opinion of yourself. If past successes have conditioned you to see yourself in your mind as a successful person, you will feel proud of yourself and will find ways to continue this image. If, on the other hand, you picture yourself as a failure and constantly visualize your past blunders, you are setting yourself up for more failure and more frustration. (p. 30)

Self-Esteem Definitions of Self-Esteem

Many people believe self-esteem to be: self-approval, conceit, egotism, self-respect, pride, proudness, vanity, arrogance, dignity, boastfulness, gravity and sobriety. Therefore, the primary foundation of self-esteem is pride or satisfaction with the self. "Some of the definitions of self-esteem are categorically represented as (1) positive or negative self-opinion, (2) personal worth (Calhoun, 1973).

Positive or Negative Self-Opinion

Rosenberg (1965) believes that "self-esteem is a positive or negative attitude toward a particular object, namely, the 'self'." (p. 30). Sears and Sherman (1964) define self-esteem as "Possession of favourable self-concept." (p. 10). Gergen (1971) defines self-esteem as "... the extent to which the person feels positive about himself". (p. 11). Allport (1961) adds that "pride is one common synonym of self-esteem. Self love another." (p. 120). McIntosh (1969) defines self-esteem as "a favorable opinion of one's character and abilities." (p. 760).

Personal Worth

Ziller, Hagey, Smith and Long (1969) state that "self-esteem is usually defined as the individual perception of his worth". (p. 84). Coleman (1964) defines self-esteem as "a feeling of personal worth, our need to feel that we are worthy of the respect of others." (p. 73). Elder (1968) offers self-esteem as the "feelings of personal worth influenced by performance, abilities, appearance, and the judgment of significant others." (p. 258).

According to the previous definitions of self-esteem, the individual's opinion of himself, pride and personal worth appear to be the most important variables in defining self-esteem.

The Development of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the last phase of self to develop. After the individual has established a self-concept, the degree of satisfaction he has with himself by knowing his faults and weakness, acknowledgment of his strengths and attributes will constitute the degree of the self-esteem (Calhoun, 1973).

Stability of the Self-Esteem

Coopersmith (1959) and Gergen (1971) believe that self-esteem is not constant. Coopersmith (1959) states "self-esteem is an ephemeral subject difficult to deal with empirically." (p. 93). Gergen (1971) states that "self-esteem is neither global nor fixed." (p. 37).

In order to change the self-concept one must first change the self-esteem. This is accomplished by allowing more than ample successful experiences, positive reinforcement, praise and personal concern. In time, the individual can be expected to become more satisfied with himself, and eventually his self-concept will improve. However, this is a process requiring time and a minimum of unsuccessful experiences for the individual.

When researchers purport to measure and to change the self-concept of individuals, they are attempting to measure and change the self-esteem of individuals. It is more feasible to influence self-esteem than self-concept. "Self esteem is based on self-satisfaction, while self-concept is based on perceptions influenced by past experiences." (Calhoun, 1973, p. 32). Therefore, by improving the immediate goal of satisfaction within the individual, eventually one may hope to improve the self-concept.

Brownfain (1952) hypothesized that instability of the self-concept may be considered to be a correlate of "self-esteem" and is associated with "poor adjustment." He compared two groups of fifteen persons who had extremely "stable" and "unstable" self-concepts respectively. One of his

significant findings is that stable persons gave themselves a more favorable "realistic private self-concept".

Self-Concept and Age Difference

Wylie (1961) states "At present there are no longitudinal data on which to base a description of the development of the self-concept". (p. 119). In lieu of such data one might think that results from cross-sectional studies of various age groups could be pieced together to attain a tentative developmental picture. This is impossible, however, due to the wide differences in instruments, relevant characteristics of self-concept, and testing conditions in the studies under review. Some disparate investigations, which come as close as any to being developmentally oriented, have been mentioned by Wylie (1961).

Ames' (1952) study on nursery school children presents a summary of "data in regard to the growing sense of self such as can be derived from verbalizations to self or to others ... data are objective in that they consist of actual statements and behavior of (approximately 100-150) subjects. They are, however, selective. Behaviors and verbalizations considered most pertinent data were further selected" (Ames, 1952, p. 194). "From these observations we have built up a developmental picture of the sense of self as it appears to change from age to age" (from one month through 3½ years). (p. 229). It may be said that Ames' study is suggestive, but rather diffuse and inconclusive.

Another study performed by Perkins (1958) used 4th and 6th grade children. He obtained a significant increase in self-ideal congruence over a six month period. Perkins also found that the sixth grade children showed greater self-ideal congruence than did the fourth graders. It might be said that these children may represent developmental changes of some kind in self-ideal congruence.

Havighurst, Robinson, and Door (1946) made a study comparing children of widely different ages. These investigators were interested in the development of the ideal self, as indexed by compositions written to describe "The Person I Would Like To Be Like". Responses fell mainly into four categories: parents or family members, glamorous persons, attractive visible adults, and composition imaginary persons. Because their nine groups of respondents were not selected so as to yield a closely controlled analysis of any one variable such as age, the authors offer the following very tentative description of an age sequence. Although the trend is not rigid, and some steps may be missed, the children's choice tended to move away from the family circle with age. From age 6 to 8, parents or some other family member were typical choices. From age 8 to

16 children tended to describe glamorous persons, then attractive visible adults, and finally composite imaginary persons.

Ketcham and Morse (1965) state: "As children progress through the elementary and secondary grades their self image and self-esteem take on an increasingly negative quality." (p. 204). In their research they employed two methods for measuring the self-esteem of 600 pupils in alternate grades from three to eleven. These two methods are Osgood Semantic Differential, and the Self-Esteem Inventory developed by Stanley Coopermith of the University of California. One of their significant findings is that "forty percent (of the pupils) report they often become discouraged in school and this increases with age from 22% to 43%." (p. 89). Morse (1964) states "for the young child school is a secure, supporting place with regard to his mental health but as he grows older confidence diminishes and school regard decreases." (p. 198).

Self-Concept and Sex Difference

Wylie (1961) states "the available studies of sex differences in self-concept have been directed mainly toward two questions: to what degree have males and females accepted particular sex role stereotypes as applicable to their own actual or ideal self-concept in particular?" (p. 43).

Three studies by McKee and Sherriffs have explored questions concerning male and female stereotypes (McKee and Sherriffs, 1957, 1959; Sherriffs and McKee, 1957). When they used a generalized rating scale, they found that both male and female college students reported that males were superior to females in terms of self-concept.

Other investigators have explored the favorability of the female and male self-concepts without regard to the question of stereotypes. Wylie referred to Matteson's study. Matteson (1955) computed an Aspiration Index (actual self minus self hoped for two years hence) and a Discrepancy Index (actual self minus self as he thinks others see him) on 419 college freshmen. He reports finding no sex differences in either of these scores. Wylie (1961) made a comment on this study "Unfortunately no information was given on abilities or backgrounds of these respondents to see whether some variable (s) other than sex might account for the obtained differences." (In Wylie, 1961, p. 144).

Engel (1959) in her study of the stability of children's self-concepts over a two year period assumed that "cultural ambiguities concerning sex roles should be more likely to affect girls than boys". On this assumption, "it was hypothesized that the self-concept of boys would be significantly more stable over the two year period than that of the girls. This hypothesis was not upheld." (Engel, 1959, p. 213).

It is difficult to synthesize the results since methods, instruments and types of samples varied widely across studies. It may be said there may be sex differences with regard to discrepancies which respondents perceive between actual self, personal ideal for self, and social expectations.

Self-Concept and Socioeconomic

Status Differences

Norma Trowbridge (1972) states: "The number of investigations of the relationship between self-concept and socioeconomic status (SES) has been increasing but the relationship remains undetermined. Findings appear to be in conflict. A number of persons have postulated that children of low socio-economic status do actually reflect the negative image society holds of them (Ausubel and Ausubel, 1963; Erickson, 1963; Witty, 1967). Some investigations appear to support this thesis (Deutsch, 1960; Long and Henderson, 1968; Wylie, 1963), while others suggest no significant differences in self-concept of children of different SES (Coleman, 1966. McDaniel, 1967; Scott, 1969). Studies by Clark and Trowbridge, 1971; Green and Rohwer, 1971; Soares and Soares, 1969, and Zirkel and Moses, 1971 indicate that by some criteria the self-concept of low SES children may be even more positive than that of middle class children." (In Trowbridge, 1972, p. 123).

In Trowbridge's study (1972), she employed the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory to determine whether Coopersmith Self-Esteem differences in self-concept existed between children of different SES. Her subjects (133 classrooms) were selected from a total of 42 elementary schools, from both urban and rural parts of central Iowa. Trowbridge found that 'in general' low SES children have higher self-concept scores than middle SES children.

Wylie (1961) referred to four studies in this area. These four investigators have wondered whether socioeconomic status is associated with any particular self-concept characteristics. Perhaps class status affects self-acceptance (Hill, 1957), or feelings of self worth (Mason, 1954). Perhaps a distinctive patterning of self-concept variables is associated with class status (Klausner, 1953). Or perhaps the characteristics of the ideal self are a function of class status (Havighurst, 1949).

Hill (1957) found no consistent association between scores on the Index of Status characteristics and scores on Phillips' Questionnaire concerning self- and other-acceptance. No significance tests are given for the results reported (according to Wylie, 1961). He also had an experimental group of

pupils study Warner's "what you should know about social class". while a control group did not study this topic. Then the Phillips Questionnaire was repeated, six weeks after initial testing. Neither high nor low status experimental respondents showed any difference from control respondents on the second administration of the Phillips Questionnaire. (Phillips Questionnaire consists of 50 statements, 25 of the statements concern the self, and 25 of them concern others. The self items in this questionnaire are all negatively phrased 'i.e., to agree would always be to show poor self-acceptance'.)

Wylie (1961) refers to another study of social class through which 27 seventeen year old white males were categorized by Kausner (1953) according to Warner's Index of Status Characteristics and Marxian social classifications. The Questionnaire consists of 60 statements concerning self-concept which were intercorrelated and factor-analyzed. This resulted in three factors, labelled "reactive aggression", "adjusted inferiority", and "socially isolated self aggression". Results revealed some suggestive trends toward an association between "reactive aggression" and lower middle class or proletariat status, and between "socially isolated self aggression" and bourgeois or upper middle class status. Subjects high on "adjusted inferiority" seem less clearly homogeneous on social class.

Mason's (1954) research involved more than socioeconomic class. She hoped to study the self-concept, especially feeling of self-worth and affective response to life, as a function of variables such as age, economic status, and living conditions (institutionalized-independent). She used several self-concept measures. Her subjects varied widely from the point of view of age. Wylie (1961) commenting on this study states: "Unfortunately uncontrolled variables in this design make it impossible to assign inter-group differences in self-concept to any of the variables purportedly under study. For example the two older groups differed from one another not only with respect to living conditions, but also with respect to socioeconomic class." (p. 138).

In Havighurst's (1949) work with sixteen-year-olds in a small Midwestern town, subjects' ideal selves were inferred from their written compositions describing "The Person I Would Like To Be Like". A scale was devised for rating the essays on "moral values ... ranging from selfish and materialistic to altruistic and spiritual" (Havighurst, 1949, p. 285). Three judges rank-ordered the 78 papers with respect to this scale, and an average rank was assigned to each essay. (The rank-order correlation between pairs of judges were + .58, + .61, and + .68.) Essays were dichotomized at the median and subjects were divided according to Warner's criteria into social-class groups: (1) Upper and middle classes, and (2) lower classes. The tetrachoric correlation between social class

status and ranks of the essays on moral values was + .27. Wylie's (1961) remark on this study is "we cannot conclude that class status as such is associated with expressed moral values because the latter correlated positively with IQ and with average school grade". (p. 139).

It appears that the four studies taken together do not permit us to conclude anything about the relationship between socioeconomic class and the self-concept.

As a matter of fact the problem of interpreting such conflicting results is most difficult. Zirkel and Moses (1971) in their recent review of self-concept studies suggest that "Reasons for inconsistencies seem to be varied and diverse. Some of these may be attributed to differences in definitions, instruments, research designs, age groups, regions, times and the individuality of human beings which defies categorization." (p. 254).

Self-Concept and Ethnic Background Differences

Perry A. Zirkel (1972) states "The effects of ethnic group mixture in the school on the self-concepts of students is a subject that has evoked perhaps much heat but little light." (p.214).

Wylie's (1961) landmark review of self-concept research did not mention any empirical studies relating self-concept to ethnic group membership. In fact, much of the early research focused on attitudes toward one's ethnic groups, simply assuming a relationship between these attitudes and the attitudes toward oneself. For example, Goodman (1952), Clark and Clark (1958), Caliguri (1966), and Raymer (1969) found that black children identified negatively with their own race. Moreover, Butts (1963) and Meyers (1966) found support for the assumed relationship between ethnic concepts and self-concepts among black children.

Several studies involving children in elementary and junior high school did find a significantly higher mean self-concept for white children than for black children (Deutsch, 1960; Keller, 1963; Henton, 1964; Radke-Yarrow, 1965; Lansman, 1968; Long and Henderson, 1968). Taylor (1967) and Williams and Byars (1968) found similar but less conclusive results in studies involving preschool and high school youngsters, respectively.

However, a growing body of recent research indicates that there is no significant difference between the self-concepts of black and white students. Wylie (1963), Gibby and Gabler (1967). McDaniel (1967), and Zirkel and Moses (1971) obtained such results for black and white elementary school pupils. Rosenberg (1965), Coleman (1966), Wendland (1968), Hodgkins and Stakenas (1969), and DeBlaisie and Healy (1970)

found the same results for secondary school students. Schulman and Knight (1968) reached the same conclusion for black and white educable mentally retarded youngsters. Gaier and Wamach (1960) and Renbarger (1969) reported such results for college and adult students respectively.

Findings involving students from other minority groups are less numerous but somewhat similar. Among Spanish-speaking students, Mexican-Americans have received the most attention in this area of research. Coleman (1966) did find that the mean self-concept of Mexican-American children was significantly lower than the mean self-concepts of both black and white children. McDaniel (1967) found the mean self-concept of Mexican-American children to be significantly below that of white but not that of black children. Palomares and Cummins (1968), Evans (1969), and Hishiki (1969) also found evidences of depressed self-concept for Mexican-American children. However, Najmi (1966), Carter (1968), and DeBlaisse and Healy (1970) found no significant differences between the self-concepts of Mexican-American and white children.

Zirkel and Moses (1971) have investigated the possible relationship of self-concept with ethnic group membership and mixture in the school setting. One hundred twenty black, Puerto Rican, and white students were selected from the fifth and sixth grades of three schools, each of which had a different one of these ethnic groups in a majority. Results on the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory indicated that the self-concept of these children was significantly affected by their ethnic group membership but not by the majority-minority mixture of the groups within the schools. The significant effect was ascribed to the lower self-concept of the Puerto Rican children in the study.

A large number of studies have been made of the self-concept in recent years. One might naturally ask then, is there really a need for yet another study of the self-concept? The answer is yes and there are several reasons why. The first is because there have been relatively few studies on the self-concepts of children of various ethnic backgrounds, and of different SES groups. A second reason is that existing studies on the self-concept of various groups are contradictory. A third reason is that this study seeks to examine the inter-relationships of many more variables than has been done in the past. A last and important reason is that there have been relatively few studies dealing with the analysis of measuring instruments of self-concept and self-esteem.

One of the most controversial and important questions in self-concept is if it is conscious to the individual, or whether it is unconscious.

Generally speaking, theorists who have held the view that the self-

concept is conscious have been associated with the term phenomenology; those who believed that much of an individual's behavior is motivated by unconscious factors or an unconscious self are called nonphenomenologists.

The nonphenomenological framework came into vogue for three different reasons. First, because of the belief that conscious behavior could not explain or predict all behavior. Secondly, because factors outside of the phenomenological field were thought to influence behavior; and lastly, because of inconsistencies in self perception.

The nonphenomenological framework suffered from several major defects. First, the unconscious was a term from which many behavioral scientists were trying to dissociate themselves, and second yet, the term unconscious like the self-concept had lost its heuristic usefulness. For example, when asked why a certain behavior occurred, the answer was because of the unconscious. Because of the disinterest in the unconscious not much research has been done on it since the early 1960's. Wylie (1961) made an exhaustive study of the existing nonphenomenological studies and found them to be vague, lacking in construct validity, and employing poor controls. Wylie concluded, however, that nonphenomenological studies on the self-concept may have great importance and that further research is needed.

This study does not deny that existence of influence of the unconscious self-concept. However, it is well-known than an individual's conscious perception of the relationship between himself and his environment is instrumental in influencing behavior (Wylie, 1961). The conscious self-concept is ascertained along with variables which is influences and which influence it.

According to perceptual psychology, behavior is a function of a perception. This means that as a person sees, he behaves. Perception furnishes the materials out of which the self emerges and grows. Thus, the importance of a better understanding of the structure of the child's perceptual field emerges.

The psycho-cybernetic theorists share the phenomenologists' view point. They maintain that the way the individual sees himself (his self-image) influences his behavior. Maltz (1960) believes that the creative mechanism within ourselves works to achieve goals of success and happiness or unhappiness and failure, depending upon the goals which we set for ourselves.

From the preceding discussion it may be concluded that the importance of the phenomenological approach of self-concept is emphasized in this study.

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مفهوم الذات عند الام وعلاقته بالتحصيل الاكاديمي للطفل

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يدور هذا البحث حول مفهوم الذات عند الامهات وكيف يتكون لديهن - وفي هذا الصدد يعرض الباحث الكثير من النظريات المتعلقة بمفهوم الذات. ثم يتناول البحث كيف يتكون مفهوم ذات الام العالي والمنخفض.

ثم يتناول البحث بعد ذلك علاقة مفهوم ذات الام بالتحصيل الاكاديمي للطفل - ويصل الباحث في نهاية البحث الى قناعة بأنه كلما زاد مفهوم ذات الام كلما زاد التحصيل الاكاديمي للطفل والعكس صحيح. بمعنى ان الام التي لا تتمتع بمفهوم ذات عالي ولا تثق بنفسها - هذا له تأثيره المباشر على التحصيل الاكاديمي لدى طفلها.