

Research in Review

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Recent Studies on Self-Concepts in Elementary Students

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In 1961, Ruth Wylie completed an extensive review of research on self-concept. Purkey (1970) reviewed literature on self-concept and school achievement with emphasis on work completed after Wylie's research; consequently, the following review of literature covers research completed after Purkey. Most of the studies reported were restricted to the effect of the elementary school environment on the self-concept of the child. Because of limited space, only studies with significant results in self-concepts were included.

Self-Concept and Blacks. Wash (1972) found many differences in ten- and eleven-year-old black children who attended integrated and segregated schools. The groups that had higher self-concepts were high socioeconomic children in segregated schools and high socioeconomic children in integrated neighborhood schools. Wash found that within segregated schools high socioeconomic blacks had higher self-concepts. Within integrated-neighborhood schools, children from low socioeconomic backgrounds exhibited higher self-concepts.

Strang (1972) compared children in schools with differing proportions of black and white students. He concluded (a) children in racially balanced schools had more positive self-concepts, (b) children in the majority racial group had higher self-concepts, (c) black children as a total group had higher self-concepts, and (d) children in predominately black schools had higher self-concepts than white children in predominately white schools. Henderson (1973) also found that students in predominately black schools had higher self-concepts than children in predominately white schools.

Whisenton (1970) reported that black students who had planned experiences with black adult models of achievement made significant gains in self-acceptance.

A study by Kuhn (1972) concluded that social class had significant effect on academic self-concepts of children. He found more similarities than differences in any given social class when comparing self-concepts of blacks with whites, although blacks as a whole had higher self-concepts.

Owen (1972) found a close relationship between self-concepts of disadvantaged children regardless of race. Disadvantaged children of both races had negative self-concepts. Henderson (1973) reported that students of high socioeconomic status of both races had higher self-concepts of their academic abilities.

Self-Concept and Open Classrooms. A few studies showed that open classrooms had a positive effect on building self-concepts in elementary children. Males, who were very low in reading achievement, were studied by Koskoff (1973). Those who were enrolled in open classrooms rather than traditional classrooms made significantly higher self-concept scores.

Beckley (1972) compared student attitudes toward self in a self-contained classroom to an open classroom situation. A higher level of attitude toward self existed in the open classroom. Brown (1973) discovered a significant difference in self-esteem between fourth grade students who attended open classes and those who attended stratified classes.

Lovin (1972), on the other hand, found that children who moved into a new open facility with

their former teachers and peers had a loss in self-concept.

Self-Concept and Sex. Studies using various instruments to measure self-concept reported conflicting findings when relating self-concept to sex. Most of the studies were restricted to upper elementary children.

Wickersham (1970), Beemer (1971), Henderson (1973), and Edeburn (1973) reported higher self-concepts in girls than in boys. Strang (1972) and Mason (1975), however, found that boys had more positive self-concepts than girls.

Self-Concept and Student Teaching. Neal (1973), studying the effect of student teachers on the self-concepts of elementary pupils, concluded that the number of teachers present in the classroom affected the pupils' self-concepts. Pupils increased in self-concept in relationship to the number of teachers present. A maximum of three teachers were in each classroom.

Self-Concept and Teaching Settings. Hinojosa (1974) found a relationship between high self-esteem and an open climate, and low self-esteem and a closed climate in the elementary classroom. Thompson (1972) reported a rise in self-concept as a result of team teaching versus traditional teaching. Marek (1972) found that depth-study in social studies versus the expository method was effective in the formation and maintenance of a learner's positive self-concept. Wickersham (1970) reported that children working with direct rather than indirect teachers had higher self-concepts.

Self-Concept and Tutoring. Robertson (1971) studied the effects on self-concept of fifth-grade students tutoring first-grade students. The results indicated that the fifth-grade students developed significantly different, and more positive, self-concepts as a result of the tutoring sessions.

Holcomb (1973) studied the effects of university students who had a friendship-tutorial

relationship with elementary school isolates. The study found that the relationship increased the social status of male and female isolates, improved male isolates' attitude toward self, and helped them view themselves as unique. The relationship also improved teachers' perception of male isolates' school work, interaction with the teacher, and participation in class. Mason (1975) found that high achieving elementary students tutored in reading and language arts by university tutors gained significantly in self concepts. ⁷

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Koskoff. "A Comparison of the Self-Concept of Children Enrolled in American Open Primary Schools and American Traditional Schools." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1973.

K. C. Kuhn. "Self-Concept of Black and White Students Between and Among Social Classes in Newly Desegregated Elementary Schools." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Syracuse University, 1972.

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C. A. Neal. "An Investigation Into the Effects of a Teacher Education Program Upon Pupil Learning Potential, Achievement, Self-Concept, and Concept of Teacher." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, West Virginia University, 1973.

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