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Date August 30, 1977

IMPROVING SELF-IMAGE IN REMEDIAL ENGLISH STUDENTS THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN A CLASSROOM DRAMA PROJECT

by

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ABSTRACT

Students enrolled in remedial English classes in school have a disproportionate percentage of behavior problems in the home, the school, and the community. Much of this deviant behavior is a result of poor self-image on the part of the students. If self-image in these students can be improved, behavior can be improved in these areas. The method selected was the use of theater experiences in an English classroom to provide students with successes that should improve their self-images. The subject population consisted of all freshmen and sophomore students enrolled in remedial English programs in Fergus High School in the 1974-75 school year. There were 17 boys from ages 14 to 18 and 10 girls aged 15 to 17 years. The study involved the selection, casting, production and presentation of plays. The plays were video-taped and played back to the classes involved. The Mooney Problem Check List was given to the groups before the project began and a different form of the same instrument was given at the end of the program. The mean of the seven problem categories in the pre-test was 1.557 while the post-test yielded a mean of 1.884 thus showing that such a program as the one attempted did nothing to improve self-image on the part of the remedial English students. However, the mean of the problems in the school related category was 10.045 of the items in the pre-test and 4.68 on the post-test indicating that school related problems had dropped in importance to the students. It would appear that the basic premise of using classroom techniques in an attempt to improve self-image and to upgrade deviant behavior in this school, the home and the community were not successful although the partial success of the concept was shown by the scores for school-related problems is worthy of further study.

Chapter 1

Introduction

During the past ten years this researcher has been involved with students who have received most of their language arts preparation in high school remedial English programs of one type or another. Working as a teacher of remedial English in the school term and as a policeman during the summer recess, some interesting observations and conclusions have become apparent. It is possible that students with learning disabilities in language arts are uniquely different from students who enjoy some degree of success in a study of English. First, these students seem to experience more problems of a behavioral nature in school than do the majority of other students of average or above average ability attending the same school. Secondly, many of these same students require a reputation with the local police as being the ones that should be watched closely. Law refers to this as "being under the perusal of the authorities." Lastly, many of these students, even though they had the potential of completing their high school studies, tend to drop out of school for a variety of reasons, the most frequently being mentioned as "dislike school" on the check-out forms as observed by this researcher over the past 12 years.

For a number of years this investigator has used the Kottmier Interest Inventory as a device to get acquainted with new students as early as possible. Although no records were kept of the information

because of its confidential nature and because of the potential legal ramifications against the maintenance of such a file, it has been observed that remedial students display markedly less interest in areas such as favorite books and other questions related to academic expertise, which was expected, but also many did not belong to churches, scout groups, 4-H or other organizations that should provide some positive self-direction in the maturation process.

Conversations with teachers in other disciplines about the remedial students seem to indicate that these students' conduct in class was often negative in nature. Many of the students quickly gained a reputation as trouble-makers and were singled out by some teachers as the ones to call on with difficult questions or made to sit near the teacher or to be subjected to other humiliating experiences in classrooms because of their conduct and attitudes. The police, as observed by this reporter's first hand vantage point, often stopped a disproportionate number of these same remedial students in order to inspect drivers' licenses, look for evidence of drugs or alcohol, enforce curfew ordinances and employ other such "hassling" techniques while, for the most part, the "good" kids were ignored. Store and cafe owners had their own way of handling these young people. Upon entering a business place they were asked if they could be "helped." They don't get a chance to browse around like the others. These are symptoms of an underlying problem. T. A. Harris, in his book

I'm OK -- You're OK, states that children with learning difficulties struggle under an oppressive cloud of self-doubt in their own abilities. Harris states,

> His inability to hold his own in a society of comparison and competition will sometimes create conflicts requiring institutional care, in which this competition is minimized. Yet his emotional turmoil continues to tormet him and those around him (p.170).

Obviously something should be done to help the remedial student solve some of these problems.

Statement of the Problem

Students with learning disabilities are more apt to get into trouble in the classroom with their peers and/or their teachers, in the home with their parents and/or their siblings, or in the community with the authorities and/or the members of the society.

Students with learning disabilities are unable to participate in classroom interaction with their peer group because of a lack of confidence born from the realization that they are less knowledgeable in the communication area than are their fellow students. This could well account for the behavioral problems that many teachers experience with the so-called "slow-learners." Since all students desire some form of recognition, they are likely to "show-off" or create discipline problems in the classroom to compensate for feelings of inadequacy in

scholastic performance. Such deviant behavior is a symptom rather than a cause of the serious problems of truancy, drop-outs, non-participation in extra-curricular activities, and problems with the law.

For the most part, the students in remedial classes belong to no school-sponsored clubs, athletic teams or co-curricular activity groups such as Boy Scouts, De Molay, Rainbow Girls or other social organizations. Few of them are active in church groups. These students are often identified by their over-reactive adoption of outlandish clothing (the uniform), far out hair styles, self-mutilation (tatoos and scars), alcohol and even adoption of the drug culture, all of this in the hope that some sort of a viable identity to themselves will emerge. At the root of these observations, the pupil's self-image seems to be the neglected facet of pupil growth development. Harris considers anyone's need for self-recognition a form of stroking.

> In the first position (I'm not OK -- You're OK) the person feels at the mercy of others. He feels a great need for stroking, or recognition, which is the psychological version of the early physical stroking. In this position there is hope because there is a source of stroking--YOU'RE OKAY--even if the stroking is not constant (p.45).

It is apparent that something should be done in the classroom to build poise, to gain self-confidence, to improve self-image, and most

importantly, to give recognition to students with proven learning disabilities in the language arts area. This is stroking as applied in the remedial English classroom.

A possible solution to the problem is to implement a creative dramatics project in the classroom. By participating in such a program, students will be observed to see if they become more deeply involved in interaction with their peer group, which in turn we will check to see if leads to more active participation in the co-curricular areas described above.

Need and Purpose of the Study

Teachers who address themselves to the cause of improving the performance of remedial students need such a study as proposed for a variety of reasons. First, because of the class load of most teachers it is impossible to devote the time required to experiment on an organized basis toward affecting some change in the perceptual domain of their students. Second, some remedial teachers are too unsure of their own abilities in the theater area to feel comfortable in attempting to teach such a course as I propose. Third, some schools do not have the financial resources available to commit themselves to a program to such an extent that could assure success to such a pilot program. Fourth, many remedial teachers have not recognized the implications of a perceptual psychological approach to the underlying causes of the deviant behavior of many of their charges and thus have

not addressed themselves to the problem. Lastly, remedial students have a built-in shyness and are very reluctant to try anything different or innovative because they feel comfortable in the status quo of their classrooms. Even without teacher-assigned seating charts, these pupils will gradually select the same seat every day in class and feel uncomfortable if someone else occupies it.

The fundamental purpose of this study is fourfold. First, the self-image of remedial English students is at a low ebb and can be improved through the use of easily learned fundamentals of dramatic techniques. Second, any reasonably qualified English teacher can apply similar procedures in a classroom. Third, such a project is economically feasible in most school districts through the use of equipment and supplies already available in most school districts. And last, to make available to remedial English teachers a document that explains how deviant behavior can be modified through the application of perceptual behavior can be modified through the application of perceptual psychology principles and transactional analysis and that some of the causes of basic shyness in remedial students can be overcome with creative teaching.

In summary, through an acting experience in a remedial English classroom, students with learning disabilities in language arts can improve their self-image. The recognition they receive and the self-confidence they will gain from direct participation in a theater

happening should bring forth an improvement in their behavioral patterns in the classroom and out of it.

General Questions to be Answered

Can pupil self-image be modified by theater experiences learned in a remedial English classroom?

Can students feel they are an integral part of happenings in classrooms unless some success has been experienced by them?

Can remedial students' peer groups be expanded or altered as a result of any positive influences exerted as a result of this study?

Can a program be designed that could allow a teacher with no theater background to adopt a classroom dramatic project for the purpose of improving self-image?

Can a program designed to improve self-image actually affect an improvement in behavior patters of the students involved?

General Procedures

All students involved in the project, ninth and tenth graders at Fergus High School enrolled in the remedial English program, will complete a Mooney Self Inventory Check List (Form H) as an entry requirement for the program. These forms will be retained in student class files. Class members will begin the project by participating in charade games and other interpretive role-playing activities to gain confidence and acting skill. The classes will then improvise roles from fairy tailes such as "Hansel and Gretel", "The Three Little Pigs",

"Goldilocks", and so forth. Following this activity, students will read several one act plays for children and make reports on them to their class. The classes will select one play that they can produce and perform in. The classes will work on the various parts of technical theater including set design and construction, simple lighting, costuming, sound effects and video-taping. Honoring copyright laws, the play will be reproduced, cast and rehearsed, utilizing all members of the class. During dress rehearsal and final performances, the plays will be video-taped to help improve the students' acting ability and to allow them an opportunity to see themselves on a video screen. The teacher will select what he considers the best acting company, and the class will perform the play at one of the grade schools in Lewistown.

Upon completion of the program, the students will be given another form of the Mooney Self Inventory Check List and the results will be compared.

Limitations

The population will consist of all Fergus High School remedial English students in grades nine and ten. All activities involving the students will be as self-contained as possible. The plays and other activities will involve utilization of the classroom. Construction and painting of sets will be, of necessity, done in the shop. All

remedial students in the classes will utilize their talents to the utmost.

Students at Fergus are placed in a two track English curriculum according to their performance on a language skills test and on the recommendation of teachers from the preceding year. The results of this study should be representative because of the random selection of the students. The only stratification of the population is in English achievement.

Definition of Terms

Self-image. The perceptual component of self; the image one has of the appearance of his body; the picture one has of the impression he makes on others (Good, 1973).

Deviant behavior. Behavior which varies markedly from the norm, whether physically, mentally, socially, or emotionally (Good, 1973).

Perceptual psychology in education. All behavior, without exception, is a function of the behaver's perceptual field at the instant of behaving (Combs, 1965).

Behavioral psychology in education. To be found in the various forms of stimulus-response psychology which seeks the explanation of behavior in the observing forces exerted upon the individual (Good, 1965).

Summary

Remedial English students appear to have a disproportionate number of problems concerned with deviant behavior. The problems are related to poor self-images. If self-concepts are not improved in these students, deviant behavior can carry over from home and school into adult society. It is proposed that self-image is connected with success experiences of various types. One way of establishing positive self-image in the classroom is the utilization of dramatic or theater techniques. Recognition of ability in a theater situation should help remedial students to correct deviant behavior problems.

Chapter 2

Many teachers in high school today are concerned with the changing behavior patterns of their students. Even in today's affluent society we have a large number of failures, drop-outs, and a general apathy towards school and school activities by some students. Educators offer different explanations for this phenomena. The behaviorists in one camp complain of the lack of "relevancy" and feel that if the curriculum can be strengthened by such things as competency based education, career education or other forms designed to improve the relevance of the educational process, the problem will right itself. Certainly, the "spare the rod and spoil the child" element of the society has been heard from in the form of the cry of "Return to the Basics."

T. A. Harris (1968) concludes that most of the behavior problems experienced by today's educators can be traced to a lack of "stroking" in transactional analysis terms to the child when the student is in the "I'm not OK--You're OK" position.

Arthur Combs (1965) asked, "How can a person feel able unless somewhere he has some success?" This question must be answered by the educator if he, the educator, is to fulfill his mission in the classroom. Students are people, and if the teacher is to teach, the student must be understood. Combs said it best in an address to the American Personnel and Guidance Association Convention in 1965.

> There are two frames of reference for looking at human behavior available to us. One of these is the external or objective approach familiar to most of us as the traditional view of American psychology. Seen from this frame of reference, behavior is described from the point of view of the outside ovserver, someone looking on at the process. Its classic expression is to be found in the various forms of stimulus --response psychology which seeks the explanation of behaviour in the observable forces exerted upon the individual. The perceptual psychologists takes a different view. He seeks to understand the behavior of people from the point of view of the behaver himself. His is a phenomenological understanding of human behavior, emphasizing the meanings of events to the person.

It appears that all people, including students in remedial English programs, have the ability to change behavioral actions and reactions from within, if given the proper external stimuli.

An observation of students assigned to remedial English programs at Fergus High School was that they were prone to actions designed to attempt to disrupt the learning environment of the classroom. Consultation with other teachers in different disciplines revealed the fact that the problem students in remedial English classes were also presenting behavior problems in other classes as well. The names of

students from remedial class situations seemed to show up on detention lists and other disciplinary organs far out of proportion in comparison to the other students in the school.

A check of the juvenile arrest sheets at the Lewistown Police Department revealed that the remedial students were having more than their share of encounters with the law.

It appears that a problem exists in the deviant behavioral actions of remedial English students. Educators are aware of the problem and standard disciplinary procedures used by schools has been ineffective. The perceptual psychologists seem to have the best approach to the solution because of their concern with the person or self-image of the problem student.

Self-esteem

John P. Hewitt, in his excellent book, Social Stratification and Deviant Behavior (1970), explains the cause of deviant behavior as the reaction of the individual to outside influences, especially environmental ones. His entire second chapter is devoted to self-esteem and the regulation of behavior. He maintains that "a person's concept of himself plays a central role in his behavior." It follows that everyone has a basic drive for self-esteem. Hewitt defines self-esteem "as a person's feeling that he is what he ought to be, that he is a socially acceptable and worthy person who needs make no apology for what he is." Self-esteem is based on the following premises:

(a) All men are normally motivated to develop and maintain adequate self-esteem, (b) The growth of self-esteem is related to the development of commitments to social norms, (c) People with low self-esteem have difficulty in sustaining interpersonal relationships. These ideas are especially important in education. Kelley (1975) defined self in this way:

> The self consists, in part at least, of the accumulated experential background, or backlog of the individual. It is what has been built, since his life began, through unique biological structure. The self is therefore unique to the individual.

The next question to be brought forth has to be "What factors of experience form the self?" Kelley (1955) feels that cooperation between the individual and his environment is the key. "The growing self must feel it is involved, that it is really part of what is going on, that in some degree it is helping to shape its own destiny, together with the destiny of all." He also feels that one of the causes for conflict between teachers and students is damage to self as a result of the lack of consultation and involvement. He even expanded this concept to include other areas.

> The lack of consultation and involvement is the cause of the continuing war between parents and their children, between

teachers and learners, between teachers and administrators, employers and employees, ad infinitum.

Fagan, Long and Stevens (1975) concerned themselves with the problem of disruptive behavior in the classroom. They defined disruptive behavior in the school as behavior which is incompatible with volitional, socially acceptable efforts to master the required or assigned task. Disruptive behavior in the classroom have far-reaching and permanent effects on not only the individual but the entire educational process. They stated it in this way (p.3):

> The results are evidenced by disillusionment and antagonism toward education, negative self-concepts, and general underdevelopment of resources for coping with life's problems. Further evidence is the extent of public concern about high delinquency rates, excessive misbehavior and disorder, gross limitations in basic learning skills, and the struggle of the educational system to insure constructive socialization.

The importance of the problem can hardly be overstressed. Deviant behavior, as manifested by disruptions in the classroom along with concommitant actions in the home and the community, is one of the great wastes of our society. Certainly, deviant behavior is not confined or restricted to the classroom. The existence of prisons, jails, and mental institutions attest to the fact that deviant behavior is with us throughout life. The vast sums of money along with tremendous

quantities of time expended by teachers, law enforcement personnel and social workers all point to the magnitude of deviant behavior problems which are first displayed in the classroom. Fagan, Long and Stevens (p.4) were obviously concerned with the problem when they wrote:

> Disruptive school behavior is a vital point for concentration for several significant reasons: (1) it raises a far-reaching question as to the adequacy of prior teaching leading toward the development of self-control (whether in family, school, or community efforts); (2) it interferes with on-going group attention and usually detracts from the learning atmosphere; (3) it often reveals an insufficiency of self-resources for coping with school expectations; (4) it may indicate the mobilization of negative and maladaptive reactions to stress; (5) it can signal resistance and dissatisfaction with the class content or process; (6) it can signal provide clues to specific weaknesses in self-control.

While Fagan, Long and Stevens address themselves to the problem and propose a humanistic approach to a solution of it in a curriculum designed to address itself to self-control, they virtually neglected the importance of self-image in behavior.

Self-Image and Grades: Expectancies and Self-Fulfillment Theories

"For generations, wise teachers have sensed the significant and positive relationship between a student's concept of himself and his performance in school" (Purkey, 1970,p.14). Conversely, many students fail in school because they expect to do badly in school. Purkey (p.20) puts it this way:

> It is a personal tragedy and a social waste when a student spends year after year experiencing defeat and failure in school. The causes of the failure and the effects of the failing experience are complex, but a continuous and central factor in both cause and effect is the way in which a student views himself and his abilities.

According to Purkey, most studies of failures have concerned themselves with underachievers but there seems to be ample data available to show that the nonachievers also view themselves and their relationship in the world differently from the successful students. All of this seems to point out that the concept of self has not been dealt with in a way that reflects the importance of this factor in all students. It is impossible to actually state that academic achievement is related to self-image although literature up to this point seems to point in this direction. Purkey (p.23) explains:

Judging by the studies considered thus far, there is no question that there is a persistent relationship between the self and academic achievement. However, a great deal of caution is needed before one assumes that either the self concept determines scholastic performance or that scholastic performance shapes the self concept. It may be that the relationship between the two is caused by some factor yet to be determined. The best evidence now available suggests that it is a two-way street, that there is a continuous interaction between the self and academic achievement, and that each directly influences the other.

It seems reasonable to expect some improvement in some of the cases of deviant behavior and that we will see an improvement in academic achievement if we can instigate an improvement in the self-image of pupiles in the remedial classrooms of our schools.

Effects of Rewards on Self-Image

Harris (1968) maintains that all people in the first or "I'm OK--You're OK" position feel a great need for recognition, which is a psychological verion of earlier physical stroking or cuddling. This stroking can be negative in that by acting rebelliously, the subject receives the recognition he desires. Harris concludes that the ultimate consequence of continuation or even suicide. Obviously, the value of a positive reward (stroking) is more effective in dealing with

deviant behavior than would be the threat of some sort of punishment.

Kifer (1973) demonstrated that school achievement has a cumulative effect on self-concept and proposed that this trend might be an affective consequence of the school learning process. Fouts (1974) seems to show the way toward developing a positive self-image when he wrote:

> In a study on a 9 year-old boy, it was found that a baseline of oppositional behavior (verbal, ignoring of teacher requests, moving away from the teacher when requests were made), teacher aggression (hitting, throwing objects at the teacher, statements such as "I hate you") and cursing were vastly improved when the child was given recognition from his teacher and his performance in a video tape on 'How to Work Hard in School.'

It appears that the self-image is a very plastic or malleable device that is continually being molded by external factors, both negative and positive. The process begins at birth and continues throughout a person's lifetime. As educators we are concerned with the formative years, from five through early adulthood. The concept requires the efforts of educators, sociologists, psychologists, governmental agencies and, most certainly, parents of children. Hewitt (1970,pp.45-6) summarizes it thusly:

> The balance of threats to and supports for self-esteem that the child receives in various public and private contexts of

socialization, together with the normative orientation that each context encourages, determines the normative and behavioral directions that the child will take as he grows into adulthood. The less secure the self-esteem of the child when he moves from the private sphere into public contexts, the shakier it will become in those contexts. At one extreme is the child whose self-esteem is wholly inadequate, who is beset by enormous anxiety, whose normative commitments are weak if they exist at all, and who is not well enough disposed toward others to interact with them successfully. Assuming that such a child is capable of functioning in a social group (which is doubtful) his experiences in public contexts will determine whether his self-esteem will be damaged irreparably or will be built up to the point of adequacy. The former is more probable and the result may be in some form of metal illness. At the other extreme is the child whose self-esteem is more adequate, who is committed to his family's norms, who can interact successfully with others, and who can easily manage any anxieties that arise.

Conclusion

The problem of deviant behavior is a real and pressing thing. Researchers from different schools of thought have addressed themselves to a solution of this problem. It appears that the perceptual

psychologists seem to have the best approach to a solution. Deviant behavior begins in the home and progresses as a symptom of self-image problems. The place to deal with the symptom is in the school. If left untreated deviant behavior manifests itself in later life in the form of delinquency or mental illness.

Chapter 3

The overall plan of this study was to determine if the self-image of a remedial student could be improved through the employment of a classroom procedure involving theater techniques over a period of one semester. In this experiment subjects were assigned on the basis of their enrollment in a remedial English course in the ninth and tenth grades at Fergus High School in Lewistown, Montana. At the beginning of the project these students were administered the Junior High School Form of the Mooney Problem Check List. The instrument was designed to identify individual problems involving self-image in the following areas: Health and Physical Development; School, Home and Family; Money, Work, and the Future; Boy and Girl Relations; Relations to People in General; and Self-centered Concerns. At the conclusion of the project, the High School Form of the Problem Check List was again administered. Although the High School Form was expanded to include problems in Social-Psychological Relationships, Morals and Religion, The Future: Vocational and Educational, and Curriculum and Teaching Procedure these items were disregarded in the comparison of the two results of the inventory.

The existence of negative self-concepts in remedial students has been well documented in the writings of Combs (1965), Hewitt (1970), and Harris (1965). If the students involved are given a chance to identify the areas of insecurity which they feel are important in their

lives, there should be no reason why they should be less than candid in their response to the questions on the instrument. An evaluation of their responses to the check lists should indicate how they view themselves before and after the experiment.

If a classroom experience can be designed to give recognition for a student's actions, some positive behavior modification should emerge. The use of a classroom dramatic experience should provide the impetus or catalyst for such a happening.

One possibility is to employ dramatic techniques in a regular English classroom. The classroom is selected because the students feel more comfortable in familiar surroundings, thus initial shyness that could be expected to inhibit student's reaction to the first stages of the program can be avoided. The procedure would be relatively inexpensive because most schools already possess a good deal of the materials required for the program. Only a rudimentary knowledge of dramatic technique is required of the teacher because of the fundamental approach to drama that is employed in the project. Assurances of the validity of the merits of the program will come from the selection of the evaluation instruments and the procedures employed in the final evaluation of the study.

Hypothesis

The study was designed to test the following major hypotheses for significance at the .05 level.

The experimental group, which was exposed to the theater techniques of language development, will reflect a significant drop in the number of problem items checked on the Mooney Problem Check Lists.

Population Description

The population consists of all ninth and tenth grade students enrolled at Fergus High School. Students are selected for the remedial program through a process inaugurated by the guidance office. Student records are examined and poor performance on verbal skill sections of instruction are noted. The eighth grade students are administered a standardized test encompassing language and mathematic skills. On the basis of this evaluation, the student's expectations are then discussed with English teachers from the junior high school. Students found weak in language arts are then enrolled in the remedial program. Conferences between the special education teacher at Fergus High and the remedial English teacher usually provide several more educable special education students for the remedial program. During the school year the administration, guidance department and affected English teachers shift students into the remedial program if it is felt that failing students in the regular program can be benefited by enrollment in remedial classes. The remedial program also provides for reading improvement prescribed by a reading specialist. Remedial students demonstrating a need for reading improvement are funneled into the reading program. The program also provides for lateral return or

'mainstreaming' of students as their language and/or reading skills improve. Students are channeled into the tenth grade program mainly on the basis of post term achievement tests and recommendations of the remedial English teacher.

The total population involved in the experiment consisted of 17 boys, two of whom were fourteen years old, five were fifteen, four were sixteen, five were seventeen and one was eighteen. Of the ten girls involved in the study, five were fifteen, four were sixteen and one was seventeen.

Treatments in the Experiment

At the beginning of the program, students were administered the Mooney Problem Check List (form H).

Students then were introduced into rudimentary interpretive acting using the method-style approach. Students were asked to become a seed, for example. They portrayed growth into a tree and responded to various stimuli such as cold, rain, snow, wind and sun. Charades were performed at the second stage to loosen the class up. At the end of this segment the students dramatized, extemporaneously, various fairy tales such as "Goldilocks", "Hansel and Gretel", and "Billy Goat Gruff". The group analyzed the characters they performed and also critiqued the performance of their peers. During this stage of the program, students not involved in the production worked with a cassette recorder and

stereo-system to develop a sound track for the fairy tale performed.

The individuals in the class then began reading various children's plays and making reports back to the class on what they had learned and presented a report on the plays they had read. At the end of this segment the various classes selected two different plays. These were reproduced and read in class so the class members got a feel for the plays. Then one of the plays was selected and cast from each class. Student directors, sound technicians, light technicians, property managers and stage managers were selected from the students that did not get parts in the play. The play was rehearsed and back stage work began with the designing and construction of a set. It was in the classroom and the lights were installed, hooked up and adjusted. The class learned fundamental make-up procedures and started to apply make-up to each other. Costuming problems were solved and as rehearsals continued, the play was video-taped. At the end of the dress rehearsal the class with the best performance presented the play on the high school stage and elementary school audiences were invited to attend the performance.

The students were given the Mooney Problem Check List at the conclusion of the study.

A Course Outline

Phase I: Indoctrination

1. Class completed "Mooney Problem Check List."
2. Using records, classes engaged in interpretive stage movements.
3. Charades
4. Stage movements and terminology

Phase II: Improvisational Acting Skills

1. Dramatization of selected fairy tales
2. Critique of performances
3. Began reading of plays (independent study)
4. Oral readings of teacher-selected one-act children's plays with discussion of merits and weaknesses of plays.

Phase III: Play Selection and Reports

1. Each student reported on a play he had read.
2. Each class selected two plays for oral reading in class.
3. Critique and final selection of play for performance.

Phase IV: Set Design and Technical Theater

1. Class designed set for play selected.
2. Viewed filmstrip on stage lighting.
3. Viewed filmstrip on costuming.
4. Workshop on sound track techniques.

Phase V: Technical Theater and Casting

1. Painted simple sets from student designs.
2. Viewed filmstrips on make-up.
3. Workshop on make-up.
4. Tryouts and casting of play.

Phase VI: Rehearsed Lines, Block, and Action

1. Cast rehearsals.
2. Supportive members worked on sets and properties.

Phase VII: Rehearsals, Technical

1. Using sets, lights, and sound, rehearse and adjudicate.
2. Video tape rehearsal and adjudicate.
3. Using costumes, video tape again and adjudicate.

Phase VIII: Final Rehearsal and Production

1. Technical rehearsal and tape.
2. Dress rehearsal and tape.
3. Select best performances by classes.
4. Perform in auditorium.

Phase IX: Evaluation of Program

1. Strike sets and return all materials
2. Classes critique the program.
3. Complete "Mooney Problem Check Lists".

The Mooney Problem Check List was utilized to establish self-image in the population at the beginning of the study. At the

conclusion of the study, a different form of the same instrument was again administered. Any change in the number of items checked was then evaluated to determine any change in self-image.

Reliability

Mooney and Gordon (1950) report in the test manual that Gordon administered the college form of the pre-1950 revision of the Problem Check List twice to 116 college students. "The frequency with which each of the same items was marked on the second administration and a correlation coefficient of .93 was found." They further stated that in a study of four educational groups, the check list was given and then repeated one to ten weeks later. The rank order of the eleven problem areas, arranged by size of mean number of problems checked in the area, remained virtually the same from the first to the second administration. The rank order correlation coefficients varied from .90 to .98. The authors contend that:

> It can therefore be concluded that while the Problem Check Lists must be, and are, so designed as to reflect changing situations and experiences in the individual case, they nevertheless exhibit sufficient stability to warrant general program planning on the basis of survey results,

Although research failed to produce evidence that any studies had been conducted on high school students to establish similar validity, it is

reasonable to imagine that similar results would be obtained from such a study.

A search of Buros Mental Measurement Yearbooks resulted in a verification of the test authors' posture. Jones (1953,p.73) concluded:

> Since the list is not designed to produce 'scores' and no nomative or correlational data are supplied, it cannot be assessed with regard to the usual concepts of reliability and validity. Chief attention is directed to the individual items as significant data. Persons who mark an exceptionally large number of items may be likely candidates for counseling, but the selection of such cases rests upon local conditions and not on adjustment norms, which the authors regard as inapplicable.

M. Krugman (p.73) in the same source wrote that this instrument, its strengths and limitations, are well described in the manual, and "that as an independent instrument it has value mainly for research purposes." Since the study of self-image of remedial students at Fergus High School is an attempt to measure any improvements in the pupils after the application of an instructional method, the use of the Mooney Problem Check List can be regarded as a proper method of evaluating the entrance and exit self-images of students involved in the study.

Methods of Collecting Data

The classes involved were given the Mooney Problem Check List (form H) at the beginning of the program. Administration of the check list does not require any special training. There are 330 problems listed on the instrument. The student darkens the space under each item that he feels troubles him. After he has gone through the list once, he goes back and makes another mark above the items that he feels trouble him the most. If the problem does not concern the student, it is left blank. The problems are so arranged on the answer sheet that they are categorized into broad areas such as Health and Physical Development; School, Home and the Family; Money, Work and the Future; and the like. At the end of the experiment the check list was again administered to the students involved.

Organization of Data

A frequency distribution for each of the problem areas of the check list was prepared from both forms, and arithmetic means from each of the seven problems areas was plotted on a frequency polygraph.

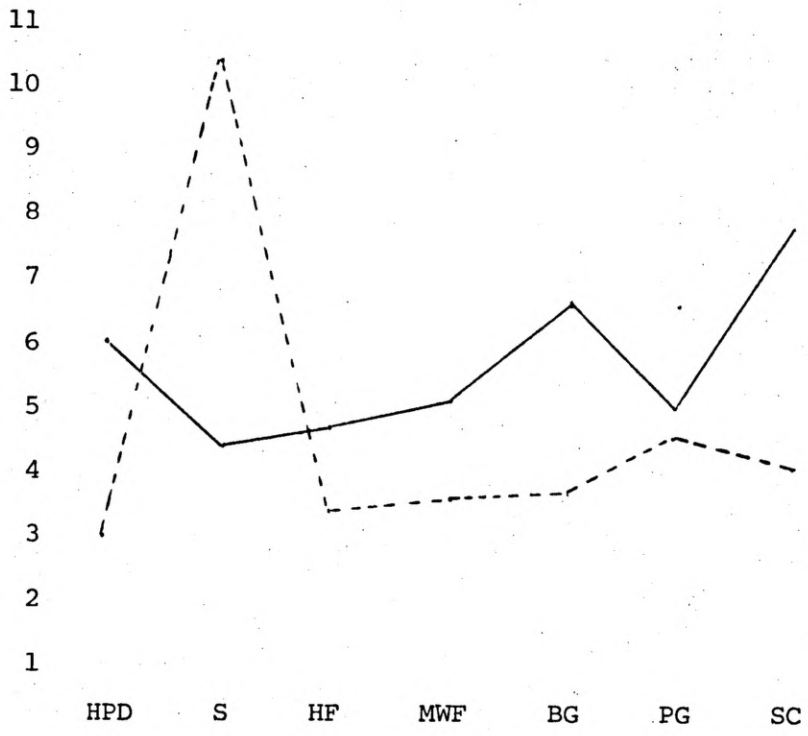
Questions to be Answered

1. Can a program in an English classroom be so designed that it will be easily administered by teachers with little or no formal training in theater or theater techniques?

2. Can pupil self-image be modified by theater experiences learned in a remedial English classroom?

Table 1

Changes in Remedial Student's Self-Perception



HPD--Health and Physical Development

S--School

HF--Home and Family

MWF--Money, Work, and the Future

BG--Boy and Girl Relationships

PG--Relations to People in General

SC--Self-centered Concerns

3. Can students feel they are an integral part of happenings in classrooms unless some success has been experienced by them?

4. Can deviant behavior as indicated by responses to problem identification check lists be positively modified and will any improvements, if noted, be continued outside of the English classroom?

Summary

One of the basic needs of all people is a desire for recognition. Some low-achieving students attempt to satisfy this need by some display of deviant behavior in the classroom because they have learned from experience that normal classroom activities do not supply the opportunities for recognition that other students enjoy. Low achievers in English are identified in Fergus High School by various methods including test results and teacher recommendations. These students are then placed on a track that allows for more individual attention and effort from teachers than is feasible in a normal classroom situation. To provide these students a chance to share a feeling of achievement, a program can be designed, using theater techniques in the classroom, that should yield these desired results. The program will involve acting and technical experiences in various endeavors including dramatization of fairy tales and the production of one-act plays. The recognition will occur when a play is actually performed for a group of grade school students. Data will be collected from the students involved using the Mooney Problem Check List. The project

will be considered feasible if a negative difference appears on the eleven interest bands of the Mooney Problem Check List and if a positive difference occurs on an evaluation of the teacher's behavior interview sheets for these low-achievers.

Chapter 4

Analysis

Before the basic hypothesis could be tested it was considered desirable to find answers to some questions. First, can a program in an English classroom be so designed that it can be easily administered by teachers with little or no formal training in theater or theater techniques? Because of the impact of Moffett's Teaching the Universe of Discourse (1968) on the teaching of English through some sort of interaction process and its concomitant reliance on role playing, dialogues, choral reading, and other theatrical devices, some teachers graduating from colleges today with English majors have been exposed to enough methodology in theater to adequately handle any such requirements that could arise in a classroom employing a project similar to the one described in this paper. As an example, of six teachers hired at Fergus High School in the past six years to teach English, four of them have had some formal theater training, while two did not.

A few hours spent with the local little theater group in most towns should turn up enough information to allow the teacher to improvise what little material needed that is not available in the school presently. A good source of inexpensive stage supplies needed, such as sound effects records, make-up kits and so forth, is Theater House, Inc., 400 W. Third Street, Covington, Kentucky 41011. Books on basic stagecraft, costuming, and so forth, as well as royalty-free play

anthologies, are available from Plays, Inc., 8 Arlington Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116.

Second, can pupil self-image be modified by theater experiences learned in a remedial English classroom? The entrance test mean on the Mooney Problem Check List for the school category was 10.045 while the exit instrument was 4.68. This statistic was especially important. Some of the actual problems identified initially were Getting low grades in school, Not interested in books, Slow in reading, Afraid of failing in school work, Can't keep my mind on studies, Worried about grades, Don't like school, and School is too strict. It appears that students did get some worthwhile benefits from this segment of the program. Although the project was very limited in time, it is apparent that school-related activities of the remedial students involved were positively influenced by their participation in the experiment. However, in view of the overall findings of the responses to the pre and post problem check lists, where an average of the means compiled from the seven areas was computed, there was a significant increase in the average number of problems checked on the post test. While the mean of the means was 1.557 for the pre-test, the mean increased in the post test to 1.884. The possibility certainly exists that problems experienced by students involved in the project outside the sphere of the school became relatively more important during the time the experiment was in progress.

It was noted by this researcher, however, that remedial students began the program with much shyness and many reservations. After all, they had developed a pattern of sitting in the back of the room while teaching and learning between teachers and other students was in progress in front of them. This vicarious attitude had served them well for nine or ten years. The only problem they were likely to encounter occurred during performance evaluations and test times. As the project progressed, the students became more and more involved. Indeed, they were reluctant to do any paper and pencil work, preferring instead to continue with the theater assignments.

Third, can students feel they are an integral part of happenings in classrooms unless some success has been experienced by them? Combs (1974) devoted much time in studying this proposition. He concluded that there is a considerable amount of self-fulfilling prophesy involved in the learning process. If a student feels he is a poor student, he unconsciously attempts to make that feeling a reality. Conversely, if a student experiences success in his studies, he seems to demand continuing success. This tenet is supported by many other researchers including G. T. Touts (1974), Fagan, Long, and Stevens (1975), and Kelly (1962). In the Fergus High School project, the validity of the conclusions was borne out. At the beginning of the study, students were extremely reluctant to participate in any of the warming up exercises proposed by this researcher. Simple drills in

emoting such as attempting to portray how a wall might feel upon the application of a new coat of paint were met with a reluctance bordering on rebellion. A frequently heard comment was "This is Mickey Mouse. I ain't going to do that!" However, patience prevailed. A rug had been installed on the floor and the simple act of removing shoes and going around in stocking feet seemed to get the students in the proper frame of mind. It was interesting to note that some of the students who objected most vehemently were among the first to become involved in the program. Usually, soothing or mood music was played in the background, and this seemed to aid the students in their adaptation toward this new approach to the learning of English. Outside the class, assignments involved the reading of materials suitable for acting out. Fairy tales seemed to be the favorites of the classes for dramatization. Students brought in stories, read them and discussed the merits of the stories for dramatization. Eventually, a story was agreed upon for further work and the class began accumulating props and token pieces of a set. It was interesting to note that, for a majority of the students, there was precious little imagination displayed, and the amount of innovation or ingenuity in securing props was very limited as might well be expected in a group such as this one involved in the study.

However, as the weeks progressed, strengths on the part of some students were identified by the others, and the students thus

identified were given jobs by their peers to take advantage of these talents. Two of the girls in one class were interested in art and did a good job on set design and painting. A boy in another class had a flair for clothing and was put in charge of costumes. Each of the four classes seemed to have a boy or a girl who liked electricity and sound equipment and was willing to research the labels on sound effect records and to cut a cassette tape of these sounds so they could be cued in on a script.

Eventually, even the most reluctant of the students became involved in the project. One of the most interesting activities of the program concerned make up. Boys and girls both were fascinated with liners, grease paint, rouge, powder, and especially nose putty. After viewing a couple of film strips describing some of the theory of stage make up, the students were given make up kits and proceeded to use the cosmetics to transform each other into old men and women, bandits, pirates, witches and so on. It was the feeling of this researcher that the act of touching each other's faces was very important and a certain amount of comradery was established as a result of this activity.

By the time the project was completed, it was abundantly apparent that the students had found something that they could do well. The successes they had experienced in the project seemed to demonstate the answer to the third question was affirmative. By the end of the

program the students seemed to be more courteous towards each other and more tolerant of others. They had learned that their peers in class had strengths and weaknesses, just as they had, and they emerged from the study as more mature young people.

The fourth question to be answered, "Can deviant behavior as indicated by responses to problem identification check lists be positively modified, and will any improvements, if noted, be continued outside of the English classroom?" was the major disappointment of the project. In this area the psychologists must be listened to. Although Harris (1967), Berne (1961), Hewitt (1970), and Combs (1965) have different approaches to the overall problem of behavior modification, they all are in agreement that the causes of deviant behavior are slow in rising, and any device designed to reverse these symptoms cannot be expected to dramatically change a lifestyle that has existed for a considerable length of time. While it is true that modifications in classroom behavior were noted, the results of the post program check list seem to indicate that instead of a decline in problems checked off, there was a marked increase in the problem areas checked.

The entrance instrument mean for Health and Physical Development was 3.09 while the exit mean was 6.18. For School the entrance mean was 10.045 while the exit was 4.68; Home and Family was 3.68 while the exit showed 5.045; Money, Work and the Future was 3.909 while the exit mean was 5.272; Boy Girl relationships were 4.0 on the entrance and

7.136 for the exit mean; Relations to People in General were 5.136 problem means while 5.454; and Self-centered Interest problem means was 4.409 while the exit mean was 7.681.

There are several possible explanations for this phenomena. First, the students involved were given the initial or pre-test prior to being given any formalized instruction in values clarification. Many of them displayed an immaturity that was in keeping with their psychological and sociological development. Perhaps they had had little or no opportunity to sit down and think about life problems and were not prepared to compose a list of problems. As was noted above, to this observer there seemed to be a marked increase in the maturity of these students at the end of the project. A part of maturity is the ability to recognize problems involving self-identity. When the students took the post-experiment test, they might well have been better prepared and consequently were more candid in their responses than was the case when they took the pre-test.

Or, perhaps the students were in a period in their own growth where more problem areas outside the school situation evolved naturally. Between the ages of fifteen and seventeen, physical growth is often accelerated. During this time young people become increasingly aware of their surroundings. It is a period of rebellion against most institutions, including home, society, and schools.

Hypothesis

Since there was no decline in the number of problems checked in the post-test as compared to the pre-test, the null hypothesis in the experiment was rejected, and therefore the position that using theater techniques in a remedial English classroom in Fergus High School to improve self-image in student participants to a degree that could conceivably help them in modifying their behavior outside the classroom is untenable. The mean of the seven areas tested was 1.557 of the items checked on the pre-test and 1.884 on the post-test.

Summary

Analysis of information acquired during the study seemed to indicate that establishment of a program using theater techniques in a classroom offered no insurmountable difficulties. Most English teachers now being trained have enough expertise to offer such a course. Specialized equipment and supplies are readily available at a price that is within the capabilities of school districts in Montana.

Pupil self-image can be modified or improved by participation in such a project as was conducted at Fergus High School. However, this modification is restricted to school activities and learning involved in schools.

The study demonstrated that success in the classroom could be experienced by remedial students. Satisfactory completion of tasks involving all of the students provided abundant evidence that they were

capable of achieving results that provided some praise from their peers and their teachers.

From this study it is concluded that deviant behavior, as indicated by responses to problem identification checklists, cannot be positively modified by participation in classes stressing participation in theater techniques in remedial English classrooms. It follows that since there was no improvement in behavior patterns there is no influence outside the classroom. It is the conclusion of this researcher that the problems associated with self-image and the slow learner are deep rooted and cannot be reversed or solved during the course of one semester.

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusions

The present study was designed to promote an improvement in the self-image of students enrolled in a remedial English project at Fergus High School in Lewistown, Montana. If self-image could be improved, deviant behavior exhibited by remedial students in the classroom, the home and the community should have been positively modified. The vehicle selected to affect this modification was the use of theater techniques in the classroom. The basic premise of the study was that deviant behavior outside the classroom on the part of remedial students could be altered once the students experienced some success in the classroom.

Researcher indicates that the employment of theater technicians in remedial English classroom to improve self-image of high school students had not been attempted. Perceptual psychologists have established that symptoms of deviant behavior are closely linked with self-image, and thus that behavior modification can be accomplished with the improvement of self-image. Deviant behavior begins very early in the psychological development of all people, and the pattern is firmly imprinted by the time a child enters school. If left untreated, deviant behavior manifests itself in later life in the form of delinquency, mental illness or other unacceptable actions. Hewitt (1970) maintains that

> The development of a mobility orientation and the actual attainment of mobility seems unlikely for most delinquents because, as they leave school, which they are likely to do fairly early, they leave behind their contacts with the values and means of mobility. Several other adult patterns of adjustment are possible: membership in a subculture of adult criminals, continuation of the pattern of law-violating behavior into adult life, and voluntary reform and acceptance of conventional lower-class or working-class life style.

Low achievers in English in Fergus High School are identified by several different methods including standardized test scores on language arts, examination of permanent records, and referrals by counselors and teachers. Although a modified teaching method is employed by the school district, the students are periodically re-examined and mainstreamed if their progress warrants such action. A program was designed involving theater experiences in a remedial English classroom that allowed recognition experiences on the part of the participants and thus enhanced self-image of the pupils. The program provided for the measurement of self-image through use of the Mooney Problem Check List which was administered at the beginning of the project and again at the end of it. A different form of the instrument was used each time. The project is easy to administer because most English teachers are employing more drama techniques in accordance with the current

methods of English instruction being employed in classrooms. Recognition of remedial English students' efforts by their peers should provide the improvements in self-image required. The project would have been considered successful had the null hypotheses in the mean of the seven problem bands spoken to in the Mooney Problem Check List been rejected.

Establishment of a program involving theater techniques in a remedial classroom offered no major problem in the areas of instruction or logistics. Supplies can be obtained with a minimum of expense to the school district while most instructors of English have enough expertise to handle any problems that might arise in instruction. Participation in the program at Fergus High School demonstrated that pupil self-image can be improved to a degree that the students find that their problems in school are diminished to a considerable degree. The experiment provided evidence that success in the classroom can be experienced by remedial English students in the classroom. A relationship between the praise and recognition given by peers and teachers in the classroom had a positive effect on self-image.

However, deviant behavior, as indicated by student responses to the problem items covered by the Mooney Problem Check List, was not altered or modified as a result of this experiment. Rather, there was a marked increase in the mean of all save but one of the items marked

on the check list administered at the conclusion of the project. There is a variety of possible explanations for this phenomena.

Conclusion

As a result of the analyses of data presented in Chapter 4, it was concluded that while student performance in the classroom was positively modified, there was no carryover value outside of the controlled environment of a school. Of the possible premises available to explain the failure of the project to support a null hypothesis, the most plausible one concerns itself with an increased awareness of and ability to identify problem areas that concerned the students by the students. One of the bellwethers of increased maturity is the subordination of egocentricity or to put it in the terms of Harris (1968),

> We cannot decide on the fourth position (I'm OK--You're OK) without a great deal more information than most persons without a great deal more information than most persons have available to them about the circumstances surrounding the original positions decided on so early in life. Fortunate are the children who are helped early in life to find they are OK by repeated exposure to situations in which they can prove, to themselves, their own worth and the worth of others.

Thus, as the student began to expand his own personality, he became more aware of the causes of his frustrations and began to identify more of them.

The establishment of proof that classroom performance and relationships with peers in learning situations improved as a result of this study seems to indicate that it should be continued over a longer period of time than was initially provided for in the design of the project. Students seemed to work together in closer harmony and indicated that problems identified with school in the Mooney Problem Check List were being solved. This data indicates that more work should be done in this area by researchers.

Implications

The matter of behavior modification is still of great concern to psychologists and eduators alike. While the causes of deviant behavior have been described and agreed upon by researchers in both fields, treatment of these problems is varied. Research must continue along the avenues indicated by current studies. In addition, educators must become more involved in this area because education is involved with the total population during the period in which something positive can be accomplished in the area of behavior modification.

The current project indicates that the testing instrument should be updated. There is a real need for a problem check list that reflects the changing life styles of today's teenager. Many of the

problems of yesterday are no longer associated with life as currently lived. A considerable portion of today's youth has had experiences with drugs and alcohol, and yet the Mooney Check List does not identify this category of problems. Unwed mothers are another problem for today's teenager, and this area is also neglected. It appears the publishers of standardized tests are more concerned with other areas than they are with establishing some sort of instrument that lends itself to an evaluation of behavior modification.

This researcher feels that, while the null hypothesis was supported, the basic concept of the relationship between self-image and behavior modification exists. The program demands a more in-depth study for a longer period. In another study, more counseling by school counselors and school psychologists working with a teacher could be of great benefit. The establishment of a control group would also enhance the effectiveness of such a study. The population of remedial English students at Fergus High School is too small to make such a program feasible; thus, implementation in a large school district would be advantageous.

It would be of benefit to conduct the study again with a different group of students to validate the findings of the previous study. There is a strong possibility that the program would have more coherence if it were replicated. Or, the project could be held over a period of two semesters in two different years. The longer period of

time could allow for students to adjust to the different methods of presentation of materials and to become more comfortable with behavior self-evaluation processes.

If this researcher were to replicate the study, the sample would be given a short course in values clarification before the actual project would begin. This action would prepare the students to perform better tasks of identifying problem areas in their own lives. It was not felt that the students were serious enough in responding to the first check list. Other than this, the study was properly presented to the remedial student population.

A final possibility for an improvement in the study is that the program might be offered to a younger group of students. Junior high students in the 12-14 year range might have minds more receptive than do the older students. Then too, the students might not feel that they have such a myriad of self-identity problems. Moffett (1968) urges teachers to begin working with dramatic techniques in kindergarten. His reasonsing is that the extremely young students have fewer reservations about participating in activities that might appear less than sedate to the older students.

Additional Suggestions for Further Research

It would be desirable to extend the treatment over a number of years with a population more representative of a greater diversified socioeconomic background than can be found in Fergus High School. The

area served by Fergus High School is basically rural in makeup. Would urban children from a metropolitan area perform in a similar manner as did the sample employed in the current study?

The students seemed to enjoy the project. Could their interest in such a program be sustained over a period of several years?

Can self-image actually be permanently affected by any image-building project designed to be carried out in a classroom?

Can a vehicle be designed that can adequately assess self-image as an aid to counselors and teachers in today's schools? This area of test design deserves further study.

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