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A THESIS

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We hereby recommend that the Thesis prepared under  
our supervision by Carolyn E. Hunter  
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PERFORMANCE

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## CHAPTER I

### I N T R O D U C T I O N

The complexity of our society, the rapidity of change, and the accumulation of ever increasing bodies of knowledge demands that institutions of learning meet the educational needs of today's youth.

Educators are entrusted with Society's most precious possessions, "children." (23) Hence all factors which influence the learning process and the subsequent performance of students must be reviewed and analysed, to promote an atmosphere conducive to learning.

Psychologists and educators such as Diggory (12) and Ellsworth (13) have concerned themselves with the relationship of "self-concept" in learning. Because of their findings and its possible implications, one must look closely and assess the importance of self-concept as a factor in the behavior and academic performance of students.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since the advent of time, man as a rational, thinking organism has grappled with and has been affected by his awareness of the pronoun "I" or the concept of "self".

Descartes (11) as early as 1644 explored the awareness of the individual spirit or psyche in his writings. He realized its significance and stated from a logical conclusion, "I think therefore I am."

Although man has always behaved in terms of some kind of understanding of self, the serious use of self in the behavioral sciences is comparatively recent. The banner of the concept of self has been taken up by many psychologists and educators and is the subject of much theory and experimentation today. It is generally accepted that the self provides a core around which all other perceptions and continuity to the personality. Basic to an understanding of the various and diverse behavior of individuals is the understanding of self.

In psychological circles the term self has been used in various ways. Of these two chief definitions have come to the forefront, the self as a subject or agent and the self the individual who is known to himself. It is the meaning of the latter that we will concern ourselves with in this thesis.

In tracing the formation of the current heightened interest in the concept of self, one must logically start at the earliest beginnings. As early as the 1800's when psychology became an official discipline and science of human behavior, self concept has had cyclic resurgence. The

concept of self came under close scrutiny by William James. (20) James incorporated in psychological thinking, "self", a dominant position. Much of the contemporary theorizing about self concept derives from James. He considered ego the individual's sense of identity. In addition to this, he felt that the self included the spiritual, material and social aspects. Mental facilities and inclinations comprised the spiritual self.

About a half a century after James's writings a number of theorists began to establish and elucidate their concepts of self. Such men as Allport (1), Freud (14), Lewin (24), Rogers (41), and others with overlapping differences and similarities advanced their theories.

Allport (1) like James, articulated on the interrelatedness of the self as both object and process with a measure of clarity. He was especially cautious about the use of the term "self" in order to avoid the agent prescientific psychology. Yet, his contributions to an operationally useful concept of a dynamic self have been considerable. Allport called the ego, or self functions the propiate functions of the personality. Allport stated, (1) in ego-involved conditions confidence in one's own performance is rated higher than otherwise, opinions about which one has intense feeling are strongly held, statements about one's self or one's beliefs are designed to avoid losing the favorable opinion of others,



and things are better learned and remembered if they are consistent with the system of beliefs to which the individual is committed. This outline of Allport's views is matched very closely in Lecky's (24) theory of "self-consistency". Freud (14) and other psychoanalytical students approached the subject by giving attention to the nonphenomenal constructs of self as opposed to the conscious or phenomenal self of which is our main concern.

Mead in contrast to Freud's conception of the ego as a system of processes viewed the self as an object of awareness. Mead (34) claimed that the person responds to himself with certain feelings and attitudes as others respond to him; he becomes self-conscious (aware) by the way people react to him as an object. Further, various selves can be differentiated by the specific set of responses in different social settings. Home attitudes expressed toward him create a home self, school attitudes expressed by teachers and classroom experiences create a school self, and social attitudes expressed by peers and others in social settings create a social self.

Lewin's thoughts concerning the self included his theory on the life space, which includes the individual's universe of personal experiences as a space in which he moves. (26) He placed much emphasis on the person-environment combination as the basic determinant of action.

Lundholm, (29) another self-psychologist, distinguished between a subjective self and an objective self. The subjective self is mainly what the person comes to think about himself. Lundholm viewed the subjective self as alterable from the experiences one has in interaction with others in the pursuit of various tasks.

Sherif and Cantril (45) vaguely asserted that the self is an object and the ego is a process. They implied that when the ego becomes involved in a given task it will energize and direct the person's behavior. For instance, if self-esteem is at stake, the ego attitudes are aroused and tend to motivate the person to work much harder.

Symonds (52) incorporated the psychoanalytic theory of Freud and the social philosophy of Mead and thus sees the ego as a group of processes and the self as the manner in which the individual reacts to himself. There is a favorable self-reaction when the ego performs effectively in meeting the demands of life. On the other hand, the ego functions more effectively when the self is confident and held in high regard.

Cattell(9) considered "the self" the principal organizing influence exerted upon man which gives stability and order to human behavior. He differentiated between the concept of self awareness and sentiment of self. The sentiment of self regard is the most important influence in man. Cattell (9)

stated that sentiments are the ". . .major acquired dynamic trait structures which causes their possessors to pay attention to certain objects, or class of objects and to feel and react in a certain way with regard to them."

Murphy, (35) defined "self" as the individual is known to the individual. This derives from the person's conceptions and perceptions of his total being, including such selves as the frustrated self and the ideal self.

Unlike Symonds who cautioned that a person's unconscious self evaluations may distort his self-concept, Rogers believed in the discontinuity of the unconscious and conscious. Rogers stated, (41) "People behave in terms of the ways in which they see themselves-a conscious activity. "Behavior is consistent with the organized hypotheses and concepts of the self-structure." The consistency between behavior and self-concepts indicated the dual role of self: self as object and self as process.

Snygg and Combs are the clearest representatives of the self concept theory to which one can subscribe. Because of the central role they accorded to conscious feelings, cognitions, and perceptions, Snygg and Combs are "phenomenologists." They claimed (47) that "all behavior, without exception, is completely determined by and pertinent to the phenomenal field of the behaving organism." That is, how a person behaves is the result of how he perceives the situation

and himself at the moment of his action. In fact, awareness is the cause of behavior. How a person feels and thinks determines his course of action. Phenomenology, then is the study of direct awareness. Syngg and Combs gave us a phenomenal self which is both an object and a process, thus avoiding arbitrary distinctions and semantic difficulties. Later Combs (47) succinctly stated: "The self is composed of perceptions concerning the individual and this organization of perceptions in turn has vital and important effects upon the behavior of the individual."

In this chapter man's search for an understanding of the causes of his conduct has been traced. Proponents of the self construct theory during this time used the term self to have one of three meanings: (1) a dynamic process; (2) a system of awareness; (3) an interrelated process and awareness. The first meaning incorporated the cognition processes, such as perceiving interpreting thinking and remembering. The second denoted the objectified form of awareness an individual gives to his feelings, evaluations and beliefs about himself. The third gives the body of awareness, a psychodynamic quality in terms of its effect.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF CONCEPT

A child is not born with a concept of himself. He first begins to form this concept when he realized that there are other beings in the world with him, but even before this

his first reaction to the world is "I am hungry, or cold, or wet." Certainly, children are not born with any attitudes or value system. Their original images of themselves are formed in the family circle. They develop these notions of who they are in relation to the behavior of the people around them, particularly through the ways in which their behavior is received by the adults who are important to them, those people who are significant to them.

All personality theorists who are concerned with constructs involving the self accord great importance to parent-child interaction in the development of the self concept. This notion follows from such general ideas as these: (a) The self concept is a learned constellation of perceptions, cognitions, and values. (b) An important part of this learning comes from observing the reactions one gets from other persons. (c) The parents are the persons who are present earliest and most consistently. For this reason, and because of the child's learning. Presumably, then, the parent can influence the development of such aspects of the self concept as the following: (a) the generalized level of self-regard (e.g., by being loved and accepted the child comes to love himself, and through acquisition of accepted (reinforced) behaviors he comes to respect his own functioning), (b) the subjective standards of conduct which are associated with his role and individual status (i.e., the development of the ideal self),

(c) the realism of his view of his abilities and limitations, and the acceptance of them, (d) the degree of acceptance in phenomenal self concept of inevitable characteristics (e.g., hostility, jealousy, sex), (e) the adequacy of his means of appraising his effects on others.

When does the child become aware of himself as a distinct individual? Many conjectures have been made about this, and one estimate is that it is sometimes during the first year that the infant "discovers himself" and "finds a place in, yet apartness from, the outside world" (12).

The development of self-awareness does not occur in an all-or-none fashion which would enable one to assume that up to this point the child does not possess it but beyond this point he does. It is more likely that a child perceives different aspects of what he eventually calls himself with varying degrees of clarity at different times. His awareness of his distinctness from others seems to take place while he still has not gone very far in his perception and conception of many of the characteristics that eventually comprise what he calls himself. Moreover, the process of self-awareness or self discovery is actively going on at least as long as the child is developing or discovering new potentialities, and in a healthy person the discovery of self continues as long as he lives.

Among the early signs of self-awareness are those appearing when a child begins actively to control things in his

environment. In his explorations, the child notices and manipulates things that are apart from him. At first he seems almost to proceed by accident, but later he does so by design. When a child is able to manipulate an object he probably has a dim awareness of himself as one who can produce effects by his own actions.

An important feature of a child's eventual view of himself is his "body-image," the picture he has of the physical properties of his body, his appearance, including (as he perceives the situation) the figure he cuts in the eyes of others; this body image is not a photographic impression; in common with all other aspects of the way in which a person views himself, it is likely to be colored by feelings and attitudes.

When we ask how a child at first perceives his body, we can answer only by conjecture. There is good reason to believe, as we have noted, that sensations play an important role in defining the boundaries of a child's image of his body.

After a child has learned to talk, signs of self-awareness become increasingly apparent, as when, for example, he correctly distinguishes between "I" and "you" and "mine," and "yours," or is able to distinguish between dreams and actual happenings, or he is able to acknowledge feelings as his own, saying (as one four-year old did) "Don't bother me,

I'm in a bad mood;" or when he takes pains to conceal his feelings, saying, "I'm not scared," in spite of signs to the contrary. (12)

A notable phase in the development of the self occurs when a child begins to assert himself in opposition to others. Another important phase in the development of a child's view of himself occurs when he is able to compare himself with his peers and to test his powers in competition with them. When a child knowingly competes, he is using others as a standard against which to measure himself. Still another significant sign of self-scrutiny occurs when a child is openly critical of his own work.

Among the earliest experiences which influence the development of the child's view of himself are those with other people. The position that the child's attitudes pertaining to himself are influenced by "significant" people, as noted earlier at first by his mother (family) or mother substitute, has been expressed most strongly by Sullivan.

According to Sullivan (50) the "self-system" has its origins in interpersonal relationships and it is influenced by "reflected appraisals." If a child is accepted approved, respected, and liked for what he is, he will be helped to acquire an attitude of self-acceptance and respect for himself. As he is judged by others, he will tend to judge himself. Further, according to this position, the attitudes concerning



himself which he has thus acquired will, in turn color the attitudes he has toward other persons.

While still in the process of making new discoveries concerning his properties as an individual, the growing child has a strong tendency to preserve ideas and attitudes he already has formed. He strives in the presence of others and in his own eyes to be himself (as he sees himself) and to live in accordance with his concepts or attitudes regarding himself, whether these or true or false. He tries to be consistent with his own view of himself. It may even be difficult for him to see or hear or grasp the meaning of anything, favorable or unfavorable, that goes counter to his picture of himself. His perception of new events in his life will be colored by views he already has established.

The foregoing sections have dealt with various aspects of self-awareness and with the characteristics which a person is clearly able to recognize as part of his make-up. These constitute a person's phenomenal self (the self which, as a phenomenon, is perceptible). There also are facets of a person's make-up which influence his ideas and attitudes pertaining to himself but which are unconscious in the sense that he does not consciously recognize them.

The term unconscious has a vast variety of meanings and interpretations which we do not here need to explore. But it is necessary to take account of some of the meanings of the concept of the unconscious when we seek to understand

children. There are many currents in a child's life of which he is not consciously aware. A child does not comprehend the roots of his experience, when, for example, he has fears springing from happenings which he has forgotten or has a phobia arising from conflicts which he does not grasp. Likewise, a child is not conscious of what is occurring when for example, he warms up to a teacher without realizing that he does so because the teacher touches off sentiments he has for his mother, or if he is deeply wounded by a mild criticism without realizing that the criticism triggers off feelings of self-reproach springing from earlier experiences in his life. What has frequently been referred to as the Unconscious is also at work if a child who has learned to suppress his anger gamely grins and feels no rage when someone abuses him in his stomach.

A condition which a person is not consciously aware of occurs when he has an "idealized image" of himself that is not in keeping with the realities of his life. An idealized image of self containing elements which a person does not knowingly perceive occurs when he adopts a pose or facade and then somehow loses sight of the fact that he is posing. Such a condition occurs, for example, if an adult sees himself as a person of cold-hearted impulses. It occurs if an older child, with powerful, competitive drive, views himself as a disinterested scholar, eager to learn for the sake of

learning without recognizing that he is using his scholarly efforts as a vehicle for competing with others.

Horney (18) describes the idealized self as a kind of pseudo-identity. The idealized self, containing elements which a person is not consciously aware of, has a different meaning than the "ideal self" which a person describes when he knowingly tells about his aspirations. The idealized self is not from a person's own point of view, an ideal toward which he is striving but something he actually has attained--it is as real as he sees it.

In view of all this we might ask: is it not futile for parents or teachers or any of us, with our ordinary minds, to apply the concept of the self in trying to understand children? Inquiry into the self is a complicated business, but it is far from futile. The understanding of the child's concept of self can greatly aid in understanding the whys of the child's performance.

Each individual lives in a private world of experience. If an outsider is to understand the behavior of another individual, he must be aware of the value structure of the self concept of that individual. This concept has been forcefully stated by Bills (4):

Since each of us has experience, the raw data of which vary from that of any other person, and since we are set to interpret this experience according to our own form of perceptual organization, it is obvious that each of us lives his life in his own individual world.... Our interpretations of our past experience provide this consistency and serve as a screen through which we receive new experiences.

The self-concept is built through accumulated social contacts and experiences with "significant others," and this profoundly affects young people and preconditions the development of the self-concept.

Significant others are the people who most intimately administer the "rewards" and "punishments" in a person's life (parents, peers, and teachers). An individual's self-concept is acquired from countless experiences with these significant persons. Also, perceptions of other people are products of learning experiences.

#### EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Lecky (24) was one of the first investigators to demonstrate that low academic achievement was often due to a child's definition of himself as a non-learner. Walsh (53) found that "high ability, low achievers" had a negative self-regard when matched with "high ability, high achievers." Benjamin (3), Reeder (38), and Buckley and Scanlan (7) presented additional data to demonstrated that a person's self-concept has a direct bearing on his intellectual efficiency.

Brookover, Thomas and Paterson (6) found a statistically significant positive correlation between self-concept and perceived evaluations of significant others, general performance in academic subjects, and achievement in specific subject matter fields.

Perkins (36) found that teachers who had taken certain courses in mental hygiene and child development were able to promote healthier personality growth in children. Cutler and McNeil (10) demonstrated that when mental health consultants worked directly with teachers, the teachers developed greater skill in child management which had beneficial effects for the student indirectly. LaBenne (23) found a highly significant relationship between the teachers's self-concept and the pupil's perception of himself in the classroom.

Self concept as a factor which influences behavior patterns and adjustment was studied by Martire (30) and Steiner (48). Both of these investigators found corroborative evidence for a positive relationship between self-concept and social adjustment. Sheerer (44) demonstrated that there was a positive correlation between acceptance of self and acceptance of and respect for others. Stock (49) also found that when a person's feelings about himself changed, his attitude toward others changed in the same direction.

In conclusion, one finds the educational implications of self-concept theory multitudinous in scope. Numerous studies indicate a direct relationship between the child's self-concept and his manifest behavior, perceptions, and academic performance. The manner of the teacher in presenting the subject matter is of critical importance, because teaching

activities have specific reference and meaning for the development of the student's self-concept. Some of these activities are internalized by the student as being self-defeating, and the circular effects of these conceptions as evidenced by Combs (47) reinforce an inability to learn certain kinds of academic material. An understanding of these factors can greatly enhance a child's performance and his subsequent adjustment and usefulness as a mature, functioning, constructive individual in our society.

### STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

#### Sample

All subjects for this study will be randomly selected from the fourth and fifth grade classes of James E. Guinn Elementary School. This school is in the area designated as the Echo area (core or inner city area). The sample will consist of twenty-six subjects, thirteen of which were in grade level four, and thirteen in grade level five.

#### Purpose

It will be the major purpose of this investigation to study the self-concepts of a group of fourth and fifth grade students and to determine the validity of the statement that academic performance is a function of negative or positive self-concept.

Specifically, the objectives of this study are stated as follows:

1. To determine the self-concept of a group of fourth and fifth grade students
2. To measure the academic achievement and intelligence of the two groups
3. To determine if there is any existing relationships between the self-concepts of students and their academic achievement and intelligence

### TERMINOLOGY

Self Concept. Self concept is the person's total appraisal of his appearance, background, and origins, abilities, and resources, attitudes and feelings which culminate as a directing force in behavior.

Ideal Self. Ratings given by the individual on descriptive adjectives of how he would like to be.

Intelligence Quotient. The ratio between mental age and chronological age.

Social Self. The individual's notion of how he is recognized

Phenomenology. The study of direct awareness.

### LIMITATIONS

The study was limited to a group of fourth and fifth grade students enrolled in elementary school in Fort Worth,

Texas. The study was further limited to those aspects of the self concept which the child chooses to reveal to the investigators.



## CHAPTER II

### P R O C E D U R E

A pre-test was administered to a sample of fourth and fifth grade students in the Spring of 1971 to facilitate the investigator in obtaining scales and questionnaires that would best give an accurate description of the child's perceived self-concept.

From the forty pupils tested, a sample of twenty-six completed the questionnaires and became the sample used in this study. The sample was divided into high and low achievers. This classification was based on the extent to which the student achieved or failed to achieve a first semester grade-point average (GPA) consistent with his Iowa Test score.

In the fourth-grade classrooms, the tests were read aloud by the investigator administering the tests and pupils read the test silently and supplied answers to the different items. Sufficient time was allowed for the students to complete each item of a test before going to the next item. However, the investigator administering the tests was careful to follow the general directions set forth for administering the different tests.

The fifth-grade pupils read silently the different test items. Help was offered only in those instances where

there was a special problem.

The Iowa Basic Skills Test had been administered prior to the administration of the self-concept tests. Results from the test were obtained from cumulative records and transferred to a data sheet.

The drawings were obtained from the subjects in a group session. The subjects were asked to seat themselves on a chair at a table of appropriate height. A sheet of plain white, eleven by eight and one half inch paper was placed on the table directly in front of them. A pencil (No. 2) was placed in the center of the paper and they were asked to: "Draw a picture of yourself. Remember draw your picture as you think you appear to yourself." The examiner then left the room and checked periodically. The situation was terminated when they indicated verbally or by gesture that they had finished.

### Instrument

Instruments which purported to measure an over all or very general evaluative attitude toward self concept were used. Specifically they were:

The Self Concept Scale adapted for use in this study was designed to measure the way the subject says he thinks of himself. Bills, Vance, and Mclean (33) developed an Index of Adjustment and Values to measure the discrepancy between the self-concept and the ideal self. The Index

consisted of forty-nine traits which appear to measure the values of a person, his acceptance of self, and the discrepancy which exists between his concept of self and his concept of his ideal self.

The Child's Self Description Scale consists of ninety-five items divided into sets of five items each. The items of the Scale were selected to describe feelings and preferences toward representative activities and situations in a child's life.

The Index of Adjustment and Values measure of self-concept was developed for use with adults. Lipsitt adapted the Index for use with children (27). This instrument serves to measure adjustment and values.

In addition to the tests cited above, the investigator deemed it appropriate to use the Human Figure Drawing Test as a servicable instrument in reflecting the individual's self-concept. The rationale for the use of the Drawing was established by several psychiatrists. Rosenbery (42) found the Human Figure Drawing Test (Draw-A-Person Test) to be quite sensitive to personality changes in an individual and to the ego defenses that he is employing. A study by Gray and Pepitone (16) indicated that a person's self-evaluation affects the way he draws the human figure.

The Iowa Test was administered prior to this study, and served as a means of assessing the subjects intelligence.

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data Analysis was carried out by the use of the product-moment correlation between the variables of the study and correlates of pairs of these variables. Chi square test of goodness of fit was employed in observing continuity to test for independency.

Self-concept and GPA (the index of performance showed a significantly positive correlation. The correlation between self-concept and I. Q. is low (though significantly different from zero) when the effect of achievement is statistically controlled. If the I. Q. is compared to the multiple correlation of I. Q. plus self-concept to predict GPA, the correlation doubles.

### CHAPTER III

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS WITH PRESENTATION OF DATA

This study was conducted to determine if academic performance was a function of negative or positive self concept. Specifically, the study was planned to determine the self concept of a group of fourth and fifth grade students; to measure the academic achievement and intelligence of the two groups; to determine if there was any existing relationship between the self concepts of students and their academic achievement and intelligence

A randomly chosen sample of fourth and fifth grade students was taken from a Fort Worth, Texas, elementary school. They were arbitrarily designated as Group A and Group B. The group consisted of twenty-six children. There were six boys and seven girls in the fifth grade and four boys and nine girls in the fourth grade.

The distribution of the subjects according to sex and socio-economic status can be found in Table 1. More than 90% of the students were from lower socio-economic backgrounds with less than 1% coming from Middle class backgrounds and none from the upper income group. Sex distribution was

disproportionate with more girls remaining in the two grade levels studied than boys.

TABLE I  
DISTRIBUTION OF SUBJECTS IN FOUR CLASSROOMS  
BY SEX AND SOCIAL CLASS STATUS

Classroom	<u>Socioeconomic Status</u>							
	<u>Upper</u>		<u>Middle</u>		<u>Lower</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
4 - 2	—	—	1	3	25	31	26	34
5 - 2	—	—	2	3	15	25	17	28
Total	0	0	3	6	40	56	43	62

Using an eight-item multiple choice questionnaire, the items formed a Guttman Scale with a reproducibility coefficient of .95 for males and .96 for females. The scale has an internal reliability of .82 for males and .77 for females.

The product-moment correlation was employed between variables of this study and the correlations of pairs of these variables were observed.

Because of the small size of the sample and faulty marking of the test by the students results from the three pencil and paper measures of concept of ability were non-significant. However, the data obtained from the Draw-A-Person Test was presented to two judges - two school specialists in psychologically related fields experienced in working with children. They were asked to use their psychological and counseling know how to evaluate or access from the test and knowledge of the student a positive or negative self concept.

Using the data from the two judges contingency tables using self concept as one variable and achievement as the other were employed. Self-concept was classified into two categories high and low. The data was treated by chi square with Yates correction factor for continuity to test for independency. Each table has one degree of freedom.



TABLE 2

JUDGE 1

Achievement	Adequate self-concept	Inadequate self-concept <sup>u</sup>
High achievement	3	10
Low achievement	7	6
	$\chi^2 = 25.2$ (NS)	
	$p = .01$	

TABLE 3

JUDGE 2

Achievement	Adequate self-concept	Inadequate self-concept
High achievement	3	10
Low achievement	7	6
	$\chi^2 = 16.4$ (NS)	
	$p = .01$	

TABLE 4

COMBINED GROUPINGS

Achievement	Adequate self-concept	Inadequate self-concept
High achievement	6	20
Low achievement	6	20
	$\chi^2 = 18.5$ (NS)	
	$p = .01$	

(NS) = Not significant

TABLE 5  
COMBINED GROUPINGS

Achievement	Adequate self-concept	Inadequate self-concept
High achievement	3	7
Low achievement	3	10
	$\chi^2 = 14.4$ (NS) $p .01$	

## CHAPTER IV

### S U M M A R Y , C O N C L U S I O N S A N D R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is any existing relationship between self concept of ability and academic performance.

Using fourth and fifth grade students in an inner city school system, it was found that: (1) There is a significant and positive correlation between self-concept and performance in academic areas. There is a significant indication that achievement is in part, a function of a pupil's self-concept. Pupils who perceive themselves "inadequately," who have negative self-concepts tend to achieve less than their potential capacity and aptitude would indicate they should achieve. One can infer that there is a significantly observable relationship existing between self-concept and achievement.

Further study in this area with an emphasis on teacher techniques for increasing positive self concept would seem to be warranted.

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