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SELF-CONCEPTS IN THE BELGRADE AND MANHATTAN SCHOOLS

by

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A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

with concentration in

Elementary Administration

Approved:

Chairman, Examining Committee

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MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

June, 1975
The completion of a study of this kind depends upon the assistance and cooperation of many persons. The researcher is especially grateful to Dr. Frank Greenough for the suggestions and encouragement given during the study, and to Dr. Eric Strohmeyer for his assistance with the analysis of the data.

The investigator is appreciative of the cooperation of the Belgrade Elementary School Principal, Mr. Neal Curtis, and Manhattan School Principal, Mr. Ivan Grodall, in making available their schools and students for use in this study.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if fourth grade children in the Manhattan Christian School had different self-concepts than the fourth grade children in the Belgrade Public School. Twenty fourth grade students from Manhattan Christian and sixty four students from Belgrade Public School were included in the study.

The researcher was involved with finding whether or not there was any significant difference in the mean self-concepts between the two groups.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Test, published by Counselor Recordings and tests, was given to each fourth grade class. Scores from the test were used to compute the mean self-concept for each group. A T-Test for Independent Samples was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups.

Conclusions arrived at as a result of the study were: (1) A significant statistical difference was found between the mean self-concept of fourth graders at Belgrade Public and Manhattan Christian when the data were tested at the .05 level of significance. (2) Belgrade fourth graders had a higher mean self-concept than did Manhattan Christian fourth graders.

Recommendations made were: (1) The results should be viewed with caution because of the limited number of students tested. (2) Further research in the area of the self-concept is needed. (3) Educators can do much to build the self-concepts of school children and should be encouraged to do so.
Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

One educator who feels that man's spiritual nature should be the core of the educational experience is Daniel C. Jordan (1972) of the Center for the study of Human Potential at the School of Education of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. He feels that a new educational system must be organized around an affirmation of the spiritual nature of man. It is this researcher's belief that humans are made up of three different natures: The intellectual, the spiritual, and the physical. The public schools teach to the intellectual and the physical natures, but because of the Supreme Court's ruling against the practice of religion in public schools (1963), virtually all schools have been reluctant to venture into the spiritual area.

If the public schools are neglecting the spiritual nature of their students, are they doing the best possible job of educating?

It is the intent of this study to determine if fourth grade children in the Manhattan Christian Elementary School have different self-concepts than the fourth grade children in the Belgrade Public Elementary School. This researcher has chosen the self-concept as the measure of a well-rounded personality because of the commonly-held belief among educators that the development of a good self-concept is essential to success in school and in life.
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to determine if fourth grade elementary children in the Manhattan Christian School have different self-concepts than the fourth grade children in the Belgrade Public Elementary School.

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

In this day and age of lawsuits, teachers and school systems have become more and more accountable for the products they are producing. The possibility that non-learners might sue the public schools for money damages has become a reality. A well-publicized suit has been filed by a high school graduate, Peter Doe, who asserts that his functional illiteracy is the fault of his school. His claim for one million dollars from the San Francisco Unified School District has put accountability of teachers and school systems into the national press.

A close look at a rather recent high-level policy pronouncement, documents Federal interest and commitment in education. The most topical quote from former President Nixon's March 3, 1970 education message to Congress was: "As we get more education for the dollar, we will ask the congress to supply more dollars for education." (Roush, 1971: 113) The message is again clear----the Federal Administration will insist upon accountability and performance in education.
If educators are to be held accountable for the children that go through the school process the self-concept of children will play an increasingly important role in the judging of that accountability. It is the intent of this researcher to measure the self-concepts of children in a public setting and in a parochial setting. Although this study is admittedly very limited, the importance of its findings may be very important. If parochial schools are producing children with better self-concepts than the public schools, perhaps those in public education need to take a look at what the parochial schools are doing. If the opposite is the case, perhaps those in Christian Education need to re-examine their methods of teaching.

GENERAL QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

This researcher will answer the following questions:

1. What are the self-concept scores of fourth grade children in the Manhattan Christian School?

2. What are the self-concept scores of fourth grade elementary children in the Belgrade Public Elementary School?

3. Is there a difference between the mean scores obtained for the respective schools?
GENERAL PROCEDURE

The problem was solved by giving children in the fourth grade The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. The two schools involved were the Manhattan Christian Elementary School and the Belgrade Public Elementary School. The self-concept scores of the two groups were compared and recommendations were made.

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

A delimitation was placed on the number of schools tested. Because of the time and money involved only two schools were given the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, and only the fourth grade children in each school were tested. It was felt by this researcher that by the time a child had reached the fourth grade the school had had time to influence the child's self-concept.

A delimitation was also placed on the type of test this researcher used. The Piers-Harris Test has eighty simple "yes" or "no" questions. Measuring the self-concept is a complex task at best and a battery of self-concept tests would be more predictive of actual self-concept.

This researcher sees the lack of information available that compares the education of a parochial student with that of a public school student as a limitation.
There is also a limitation because of the absence of a widely used children's self-concept test that has adequate reliability and validity coefficients.

There are two limitations that are inherent in any self-concept testing. There is always the question of whether the scores actually reflect one's self-concept. Secondly, when two groups are being compared, there is always the possibility that the two groups are not comparable.

In this research there is one variable that is almost impossible to control for and this researcher views this as a limitation of this study. Perhaps children whose parents send them to the Manhattan Christian School have better self-concepts than those children who go to the public school regardless of the type of instruction they are given. The opposite could also be true.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Parochial School.** The Manhattan Christian Elementary School.

**Self-Concept.** Scores obtained from the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale.
SUMMARY

There is a need to determine who is doing the best job of producing children with a good feeling about themselves, the public or parochial schools. This research will show how the self-concept scores of the fourth grade children from each of the settings compare.
Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Because of the lack of information in the researcher's area, the information in chapter two will be presented under four subtopics: (1) Importance of the Self-Concept, (2) Nature of the Self-Concept, (3) The Major Difference Between Public and Christian Schools, and (4) Measures of Self-Concept and Some Cautions. The first topic is a citing of several representative studies in this very broad area. The second subtopic will discuss the complicated nature of the self-concept. The nature of Christian schools and how they differ from public schools will be discussed in the third subtopic. The last topic will review some of the measures of self-concept and some problems that are inherent in self-concept testing. Only those measures that are paper and pencil and that require no experience to administer and interpret will be reviewed.

IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CONCEPT

The importance of self-concept in young children in relation to success in school is illustrated by the following studies: Wattenberg and Clifford (1964:461) found that measures of the self-concept and of ego strength taken at the kindergarten level were predictive of reading achievement two and one-half years later. The association between these measures and intelligence test scores was
insignificant at the .05 level. From this study we can conclude that measures of self-concept as to competence and personal worth if taken early in kindergarten would add significantly to the predictive efficiency now attainable through tests of mental ability.

Alvord and Glass (1974:178) also discovered that self-concept subtest scores were found to be significantly correlated with science achievement. Of the 1108 fourth graders tested, the correlation on the family subtest was .2609, the peer subtest .1846, and the scholastic subtest .3238. They were tested at the .01 level with a reliability coefficient of .84.

Other studies could be cited that come to the same conclusion as the above studies. How a student feels about himself and his surroundings is predictive of and related to academic success in school. A Title III project by Musholt (1974:68) points out that self-concept is also related to school participation and attendance. The study attempted to improve self-concept and student responsibility in 2,200 middle school students in the Harlem Public Schools of Rockford, Illinois. This was done by means of circle discussions in which the students talked about themselves and their concerns. The results of these discussions was increased school attendance and increased participation in school activities.

A good self-concept can predict school success. A poor self-concept can lead to school failure. In a study by White and Howard
(1972:37) of 622 sixth grade students who were given the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, it was found that students who had failed one grade had a lower self-concept than those who had not failed. Students who had failed more than one grade had an even lower self-concept score.

NATURE OF THE SELF-CONCEPT

It is the school's challenge to send each child home in the afternoon liking himself substantially better than when he arrived in the morning. Understanding how a child develops a positive self-concept is essential if educators are to meet this challenge.

A child develops a positive self image by experiencing success, love, acceptance, and understanding. Children who have poor self-concepts do not view themselves as directors of their own becoming. They lack the confidence to make decisions about their every day lives.

The self-concept has three major components: (1) self-concept (the traits, attributes, and limitations the individual assigns to himself), (2) his ideal self-concept (the individual's evaluation of himself), and (3) his other self-concept (how the individual perceives what others think of him). (Pigge, 1970:107) These three components viewed as a whole are called the global self-concept. It is the global self-concept that this researcher will measure.

According to Woolner (1971:60), the critical time for educators
to assist in improving a child's global self-concept is during the early school years. He begins to get along with others outside his family or immediate neighborhood. During this time no child should ever feel as though he were a non-learner. He must know that he can learn, that he is competent, and that he is adequate. Non-learning during the developmental years is the most devastating experience a child can have. It leads to frustration and hopelessness. The more positive the child's self-concept, the more secure he feels and the less dependent he is on other people's direction and evaluation. A child with a poor self-concept continues to depend on outside guidance to direct his own life rather than his own decisions.

The educator's fundamental job is to evaluate each child's sense of wholeness. To do this he must become aware of each child's strengths and sensitivities. Only then can he adjust his teaching to fit the child. Once aware of the students as individuals, the educator must realize that no learning will take place until each child is at ease with himself. All children experience inner conflicts from time to time, but a positive self-concept gives the child the strength to face these conflicts. The child with a healthy self-image feels certain that the world is a safe and orderly place in which to live and function. On his own level he becomes aware of his strengths and limitations.
THE MAJOR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PUBLIC AND CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

According to Collins (1973:275), the major difference between the public and the Christian school is that the Christian school deals with the relationship between God and the world while the public school deals with the intellectual development of the child.

A statement of philosophy of the Manhattan Christian School will illustrate this difference.

The Manhattan Christian School is organized on the scriptural basis of parental responsibilities for the training of their children. The Society is organized by a group of parents interested in education for their children.

Article II of the Constitution is the basis for the Society. It reads: The basis on which this Society is founded in the infallible Word of God....The purpose of Manhattan Christian School is to provide a general education from the Christian point of view for all of our covenant youth ordinarily attending school.

We can also quote from John Waterink, in his Basic Concepts of Christian Pedagogy, to illustrate the aim of Christian education. He says: "If I were asked to give a single sentence of statement of the aim of education, I should prefer to formulate the definition as follows: The forming of man into an independent personality serving God according to His Word, able and willing to employ all his God-given talents to the honor of God and for the well-being of his fellow creatures in every area of life in which man is placed by God."

The Bible describes the varied phases of Christian education in Luke 2:52: "And Jesus advanced in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and man:" wisdom referring particularly to the intellectual development of man, stature referring to his physical development; favor with God referring to his religious development; and favor with man referring to his social development.
The Bible is basic and normative to every aspect of the curriculum which contributes to the development of man in his four-fold phase. The Bible provides the spectacles through which we see all things as God would have us see them. From it we learn that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Commitment to Christ issuing in obedience to the laws of our Creator is the only successful way of life for man, the crown of creation.

Public school education does not revolve around the Bible or God. Perhaps this is due to the 1963 Supreme Court Decision regarding the practice of religion in the public schools which outlawed the use of public daily prayer as a part of school practice.

MEASURES OF SELF-CONCEPT AND SOME CAUTIONS

This researcher reviewed eleven self-concept tests. Only those measures that were paper and pencil, required no experience to administer, and required little experience to interpret were reviewed.

Two of the tests reviewed, the Global and Specific Self-Concept Scale (Remond, 1973:26) and the Children's Self-Concept Index (Remond, 1973:18) were primary tests with forms available for only grades one through three.

Three of the tests, The Lipsitt Self-Concept Scale for Children (Lipsitt, 1958: 29:463), How Much Like Me (Remond, 1973:29), and Elementary School Index of Adjustment and Values (Johnson and Bommarito, 1971:310) were for use in grades three through six exclusively. There were no forms available for the seventh and eighth grades. Also
How Much Like Me and Elementary School Index of Adjustment and Values had no validity indexes listed.

Six of the tests reviewed had forms available for grades three through twelve. Of these six tests, two of them, How I See Myself Scale (Remond, 1973:28) and The Self-Concept and Motivational Inventory (Remond, 1973:49) had no data available on validity. One of them, What I Am Like (Remond, 1973:65) was not considered reliable for individuals by the author. Another, the California Test of Personality (Buros, 1964:175-176) was considered by this researcher to have a major weakness in that it was written in 1939 with revisions in 1953. The two remaining tests in this group, the Piers-Harris Childrens Self-Concept Scale (Piers-Harris, 1969) and the Self Esteem Inventory (Seers, 1969:14:146-147) both had satisfactory reliability and validity data. However, the Piers-Harris Test was worded at the third grade reading level and for that reason was chosen over the Self-Esteem Inventory, which is worded at the fourth grade reading level. It was felt by this researcher that children would have less problems understanding the questions at the third grade reading level.

There are several problems that one should be aware of when using a self-concept test like the Piers-Harris Test. They will be discussed under three subtopics: 1) Ambiguity of items and response constraints, 2) Faking and the social desirability issue, and 3) Other response styles.
The first subtopic, **Ambiguity of Items and Response Constraints** is concerned with the fact that most items on self-report instruments are open to considerable variation in interpretation by the testee. Consider the item, "I do many bad things." (Piers, 1969:13) Adverbs such as "many," frequently," seldom," "few," cover a wide range when attempts are made to quantify them. Similarly, what one considers bad, someone else would not. And finally, we do not know the context or circumstances under which this judgment is being made.

The second subtopic, **Faking and the Social Desirability Issue**, deals with the issue of honesty in self-report inventories. Self-report inventories whose answers to content is straight-forward are subject to distortion. We speak of faking when the subject more or less deliberately slants his answer in order to produce a given effect. "Faking good" or the presenting of oneself in a favorable light is frequently equated with the term "social desirability."

One way to reduce the effects of social desirability, according to Piers (1969:14), is to use a forced choice technique--i.e., to force a choice between pairs of statements of equal desirability. But Cronbach (1960) points out that making choices more difficult reduces the reliability which could offset the gain in relevance. In general he feels that the effect of response styles depends on the length of a test. For a short test, the impure form (single statement) ordinarily gives a higher correlation with a criterion than does a short
forced-choice test. When the number of items is very large, the purer forced-choice test is more valid. Since the Piers-Harris was designed for children, the short, single-statement form was chosen. (Piers, 1969:14)

Young children have a desire to "look good," but rather than being a deliberate attempt to mislead, their responses may frequently reflect a confusion between how they really feel or act, and how they have been told they should feel and act.

"Faking bad" in adult populations is usually interpreted either as a bid for attention, or as a device to get out of some unwanted situation. Since children are less knowledgeable about any benefits that might accrue as a result of presenting an unfavorable picture of themselves, Piers believes that low scores on the Piers-Harris reflect truly low self-esteem, and should be taken seriously (1969:14).

The third subtopic, Other Response Styles, deals with the possible biasing effects of acquiescence on tests which use yes-and-no type alternatives. Acquiescence or Yea-saying is the tendency to agree with a statement, and its opposite, Nay-saying, is the tendency to disagree, regardless of the content of the items. While some (Rorer, 1965) feel that there is no real evidence for the assumption that acquiescence is an important variable in personality inventories, it is relatively easy to minimize the effect by balancing the number of positively and negatively worded items when constructing such an
inventory. The Piers-Harris was so constructed, although care was taken not to include negative words such as "don't" or "not."
(Piers, 1969:15)

SUMMARY

The research done in the area of self-concepts in relation to the elementary school experience, suggests that the child's self-concept may be one of the most important predictors of academic success in the elementary school.

At this time there are many self-concept measures available but not one of them is widely used. Because of this fact, the norms available for these tests are very limited. Also because of the very nature of the self-concept there are many variables that are hard to control for, such as the honesty of the testee and the interpretation he puts on test items. Because of the above reasons, the results of any self-concept testing must be interpreted with caution.
Chapter III

PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

The problem of this study was to determine if elementary children in the fourth grade in the Manhattan Christian School have different self-concept scores than those in the Belgrade Public Elementary School. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was administered to the students in both schools. This researcher compiled the data from the test and made recommendations based on the results.

In this chapter the instrument and the related literature will be presented in the following manner:

1. A description of the population is given.
2. The investigative category is defined.
3. A discussion of the method for collecting data is discussed.
4. The method of data organization is described.
5. The statistical hypotheses and the method of analyzing the data is discussed.
6. The precautions taken for accuracy are described.
7. A summary of the chapter is presented.
POPULATION DESCRIPTION

The population of this study consists of all fourth grade elementary students in the Belgrade Public Elementary School and the Manhattan Christian Elementary School. There were twenty students tested from Manhattan Christian and sixty four from the Belgrade Public School. Since no consistent sex differences have been found (Piers, 1969:10) boys and girls were not separated.

INVESTIGATIVE CATEGORY

The only category this researcher looked at was the global self-concept as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. The mean self-concept score from each school was found and reported.

METHOD OF COLLECTING DATA

This researcher traveled to the two schools, Belgrade Public and Manhattan Christian, and administered the Piers-Harris test to all fourth grade students. The data gathered from the Piers-Harris test were compiled and scored by this researcher.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale has gone through two revisions (Piers and Harris, 1964; Piers, 1969). Its present form is comprised of eighty simple declarative sentences, worded at the
third-grade reading level, to be answered yes or no, according to the way the student generally feels.

The accuracy of the Piers-Harris test is demonstrated by the following reliability and validity data: Kuder-Richardson reliabilities for an intermediate, 95-item form for six samples, from Grades 3 to 10, ranged from .78 for the Grade 10 girls to .93 for Grade 3 boys (Piers and Harris, 1964). For three samples, Grades 3, 6, and 10, 4-month test-retest reliability sample from the 95-item form ranged from .72 to .73 (Piers and Harris, 1964); while the 2 and 4-month test-retest reliability for fifth grade students taking the 80-item form was .77 (Wing's unpublished data, cited in Piers, 1969).

With respect to the validity of the total self-regard score from Piers-Harris, Mayer (1967) reports an r of .69 with Lipsitt's (1958) Self-Concept Scale for Children for 98 retarded students aged 12 to 16. Also, in five large samples, from Grades 4-12, reliability samples between total PH scores and scores on the Children's Social-Desirability Scale (Crandall, Crandall, and Katkovsky, 1965) ranged from .34 to .45, all significant, according to Millen's unpublished data cited in Piers (1969).

METHOD OF ORGANIZING DATA

Data obtained in this study are presented in a table that shows the mean self-concept scores of each school.
Null: There is no difference between the self-concept scores of students from the Manhattan Christian Elementary School and the Belgrade Public Elementary School.

Alternative: There is a difference in the self-concept scores of students from the Manhattan Christian Elementary School and the Belgrade Public Elementary School.

The statistical hypotheses has been tested by running a t-test for independent samples on the mean self-concept scores from each school. The data have been tested at the .05 level of significance.

PRECAUTIONS TAKEN FOR ACCURACY

Each group was given the same instructions. In order to insure the sameness of instructions they were written down and read to each group. The questions from the Piers-Harris Test were read to each group to insure that all students could read and understand what was asked.

The time required to read each question twice and give the students time to answer was approximately twenty minutes. Although there was no time limit to complete the test, care was taken to not give students too much time so that they had time to second guess themselves.
When the students had finished the test, an electronic mathematical calculator was used to compute all data. The figures were double checked to guard against error.

**SUMMARY**

In this chapter a restatement of the problem which has been investigated is given. The study includes twenty fourth graders from the Manhattan Christian School and sixty four fourth graders from Belgrade Public School.

Data used in testing the hypotheses were obtained from the *Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Test*. The data were used in comparing the mean self-concept scores of the two schools. The hypotheses have been tested by the use of the *t*-test for independent variables.
Chapter IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data analyzed were obtained from the results of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Test, which was administered to all fourth grade children in the Manhattan Christian and Belgrade Public Schools. The mean self-concept score of each school was computed and the tests of the hypotheses made on the basis of these scores.

A T-Test for independent samples was computed and the data were tested at the .05 level of significance.

The results are contained in the following table:

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<tr>
<th>RESULTS OF THE PIERS-HARRIS TEST</th>
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<tr>
<td>Manhattan Christian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean 46.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>( T = 3.259 )</td>
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A T score of 2.00 must be computed in order to reject the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the means of the two schools. Therefore, the null hypothesis must be rejected at the .05 level of significance, and it can be assumed that there is a significant difference in the mean self-concept scores of the two schools.
Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

This study was conducted to find out whether children in the Manhattan Christian School have different self-concepts than children in the Belgrade Public School. The population investigated included all of the fourth grade children in the Manhattan Christian and Belgrade School systems, a population of 20 and 64 respectively.

The children in each school were given the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Test. The results of the tests were used to compute the mean self-concept score of each school.

CONCLUSIONS

There was a significant difference in the mean self-concept scores of the respective schools. The children in the Belgrade Public Elementary School had a significantly higher mean self-concept score than did the children from the Manhattan Christian School.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This researcher feels the results of this study must be interpreted with caution because of the following reasons:

1. The population tested was very small (especially at Manhattan
2. It appeared to this researcher that the low self-concept scores by students from Manhattan Christian could have been due to their honesty in answering the questions. Perhaps students in the public school answered the questions the way they thought they were supposed to feel rather than the way they actually felt. In visiting the two schools several times, this researcher felt that honesty was stressed more in the Christian School.

With the above cautions in mind, the following recommendations are made regarding the self-concept and further research in this area:

1. Self-concept testing should be done several times within a one year period to check the variability of the scores.

2. A battery of self-concept tests should be given and correlations between the tests computed.

3. Whole school populations should be tested when comparing schools as this study did.

4. There is a need for extensive research into the area of Christian Schools and the effects of their program on young children.

5. The improvement of the self-concept may be the single most important thing that we as educators should be concerned about in the education of young children.

6. It is much easier to tear down a self-concept than to build one up. We must be careful in education to build up rather than tear
down.

7. We have been guilty in education of teaching the cognitive at the expense of the affective when in reality it is the affective that we take with us from school. We must be more concerned with teaching to the affective area.


Manhattan Christian School Policy


