San Fernando Valley State College

MEASURING SELF-ESTEEM IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Home Economics by Sandra Gilbert

July, 1971
The thesis of Sandra Gilbert is approved:

Committee Chairman

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July, 1971
With love to my husband, Morry, for his constant encouragement throughout my thesis research and writing.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to express her appreciation to the members of her graduate committee, especially to Dr. Malathi Sandhu for her guidance and constant encouragement which led to the successful completion of the author's thesis.

Sincere appreciation is also extended to the author's parents for their deep interest in her work and their financial aid which made her attendance in graduate school possible.
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ABSTRACT

MEASURING SELF-ESTEEM IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN
by
Sandra Gilbert
Master of Science in Home Economics
July, 1971

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the responses (behavior) of preschool children designated as possessing varying levels of self-esteem, to a structured, mildly frustrating experimental task. It was hoped that the investigator would discover three different levels of response (behavior) to the experimental task, corresponding to three levels of self-esteem (high, medium or low). A secondary purpose was to examine the efficacy of each of the three measures of self-esteem. A third purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of self-esteem in preschool children to such background variables as age, sex, ordinal position, religion, and father's occupation.

Twenty-nine male and twenty-five female preschool children were selected as subjects from the San Fernando Valley State College Preschool Laboratory.
Three instruments were used to rate the subject's self-esteem. First, a teacher's rating, which had been adapted from Leland Stott's Children Behavior Check-List. Second, a sociometric rating (popularity) was used to predict self-esteem. The third, a projective test involving doll play was also given to each subject.

An experimental task consisting of block constructions was used. The length of time the subject worked on the experimental task was assumed to have a relationship to his level of self-esteem.

The findings of this study were:

There is a difference in the length of time spent on the experimental task by children with high, medium and low self-esteem.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem, in individuals of all ages, has been the topic of more and more research in recent years. The importance of this research is not only limited to psychologists studying personality development, but all individuals can derive psychological, social, and personal value from it.

Stanley Coopersmith defines self-esteem as "a personal judgement of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds towards himself." (3:5) These attitudes, which are developed very early in life, are influenced by a child's environment. The environment at this early age generally tends to be limited to the family, and the child's peers. Thus, parents, siblings and peers tend to be the main influences in the development of self-esteem in the young child.

As the child develops his level of self-esteem—high, medium, or low—he tends to view and respond to the world from this frame of reference. In general, individuals with high or moderately high self-esteem are happier, better adjusted and more able to meet environmental demands than individuals with low self-
esteem. Individuals with low self-esteem generally feel inferior, helpless and often exhibit feelings of depression. For example, if an individual feels he is fairly intelligent, successful and capable, it might be deduced that the individual has high self-esteem. If the individual feels incompetent and generally inferior to others it might be deduced that he has low self-esteem. The child or adult who has developed high, or moderately high self-esteem, will function in a more positive manner thus benefitting himself and the society.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many researchers point out that an individual's level of self-esteem is a factor which will determine his impending behavior. High self-esteem tends to produce good social and personal adjustment and behavior, while low self-esteem is associated with poor adjustment. It has also been found that anxiety is related to self-esteem. Individuals with high self-esteem are less anxious, less defensive and more truthful to themselves. (12:179-180)

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the responses (behavior) of preschool children possessing varying levels of self-esteem, to a structured, mildly frustrating experimental task. The investigator hoped to discover three different levels of response (behavior)
to the experimental task, corresponding to three levels of self-esteem (high, medium, or low). Self-esteem was assessed by three separate measures. A secondary purpose of the present study was to examine the efficiency of each of these three measures of self-esteem. A third purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of self-esteem in preschool children to such background variables as age, sex, ordinal position, religion, and father's occupation.

**NULL HYPOTHESES**

1. There will be no difference in the length of time spent on the experimental task by children with high, medium, or low self-esteem.

2. Children with high, medium, or low self-esteem, will show no differences in their expectations for success (level of aspiration) in the experimental task.

**ASSUMPTIONS**

1. That different levels of self-esteem can be measured by the instruments used in the present study.

2. The three methods of measuring self-esteem are valid instruments of measurement.

3. The limited environment, which was the testing room geared to a low noise level and little extraneous
visual or auditory stimulation, does focus the attention of the subject on the experimental tasks.

**LIMITATIONS**

The sample used was from a white, middle class community. The experimental task and the two other block designs were specifically chosen for the subjects due to their presumed moderately high to very high level of motivation to succeed on such undertakings. The results of this study could then be only applicable to children from approximately the same environmental background and the same age group.

**DEFINITIONS**

1. Anxiety is negative emotional arousal consisting of two aspects...a somatic, physiological side (disturbed breathing, increased heart activity, vasomotor changes, musculoskeletal disturbances such as trembling or paralysis, increased sweating, etc.), and psychological side (perceptions of specific unpleasurable feelings and sensations, apprehensions, etc.). Anxiety differs from fear in that fear is the reaction to an impending or real danger. (8:50) Threat of failure on a task facing the individual would be classified as anxiety-reaction to a projected threat.
2. **Failure**, which is also a concern of this study, is not being able to attain the level of aspiration (action goal).

3. **Level of aspiration.** There are two types of levels of aspiration. The first type refers to what an individual would like to do or to be. This is called the ideal goal. For example, an adult may like to be the wealthiest man in a city and a child may like to have his very own pony. The second type of level of aspiration refers to what an individual intends to do. This is called an action goal. For example, an adult plans to own a small business and a child plans for how he will take care of a small kitten, the new family pet. The action goal may be considered a realistic judgment as to what the individual thinks he will accomplish.

(23:90)

4. **Self-esteem** is "a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds towards himself." (3:5) Some synonyms for self-esteem are: self-worth, self-evaluation, self-regard and self-respect. Self-esteem is also defined as feelings of superiority or inferiority in regard to the self.

5. **Success** may be considered, as that level of functioning or achievement equal to or even better than the level of aspiration (action goal). (23:92)
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The issues to be considered in this paper have been limited to three areas. The first is that of theoretical formulations in the sphere of self-esteem. The second is that of research studies on self-esteem. The third deals with research relating to level of aspiration and factors influencing it.

THEORETICAL FORMULATIONS OF SELF-ESTEEM

In historical perspective, William James presumably was the first writer to give attention to the area of self-esteem. His works established the orientation for most of the experimentation and theorizing which was to follow on the topic. In his book, Principles of Psychology, James states three probable factors influencing the development of self-esteem. He states that an individual's aspirations and values have a definite influence on his own evaluation of self-worthiness. (10:293) For any particular act of behavior the achievement of the behavior is always measured against the aspirations for the behavior. If aspirations are met in a significant or vital area of behavior, high self-esteem is developed,
but if aspirations are not met, an individual may not feel self-worth.

Our self-feelings in this world depends entirely on what we back ourselves to be and do. It is determined by the ration of our actualities to our supposed potentialities; a fraction of which our pretensions are the denominator, and the numerator our success; thus self-esteem = success / pretensions.

(10:310-11)

Although James states that achievement is measured against aspiration in each individual's valued area of behavior, he also feels that each individual attains a level of self-worth by measuring his achievements of success and status in relation to the society's standards of success and status. (10:291) This is another potential source of self-esteem.

The value assigned to the extension of the self is a third source of self-esteem, James stated that the self is:

The sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and his children, his ancestors and his friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses and yacht and bank account. All these things give him the same emotions. If they wax and prosper, he feels 'triumphant'; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down---not necessarily in the same degree for each thing, but in much the same way for all. (10:291)

In addition to the material and tangible self, James feels there is a social self. (10:293) This forms a very important part of the self. The social self originates out of interaction with other people. Thus,
an individual may develop many different social selves. He may be seen as a father, a husband, an employee, a boy scout leader, and so on. The values that the individual attaches to these various social selves are derived from the feedback he receives in each of these different social categories. (10:294) When any advancement occurs in the extended self, as in his body, religion, as a husband, or in his reputation, the individual's level of self-esteem would be expected to be raised. Any reduction or lessening of the extended self will bring an expected lowering of self-esteem.

Mead has further developed James' idea of the social self. He states that an individual's self-evaluation and self-feelings form initially as a result of his social interactions. Self-feeling develops over a time period from the individual's various social activities and encounters. (13:135) The individual also develops self-attitudes equivalent to those attitudes held by the significant "others" in his world. The individual takes on these attitudes, and values, rejects, or demeans himself as others would. Thus, the individual tends to see himself as having the qualities and the level of value that significant "others" ascribe to him. (13:156)

Mead's position stresses that self-esteem is largely an outcome of interpersonal interaction. No man is alone
in his self-appraisal. No matter how independent an individual is, he still maintains interactions with others in his social group. According to Mead, if an individual feels high self-worth, the important people in his life have treated him with high regard and respect; if an individual has low feelings of self-worth, he has been treated as inferior by others. (13:164)

Lecky is even more specific regarding the role of significant others in developing self-esteem in individuals. He feels there is a hierarchy of individuals who help develop the self-attitudes. This hierarchy corresponds to the chronological development of the individual. (11:156) At birth, a mother would be a very important influence, while the father's influence over self-attitudes would be felt slightly later. The infant or child receives feedback of attitudes from his parents, and develops similar attitudes towards himself. As a child grows and expands social horizons the sources of attitudes towards him expand. Throughout these various stages of life an individual tries to develop a unified concept of his self-worth derived from numerous relationships with significant "others".

Horney also states that the social interaction process is a source of self-esteem. One of her main interests lies in the methods the individual develops for defending himself against the deameaning feelings of
others. Horney states that the individual develops feelings of "basic anxiety" when the parent-child relationship is characterized by excessive domination, unconcern, lack of honor, belittlement, lack of affection, isolation and exclusion by the adult. (9:18) The individual defends himself against these self-demeaning attitudes by forming an idealized concept of his own capabilities and achievements. (9:21-22) One may assume that due to this attitude of idealization, the individual may have high self-esteem, yet it may lead to disappointment and lowered feelings of self-worth when these unrealistic goals are not attained.

Sullivan's position is fairly close to that of Mead in that he also regards the self as a product of interpersonal interaction. Yet, Sullivan emphasizes the importance of social involvement to an even greater degree. He feels that the self is solely a by-product of social interaction with significant "others". Sullivan maintains that no personality factor develops independently of social interactions with other individuals. (22:257) He indicates that the individual is constantly on guard against a loss of his self-esteem. Feelings of distress (anxiety) are brought about due to a loss of self-esteem. Individuals learn how to contend with these threats at different levels and with different methods. (22:260)
Adler stresses the significance of physical weakness and infirmity in the development of low self-esteem in individuals. He indicates that inferior feelings may derive from actual physical impairments, where an individual is indeed weak. (1:307) For example, an individual with a hearing loss or a bodily weakness may feel incompetent and deficient. Adler defines these problems as "organ inferiorities" and differentiates them from feelings of inferiority which derive from social processes. (1:13) Childhood interactions almost inevitably bring some feelings of inferiority, Adler indicates, but this is a natural occurrence in any child's life. These feelings of inferiority, due to lack of strength and size, do prompt children to try to attain greater size and capability. (1:13)

Adler states three sources of unfavorable influences in the development of self-esteem. Organ inferiorities and variations in size and strength have already been indicated. A third source of self-esteem derives from the treatment a child receives from significant others. (1:13) If parents, siblings and peers approve, support, and advocate the individual he will develop positive feelings of self-worth.

Erikson also attaches a great deal of significance to social interaction in the development of self-esteem and self identity. For him, the term "identity" implies
both a constant sameness within oneself (self-feeling), and a constant sharing of some kind of essential character with others. The individual will harmonize his mental image of himself with the mental image the community has of him. The harmonization takes place during puberty and adolescence. (4:56)

Identity and feelings of self-worth develop not only from emotional ties, but are also developed from "functional identity" which is the community's acknowledgment and receptiveness of the individual's achievements and abilities. (4:56)

RESEARCH STUDIES IN SELF-ESTEEM

There are two recent major studies on the subject of self-esteem. The first study is, Society and the Adolescent Self-Image by Morris Rosenberg (1965) and the second is, The Antecedents of Self-Esteem by Stanley Coopersmith (1967).

Rosenberg's study investigated self-attitudes of late adolescents. The individual, in late adolescence is seemingly preoccupied with his self-image - his identity. There are two reasons for this extreme interest. First, late adolescence is a period for making major decisions independently of parents and adult guidance. (17:4) For instance, the individual has to decide whether to attend college, trade school, or get a job. Also many
individuals at this time contemplate entering into marriage. Second, this is a period calling for adjustments to extreme changes, physical and psychological. (17:4) Both these factors often cause disturbance and conflict in the individual's self-image.

Rosenberg defines "the self-image as an attitude towards an object." (17:5) According to this definition the self is regarded as an object, and this object reflects various attitudes and feelings towards itself.

The main objective of Rosenberg's study was to determine how different social interactions created by membership in groups which featured a variety of values, outlooks or positions of existence would affect self-values and levels of self-esteem. The sample was comprised of 5,024 high school juniors and seniors from ten high schools in New York. Self-rating on a ten-point Guttman Scale was used to measure the self-esteem of the subjects.

In Coopersmith's study the emphasis was on the antecedent conditions which help develop positive or negative self-esteem. The main foundation for the study is the theory that self-esteem is significantly related to personal fulfillment and effective activity. The sample consisted of eighty-five boys between the ages of ten and twelve years. The sample was divided into five groups of seventeen subjects, each based upon a
previous subjective self-esteem rating and a teacher's rating. To measure self-esteem a fifty-item Self-Esteem Inventory (self-rated) was used on the subjects.

Popularity and Self-Esteem

Popularity has been assumed to be a characteristic of the individual with high self-esteem because popularity is associated with social success. It is assumed that the individual who attains a high level of success in social situations will have higher self-esteem than someone who lacks social success. A limited number of elements, such as age, sex, or the criteria used in the assessment of success, may change the correlation between self-esteem and success, but in general it is assumed that the correlation does exist.

To investigate peer-group reputation (popularity), Rosenberg conducted a sociometric study of 272 high school seniors in Washington D.C. Forty-seven percent of the subjects who were classified as having high self-esteem received two or more choices by their peers as a leader. Of those subjects who had been classified as having medium self-esteem thirty-two percent received two or more choices as leader, while for subjects with low self-esteem only fifteen percent had two or more choices as leader. Through these findings it can be deduced that an individual's self-attitudes might be related to the
opinions of others. (17:25)

The results from Coopersmith's popularity ratings, however, are contrary to the above findings. He found that popularity is not related to the subjective experience of self-esteem, although popularity is related to more outward behavioral aspects of assurance in an individual. It was concluded that mere acceptance by one's peers does not correlate with positive self-judgement. (3:48)

Hawk found that socially disadvantaged children tend to develop low self-esteem, attitudes of self-belittle-ment and self-deflation. These negative characteristics are displayed in peer interaction. The socially dis-ad-advantaged child becomes passive and timid in his social interactions. Due to this characteristic negative behavior of the disadvantaged child, he in turn, is viewed negatively by his peers (low popularity). (7:196)

Coopersmith also found that individuals with low self-esteem are timid and more limited in their behavior. These individuals usually do not place themselves in situations where they must state an opinion or a judg-ment. Individuals with low self-esteem do not have the ability to be leaders as they are not able to state new ideas or take a stand in support of or against an issue. (3:66)

Rosenberg found that interpersonal attitudes are
reflected to a great extent in an individual's behavior. Interpersonal awkwardness and shyness was found to be highly correlated with low self-esteem. Individuals with high self-esteem were characterized by ease of social interaction. (17:171) Social ease generally leads to club membership and much social interaction. Rosenberg did confirm the fact that adolescents with high self-esteem tend to be much more "club-oriented" and to participate more in club functions than individuals with low self-esteem. (17:194)

Social Class and Self-Worth

Social background generally tends to influence an individual's level of self-esteem. His social position is determined by his area of residence, income, and occupation. Generally individuals who are high on the social ladder have a high income, a prestigious occupation, and tend to live in a pleasant residential area. These individuals often enjoy more status and prestige in the community. Thus, through their total surroundings they develop a sense of self-worth.

As was previously stated, it has been found that socially disadvantaged children, due to their environment, do tend to develop low self-esteem. The total environment of their culture, peers, school and family help develop this low level of self-esteem. (7:196)
Surprisingly, Coopersmith found a very weak but positive relationship between his subjects' self-esteem and social class. He did arrive at a few interesting and suggestive trends which were not statistically significant. Upper middle class children were more likely to develop high self-esteem while lower middle class children tended to develop medium or low self-esteem. (3:83) Rosenberg's findings also indicated a weak positive correlation between the social class backgrounds of his subjects and their level of self-esteem. Both studies suggested that although individuals from the upper and middle social classes generally reveal positive self-attitudes as compared with lower class individuals, the differences in the groups are not as constant and numerous as was anticipated. (3:83; 17:39-41) Furthermore, in both the Rosenberg and Coopersmith studies it was found that although individuals in the lower class are more apt to state feelings of lower self-esteem, there were nearly as many individuals in this class who stated feelings of high self-esteem as low self-esteem. (17:39-41; 3:83) Redmond found similar results in his study, *Growth and Development of the Self-Concept*. He found in his subjects, ages ten years six months through eleven years five months, that there was very little difference in their level of self-esteem that could be attributed to their various socio-economic backgrounds (social class). (16:506)
Father's Occupation and Self-Evaluations

The father's occupation is closely related to the family's social class. Upper middle class occupations can be divided into three types of positions, managerial, professional, and business owners. These three different kinds of occupational positions differ greatly from the types of occupations held by fathers in the lower social classes. Coopersmith felt that these differences were so great that there would be vast personality trait differences in a child from each paternal occupational background. Yet, upon further investigation it was found that the father's occupation was not related to the levels of self-esteem attained by male offspring. The son of an unskilled laborer, for instance, could reach the same high level of self-esteem as the son of a lawyer. The treatment a child receives affects his level of self-esteem much more than the prestige of his father's occupation. (3:87)

There was one exception. Coopersmith found that children of fathers in authoritarian occupations, such as policemen, evidenced low levels of self-esteem. (3:87) Rosenberg also investigated the aspect of authoritarian or "violent" occupations. In all those occupations which were classified as violent, the fathers carried guns on the job. They included members of the armed forces,
policemen, sheriffs, detectives, or bailiffs. Rosenberg's results were similar to Coopersmith's in that these children tended to have a lower self-esteem. (17:48)

Working Mothers and Self-Esteem

Since so many mothers work today the mother's work history is thought to be related to her child's level of self-esteem. Coopersmith found that the child's level of self-esteem was unrelated to the mother's working pattern (the extent of employment, part-or full-time, since the birth of the child). Yet, there were trends indicating that total length of employment (years and months) is positively related to level of self-esteem. "The higher the child's self-esteem the more probable it is that his mother has been regularly employed for more than one year." (3:92)

School Performance and Self-Regard

Today there is much emphasis on the achievement of success in school. Failure or success in academic performance may tend to affect an individual's level of self-esteem. Performance in school is the testing ground for the development of future success in the child's life. In general, Coopersmith found that individuals with a high level of self-esteem are more competent in handling academic affairs than individuals
with either medium or low levels of self-esteem. (3:124)

Williams and Cole investigated school performance in their study, Self-Concept and School Adjustment. Their results led them to the conclusion that an individual's successful adjustment in school is not influenced by any one variable. Intellectual effectiveness is one variable, but self-esteem may also be one. Williams and Cole feel it should be the concern of the school to differentiate those children with low levels of self-esteem, to find the causes of it, and rectify them. (24:478)

Failure Experiences and Self-Worth

The effect of failure on the self-concept was investigated by Soufi. The subjects consisted of fifty-six male freshmen and sophomores at the University of California at Los Angeles. Soufi found that those subjects who were placed in situations in which they failed did have lower self-esteem scores than the subjects who were not exposed to the failure experience. He also found that subjects with high levels of anxiety tended to have lower levels of self-esteem as compared to those with low levels of anxiety. (20:50)

Ordinal Position, Family Size and Self-Esteem

It has also been assumed that ordinal position and family size are related to an individual's level of self-
esteem. Children born into families with few siblings would tend to receive more emotional and physical attention than children in large families. Time available to spend with each child varies with the number of siblings in a family. Thus, it is thought that smaller families produce children with higher levels of self-esteem than larger families.

Coopersmith's results contradicted this commonly assumed expectation. He found that there was no difference in the levels of self-esteem of the children from small families as compared with those from larger families. (3:151) As far as ordinal position is concerned, both Coopersmith and Rosenberg found that it is an important factor in the development of self-esteem. The earlier the child is born into a family, the higher his level of self-esteem. The first born child comes into a family with no sibling rivalry and competition and is thus able to achieve a high level of self-esteem without incurring any competition. Coopersmith did find that children born earlier in a family were higher in levels of self-esteem than children born in the middle or later positions. (3:152) Contrary to Coopersmith's findings, Rosenberg found high self-esteem to be common in only children. He stated that it is not the ordinal position—whether first, second or third in a family—but status as an only child which leads to high level of
Religious Affiliations and Self-Regard

In our society, various levels of social prestige are assigned to different religious affiliations. An individual's identification with a particular religion and its accompanied social prestige may affect his self-image. It is commonly assumed that Protestants would have the highest level of self-esteem, Catholics would be somewhat lower, and Jews the lowest. (17:50)

The findings of Rosenberg and Coopersmith did not confirm the above expectation. Jews may have lower social prestige, but they had somewhat higher levels of self-esteem than the Catholics and Protestants. It was also found that most individuals in these three religious groups are more inclined to have medium self-esteem, yet in all three groups, the Jews were the least inclined to express any negative self-attitudes. (3:85; 17:50)

LEVEL OF ASPIRATION

Two types of levels of aspiration are the ideal goal and the action goal. Ideal goals generally tend to be somewhat fantasy-oriented and unrealistic in relation to their actual achievement by the individual. Some individuals hold highly unrealistic goals and these are difficult to attain, but other's goals are more
realistic and often may be achieved. The action goal is at all times lower and easier to attain than the ideal goal. The action goal tends to be what one strives for and what one actually expects to do. The action goal is a reality-oriented judgement as to what the individual thinks he can actually accomplish. (23:90)

Goal discrepancy has been defined as the difference between the individual's action goal and the individual's past performance. If an individual plans to improve on his next performance with respect to his action goal, this is termed positive goal discrepancy. If an individual feels his past performance is the best he can achieve, his goal discrepancy is zero. If he sets his goal lower than his past performance of his action goal, goal discrepancy is negative. When goal discrepancy is zero, the individual may assume his performance is good and it meets his standards of evaluation, or he may feel he cannot do any better and lowers his standards to meet his particular performance. (3:142) The individual with a zero goal discrepancy, who has not lowered his standard to meet his performance, is likely to assume he is worthy. The individual with a positive goal discrepancy may appraise his performance severely and assume that he is a failure.

The attainment discrepancy is defined as the difference between the action goal or level of aspiration, and
the individual's performance the next time he tries. Success and failure are measured by the attainment discrepancy. Success is considered as that level of functioning achievement equal to or even better than the level of aspiration (action goal). Failure is not being able to attain the level of aspiration (action goal). (23:92)

Success and failure do have a relation to an individual's level of aspiration, but should not only be gauged in terms of performance. An individual's success therefore is as much related to his level of aspiration (action goal) as his actual performance. That is why two different individuals may attain exactly the same goals, and one feels failure and the other success. The successful individual has attained his level of aspiration and the other individual (who had failed) had not, even though they both performed equally. Thus, identical performance by two individuals may be judged to be a success or not, depending on the individual's level of aspiration.

Success or failure is not always experienced by an individual in every performance of a task. If a task is too easy the individual may not feel successful after its performance because it is outside the individual's level of aspiration (not an action goal). (23:92) For instance, an individual does not feel successful
when he dresses himself or takes a drink of water because these tasks are easy and are outside an individual's level of aspiration. If these same tasks were performed by a young child he would feel successful as they certainly are within his level of aspiration.

Generally an individual's level of aspiration is determined by his previous successes or failures. If an individual attains his level of aspiration and achieves success, he tends to raise his level of aspiration for his next performance of a similar task. On the other hand, if an individual fails and does not reach his level of aspiration he tends subsequently to lower it.

Gardner in his study, The Use of the Term "Level of Aspiration" found that if an individual's performance equalled his action goal, level of aspiration would be raised. On the other hand, if he did not attain his level of aspiration, it would subsequently be lowered. (5:59) Child and Whitney attained similar results in their study, also finding that there was more apt to be an expansion of the level of aspiration, as the individual attained success. (2:303)

An individual's level of aspiration has a definite relationship to his level of self-esteem. The development of high, medium, or low levels of self-esteem is greatly influenced by the individual's successes or failures, in keeping with his particular level of aspiration.
CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

SAMPLE SELECTION

The subjects consisted of twenty-nine male and twenty-four female preschool age children from the San Fernando Valley State College Preschool Laboratory. The sample ranged in age from 3.1 years to 5.0 years, with a mean age of 4.1 years. The original pool from which the fifty-three subjects were selected consisted of sixty-four male and female preschool children. The fifty-three subjects were a homogeneous sample on the basis of their social and ethnic backgrounds, with scholarship (lower socio-economic level) families and non-white children being excluded. The fifty-three subjects were selected from all four preschool classes.

INSTRUMENTS

The subjects were tested over a period of about five weeks, starting from November 10, 1970 and ending on December 16, 1970 by means of the following instruments:

Teacher's Ratings

The teacher's ratings, which had been adapted from
Leland Stott's Children's Behavior Check-List, consisted of six descriptive categories of behavior. (21) The original behavior check-list, which had been pretested by Dr. Malathi Sandhu and Mrs. Audrey Clark, consisted of eight descriptive categories. For the present study the results of the unpublished pretest led to the adaptation of the rating scale to include the six dimensions presented below. Each dimension represents the two end-points along a continuum:

A. Social Ascendence (leadership) and Self-Sufficiency versus Lack of Leadership.

B. Personal Responsibility versus Irresponsible Impulsiveness.

C. Domination versus Compliant and Retiring.

D. Social Effectiveness (Sociability) versus Social Ineptitude.

E. Personal Security versus Insecurity.

F. High Self-Esteem versus Low Self-Esteem.

A list of positive and negative characteristics representing the end-points of each continuum were included in order to aid the teachers in their ratings (refer to Appendix A, page 64). Each subject's behavior was rated on a scale from one to five. The most positive response in each was rated a "one" and the most negative response rated a "five". The midpoint was rated "three" and indicated evidence of equal amounts of the characteristics.
representing both extremes of the continuum. The subjects were rated by both the supervising teacher and the associate teacher in each class. They rated each subject together and using their consensus of opinion. The subjects in each classroom group were rated in reference to each other.

Since a child's behavior is assumed to be an external manifestation of the subject's prevailing self-appraisal, teachers were asked to rate a child's social behavior. Sections A through E (see pages 67-69) of the teacher's ratings describe the type of social behavior which has a relationship to self-esteem. Section F (see page 69) is an overall rating of the individual's level of self-esteem (his total feeling of self-worth).

Sociometric Ratings

Self-esteem in a child is partly established through seeing himself as others see him. If a child belongs to a peer group and feels he is liked and accepted by most of the members of this particular group, he will in turn, establish a high level of self-worth. (19:418) A sociometric rating was the instrument used to detect where each subject in the four classes stood in the estimation of the other subjects in the class. The instrument was pretested using five subjects in the preschool who were not subjects in the present study.

Color photographs (taken by the investigator) of the
subjects in each of the four classes were mounted in a circle on construction cardboard. Each of the classes had its own set of sixteen photographs of the subjects in that particular class.

First, the investigator pointed to each photograph and said each child's name. This was done for two reasons: to promote an awareness in the subject that he was a part of the group, and to help him associate the names of his classmates with the faces. In the older group the investigator found that even before she enunciated a name, some subjects would correctly identify the photograph. She would then let the subject say the name, after which she repeated it while pointing to the photograph.

The investigator then asked the subject the following three questions in a story form:

1. "Let's pretend it's snacktime and everyone is sitting down at the tables. If you could choose one person to sit by at snacktime, who would you pick? Point to the picture of the person you would like to sit next to."

After noting the response the investigator said,

2. "Playing with clay is lots of fun. Let's pretend today that you're going to play with clay. When you play with clay you usually sit at a table. When you're sitting at the table playing with clay, who would you like to sit next to? Point to the picture of the person you would like to sit next to."
After noting this second response the investigator said,

3. "This is going to be the last pretend story. Let's pretend that today you're going to play outdoors in the yard. If you could choose one person to play with outside who would you pick? Point to the picture of the person you would like to play with."

In answering the three questions the subject had the photographs in front of him to help him associate names with faces. The subject was then able to point to the photograph of the child he would like to be with in reference to each of the questions.

The three different scenes with three different activities were set up to produce a more accurate selection in the ratings. It was felt that the different activities might bring about different choices due to the subject's preference for different children in each activity. For example, some subjects might not feel skilled in large motor activities and shy away from the yard play, thus they might choose another child just as skilled. The same subject may be excellent in small motor skills and may have a completely different choice for the clay activity. It was felt that snacktime is a very social time and even the most shy child tends to socialize in this period and may choose a child whom he would not choose in any other circumstance.
The scoring of the sociometric ratings of self-esteem was divided into three levels of self-esteem, high, medium and low. The total number of choices received by each child in all three scenes were counted. Subjects receiving zero to two choices were classified in the low level of self-esteem. Subjects classified as having medium self-esteem received three to five choices and those classified at the high self-esteem level received six to eight choices over a total of the three scenes.

**Projective Test - Doll Play**

Young children often find it easier to project their feelings and fantasies about close personal relationships onto dolls. (14:788-89) Through the subject's responses to the doll play his self-esteem can be measured.

The two different scenes which were set up in the doll play had been pretested with five preschool subjects. The investigator first showed the subject an adult male and an adult female doll explaining that one was the "daddy" and one the "mommy". Displaying four child dolls (two male with blond and black hair and two female with blond and black hair) the investigator said, "These are the little boys and girls that live in the house. Pick up the little girl or boy you would like to play with." After the decision was made the three other child dolls were put away by the investigator for the duration of the first episode.
The first scene was described to the subject as involving a child going against a rule established by his parents. The investigator said, "Mommy and daddy have asked him (her) (pointed to the child doll the subject chose and was holding) not to play in the living-room. He (she) did play ball and knocked over a glass. See, here's the broken glass. Show me with the doll what he (she) would do next." Following the subject's response the investigator would ask, "How does he (she) feel about this?" If the investigator did not get a response from the subject she asked the following questions in turn: "Will he (she) tell his (her) mommy and daddy about breaking the glass? Will he (she) hide the glass? Will he (she) just leave the broken glass in the livingroom and go outside and play?"

The second scene involved a child with his peers. The other three children dolls (not chosen by the subject) represented the group of peers in this presentation. The investigator said, "All the children are outside playing in the yard. They're playing with Jimmy's (Susie's) new toy and he (she) (investigator points to the child doll held by the subject) wants to play with all the other children and the new toy, too. But, Jimmy (Susie) (investigator holds up child doll) says, 'You can't play with my new toy and all the other children.' Show me with the dolls what he (she) will do next." After show-
ing the investigator an action the investigator would ask the subject, "How does he (she) feel about this?"
If the investigator did not get responses from the subject she further probed with the questions: Will he (she) stay and try to play with the new toy? Will he (she) leave the yard and go away? Will he (she) stay and just watch all the children?"

Prearranged categories of responses were set up to measure the various levels of self-esteem reflected in the subject's responses. (see Appendix B, page 71) For the first scene examples of responses reflecting high, medium and low self-esteem are as follows:

1. High - Child tells his parents about the broken glass and tries to clean up broken glass.
2. Medium - Child disregards the broken glass and continues to play in the livingroom.
3. Low - Child hides the broken glass and continues to play in the livingroom.

The response related to high self-esteem reflects personal responsibility felt by the subject for his action and its outcome. The response of the subject with low self-esteem shows a complete lack of personal responsibility or desire to evade facing the issue.

For the second scene three examples of high, medium and low self-esteem are as follows:

1. High - Child stays and tries to play with the new toy.
2. Medium - Child stays and just watches all the other children play with the new toy.

3. Low - Child grabs the toy and may start a fight.

The response of the subject with high self-esteem reflects self-confidence and self-assertion. Self-doubt and lack of ability to handle a difficult social situation is displayed in the response of the low self-esteem subject.

Experimental Task and Block Designs

One factor which contributes to an individual's high self-esteem is his history of successes. (3:37) An individual's successes help him develop his particular level of aspiration. Just as many successes bring about a somewhat high level of aspiration, many failures can, in turn, result in a low level of aspiration.

The primary objective of the experimental task was to have the subjects experience a failure situation in the task, after building up expectations of success in the two previous block designs. The two first block designs were therefore structured to insure success for all the subjects.

A pilot study tested the originally conceived experimental task and the two block designs. It was found that the block designs often brought about failure. Thus, they were simplified greatly to bring about success.
The experimental task and the two block designs consisted of patterns made with small blocks (one-inch cubes). The construction of patterns was first demonstrated by the investigator. The subject then used the investigator's construction as a model.

Before the subject started the investigator asked, "Do you think you can make a design like this?" The investigator noted the response if it was affirmative, negative or doubtful. Both of the block designs and the experimental task were handled in this manner. For the first block design the investigator constructed a pattern and then said "Try to make your blocks like my blocks. See if you can make your blocks the same as my blocks. If you can make your blocks have the same design as my blocks you can have one of these jelly beans" (investigator pointed to jelly beans on the table). Each time the investigator offered the reward of the jelly bean (motivation) for the completed pattern.

The first and second block designs for the younger group (mean age 3.5 years) differed from those for the older group (mean age 4.5 years) with the block designs for the younger group being extremely simple. The first block design of the younger group consisted of stacking two blocks, one on top of another. The second block design involved stacking four blocks, one on top of another. The older group's first block design task was to stack
three blocks, one on top of another. (see Figure 1)

FIGURE 1
BLOCK DESIGNS

First Block Design
Two Blocks
(Younger Group)

Second Block Design
Four Blocks
(Younger Group)

First Block Design
Three Blocks
(Older Group)

The blocks used for the experimental task and block designs had been painted with solid white sides, solid red sides and sides which were diagonally cut in half, with half red and half white sides. For the first and second block designs for the younger group and the first block design of the older group, color had not been of any
importance. Before introducing the experimental task for the younger group, and before the second block design for the older group, the investigator explained to the subjects about the colors of the blocks. The investigator held a block and pointed to the white side and said, "This side is all white." She then pointed to the red side and said, "This side is all red." She then turned the block to the half red and white side and said, "And this side is half red and half white."

The second block design for the older group was more difficult. It was to place four blocks down in a square, all having red sides up, with only the red showing on the top. (see Figure 2)

FIGURE 2
SECOND BLOCK DESIGN

Second Block Design
Four Blocks (Older Group)
The experimental task was the same for both the younger and older group. This task was assumed to result in failure and frustration for all the subjects. The investigator would then be able to assess through the child's performance of this task, his level of aspiration, persistence in the face of mild frustration, and his reactions to failure.

The experimental task utilized four blocks. The pattern of the four blocks formed a square with a diagonal red stripe across a white field. (see Figure 3)

FIGURE 3

EXPERIMENTAL TASK

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

Experimental Task
Four Blocks
(Older and Younger Groups)
The investigator timed the child's performance on the experimental task and both block designs, assuming, that the length of time the child spent on these, especially the experimental task, had a relationship to the level of self-esteem. In the experimental task, the length of the working period was divided into three parts, each representing high, medium and low levels of self-esteem. Subjects who worked on the experimental task from 0 to 150 seconds were classified as low self-esteem - they gave up easily. Subjects who worked from 151 to 240 seconds were classified in the medium range. Those subjects who worked from 241 to 300 seconds were classified as having high self-esteem - they persisted at a difficult task. After the subject had worked on the experimental task for 300 seconds (five minutes) he was told by the investigator, "You can stop now. That was a very hard design and you tried so hard. Because you tried so hard and did such a good job you can have a jelly bean."
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data in this study included three ratings of self-esteem (teacher's ratings, sociometric ratings and doll play), the experimental task and background variables for each subject. No significant differences were found from the t-test run on the teacher's ratings comparing boys and girls and older with younger subjects. The fifty-three subjects were therefore treated as a homogeneous group.

NULL HYPOTHESIS 1

This hypothesis proposed that there would be no difference in the length of time spent on the experimental task by children with high, medium or low self-esteem.

The length of the work period for the experimental task was used to determine the subjects' level of self-esteem on the task. Performance on the experimental task was divided into three levels, high, medium and low self-esteem. Subjects who worked at the task from 0 to 150 seconds were classified as low in self-esteem. Medium self-esteem subjects worked between 151 to 240 seconds. Two-hundred and forty-one to 300 seconds was
the work period of those subjects classified as high in self-esteem. The cut-off point for all subjects on the task was 300 seconds (5 minutes):

Multiple regression coefficients were run on the three self-esteem ratings (teacher's ratings, sociometric ratings and doll play) as they predicted performance on the experimental task. Low, but significant coefficients of regression were found when comparing ratings of self-esteem on the teacher's ratings and the sociometric ratings with those obtained from the experimental task, (see Table 1)

**TABLE 1**

MULTIPLE REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS FOR SELF-ESTEEM RATINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regression of Experimental Task on Ratings of Self-Esteem</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher's Ratings</td>
<td>.17 (F=43.4907; significant at less than .01 level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociometric Ratings</td>
<td>-.09 (F=12.1881; significant at less than .01 level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doll Play</td>
<td>.18 (F=1.1043; not significant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 (page 42) shows that 46 percent of the subjects who have been rated either high, medium or low in the self-esteem by the teachers obtained the same ratings on the experimental task ($\chi^2=2.7540$, with 4 degrees of freedom,
TABLE 2
RATES OF COINCIDENCE BETWEEN ANALYSIS OF SELF-ESTEEM RATINGS OBTAINED FROM THE THREE INSTRUMENTS WITH THE EXPERIMENTAL TASK
(Data in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instruments Rating Self-Esteem</th>
<th>Experimental Task Ratings of Self-Esteem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher's Ratings (n=53)</td>
<td>High 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociometric Ratings (n=53)</td>
<td>High 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doll Play (n=53)</td>
<td>High 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
not significant). Thirty-three percent of the subjects who were rated as possessing high, medium or low levels of self-esteem on the sociometric ratings performed similarly on the experimental task ($X^2=3.1416$, with 4 degrees of freedom; not significant). Thirty-one percent of the subjects were rated on the experimental task at the same level of self-esteem as they obtained in the doll play ($X^2=3.2593$, with 4 degrees of freedom; not significant). Thus it becomes apparent the three measures of self-esteem are not significantly different from each other and from the experimental task. It also appears that of the three measures two (teacher's ratings and sociometric ratings) had low, but significant predictive value for the experimental task. Null Hypothesis 1 is therefore rejected. The above findings prove that there is a low, but significant relationship between the two self-esteem measures (teacher's ratings and sociometric ratings) and the experimental task. By means of these two measures of self-esteem it was possible to predict differences in the length of time spent on the experimental task by the subjects with three different levels of self-esteem (high, medium and low).

Some of the possible reasons for the low predictive value of the measures to the experimental task are listed below:

In the doll play ratings of self-esteem many of the
older subjects seemed to be somewhat aware of the investigator's purpose. These subjects seemed to act out the endings of the stories as if trying to please the investigator in their responses rather than giving a response reflective of their own potential behavior in similar situations. The sociometric ratings of self-esteem produced a negative correlation (-.09) which is rather difficult to explain. The investigator feels that the ratings may have been a poor measure of self-esteem for such a young group of subjects and this may have produced the negative correlation. Subjects at such an early age are just developing friendships, some still do not associate with other children and others are easily swayed from friend to friend depending on their mood at the moment. In obtaining the subjects' responses to the doll play ratings the investigator felt that most of the subjects fell into two categories of response. First, there were subjects who had only one close friend. The two friends would name each other for all three scenes in response to the question of which child they would like to associate with. A second group of children had difficulty choosing other children to associate with. The investigator would ask for a response and the subjects often scanned the circle of photographs only still to have difficulty choosing a child. Many of these subjects often finally chose a photograph of a child who was
the closest to their reach.

NULL HYPOTHESIS 2

Children with high, medium or low self-esteem will show no difference in their expectations for success (level of aspiration) in the experimental task.

Since the expectations for success, which led up to the experimental task, were overwhelmingly positive no statistical treatment was performed on the data. The findings in Table 3 (page 46) show that in the first block design fifty-one of the fifty-three subjects indicated positive expectations for success. On the second block design fifty-two of the fifty-three subjects gave positive responses. The experimental task, which was a difficult, mildly frustrating task resulted in fifty positive responses for expectations for success. Only three subjects were doubtful and no subjects had negative feelings of success. Due to these extreme positive results Null Hypothesis 2 is accepted.

The investigator feels that the two block designs were structured for success, so that even the subjects with low self-esteem may still have had a very positive expectation for success (level of aspiration). It was also noted that many of the subjects did not actually look closely at the experimental task. The younger subjects after easily completing two block
designs just glanced at the experimental task and responded with a positive expectation for success.
It would have been interesting to test whether expectations for a subsequent fourth task would have been lower following difficulty with or failure on the experimental task.

**TABLE 3**

SUBJECTS' EXPECTATIONS FOR SUCCESS IN BLOCK DESIGNS AND EXPERIMENTAL TASK
(LEVEL OF ASPIRATION)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Expectations</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Doubtful</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block Design 1</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block Design 2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Task</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>n=53</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ANALYSIS OF BACKGROUND VARIABLES**

Ordinal position, religion and father's occupation were the background variables which were examined to see if there was a relationship between measured levels of self-esteem and these variables.

The statistical treatment involved the use of the chi square test to determine possible differences
in levels of self-esteem as measured by the experimental task, the three ratings of self-esteem (teacher's ratings, doll play and sociometric ratings) and each of the background variables. Table 4 (page 48) shows the results of these analyses.

Significant results were apparent in the chi square test of the teacher's ratings of self-esteem and father's occupations. The father's occupations had been classified into four categories: professional, business, skilled and other. Table 5 (page 49) shows that 76 percent of the subject's fathers were classified into the professional category. The majority of the subjects with this background had been rated by the teachers as either high in self-esteem (19 percent) or medium (53 percent) in self-esteem.

It has already been established that the teacher's ratings were the strongest predictor of all the three ratings, yet this instrument was still a very weak predictor of the level of self-esteem on the experimental task.

The chi square analysis comparing the doll play ratings of self-esteem and the father's occupations gave significant results at the less than .01 level. The results in Table 6 (page 50) greatly contrast with the results of the analysis comparing teacher's ratings and father's occupations (Table 5, page 49). Table 6 (page 50) shows that of the subjects whose fathers were classified as professional 38 percent
**TABLE 4**

SIGNIFICANCE OF CHI SQUARE TEST ON EXPERIMENTAL TASK, DOLL PLAY SOCIOMETRIC RATINGS, TEACHER'S RATINGS AND BACKGROUND VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teacher's Ratings</th>
<th>Doll Play</th>
<th>Sociometric Ratings</th>
<th>Experimental Task*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experimental Task</strong></td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fathers Occupations</strong></td>
<td>Chi Square=16.0159; degrees of freedom =6, Significant at less than .02 level</td>
<td>Chi Square=39.0548; degrees of freedom =6, Significant at less than .01 level</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Siblings</strong></td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ordinal Position</strong></td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religion</strong></td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Not</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The experimental task was used in both the row and column due to the fact it was analyzed against all three self-esteem instruments and the background variables.
TABLE 5

TEACHER'S RATINGS OF SELF-ESTEEM
COMPARSED WITH FATHER'S OCCUPATIONS
(Data in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father's Occupations</th>
<th>Professional (n=40)</th>
<th>Business (n=8)</th>
<th>Skilled (n=3)</th>
<th>Other (n=2)</th>
<th>Total (n=53)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square = 16.0159 with 6 degrees of freedom (Significant at less than .02 level).
**TABLE 6**

**DOLL PLAY RATINGS OF SELF-ESTEEM COMPARED WITH FATHER'S OCCUPATIONS**

(Data in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father's Occupations</th>
<th>Professional (n=40)</th>
<th>Business (n=8)</th>
<th>Skilled (n=3)</th>
<th>Other (n=2)</th>
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Chi square = 39.0548 with 6 degrees of freedom (significant at less than .01 level).
were rated as possessing medium and low levels of self-esteem with none in the high level of self-esteem. The classification of skilled and other categories seemed to be almost opposite ratings of the teacher's ratings. In the teacher's ratings (Table 5, page 49) no subjects in the skilled category were classified as having high self-esteem, with 2 percent in the medium level and 4 percent in the low level, whereas in the doll play ratings 4 percent of the skilled were classified in the high self-esteem level, 2 percent in the medium level and none in the low self-esteem level. The skilled category demonstrated the same contrasting effect with 2 percent in the high and medium levels of self-esteem in the teacher's ratings and none in the low level of self-esteem. In the doll play ratings no subjects with fathers whose occupations were rated in the skilled category were classified in the high and medium levels of self-esteem, and 4 percent were classified as having low self-esteem. In future research it would be interesting to conduct a similar study and check-out the relationship of the two self-esteem ratings compared to the father's occupations to see if an opposite rating effect occurs again.

A trend was noted in the chi square analysis comparing teacher's ratings and ordinal position of the subjects. Table 7 (page 52) shows that the only child seems to have medium (60 percent) to low (40 percent) self-esteem. These
### Table 7

**Teacher's Ratings of Self-Esteem Compared with Ordinal Position**

(Data in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher's Ratings of Self-Esteem</th>
<th>Only Child (n=5)</th>
<th>Oldest (n=18)</th>
<th>Middle (n=10)</th>
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</table>

Chi square = 10.5305 with 6 degrees of freedom (not significant)
results contradict Rosenberg's findings that only children have a higher level of self-esteem. (17:107)
Of the oldest children, 28 percent were rated high in self-esteem and 72 percent medium in self-esteem. Ratings of the youngest child are quite similar. Twenty-five percent were classified at the high self-esteem level, 70 percent at the medium level and 5 percent at the low self-esteem level. The results indicating that the oldest child has high to medium levels of self-esteem do coincide with Coopersmith's findings of children being born earlier in a family possessing higher self-esteem levels than children born in middle or later positions. (3:152) Yet, results for youngest children sharply contradict Coopersmith's findings.

The findings of the chi square analysis comparing teacher's ratings of self-esteem and the number of siblings resulted in a statistically nonsignificant trend. Table 8 (page 54) shows that only children had medium to low levels of self-esteem. This same result has been previously stated in the chi square analysis performed on the teacher's ratings and ordinal position. Subjects with only one sibling seemed to fall into high (23 percent) and medium (73 percent) levels of self-esteem with only a slight percentage (4 percent) in the low self-esteem level. Of the subjects with two or more siblings 23 percent were rated in the high self-esteem level, 68 percent in medium, and 9 percent in the low
TABLE 8
TEACHER'S RATINGS OF SELF-ESTEEM
COMPARED WITH NUMBER OF SIBLINGS
(Data in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Siblings</th>
<th>None (n=5)</th>
<th>One (n=26)</th>
<th>Two or more (n=22)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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Chi square = 7.0785 with 4 degrees of freedom (not significant)
### Table 9

Doll Play Ratings of Self-Esteem Compared with Number of Siblings

(Data in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Siblings</th>
<th>None (n=5)</th>
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<tr>
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Chi square = 8.4639 with 4 degrees of freedom (not significant)
self-esteem level.

The chi square test performed on the doll play ratings of self-esteem and number of siblings (Table 9, page 55) resulted in an interesting and nonsignificant trend which strongly contrasted with the chi square analysis of the teacher's ratings and the number of siblings (Table 8, page 54). The subjects who had only one sibling were rated in the doll play measure in the medium (42 percent) to low (54 percent) range of self-esteem. In the teacher's ratings, however, only 4 percent fell into the low level of self-esteem and 23 percent were rated high in self-esteem.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the responses (behavior) of preschool children designated as possessing varying levels of self-esteem, to a structured, mildly frustrating experimental task. It was hoped that the investigator would discover three different levels of response (behavior) to the experimental task, corresponding to three levels of self-esteem (high, medium or low). A secondary purpose was to examine the efficacy of each of the three measures of self-esteem. A third purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of self-esteem in preschool children to such background variables as age, sex, ordinal position, religion and father's occupation.

PROCEDURE OF INVESTIGATION

Twenty-nine male and twenty-five female preschool children were selected as subjects from the San Fernando Valley State College Preschool Laboratory.

The subjects were tested over approximately a five week period. Three instruments were used to rate the
subject's self-esteem. First, a teacher's rating, which had been adapted from Leland Stott's Children's Behavior Check-List. The ratings of each subject were a consensus of opinion of the supervising and associate teacher in each of the four classes. Second, a sociometric rating (popularity) was used to predict self-esteem. The investigator told three different stories and the subjects selected photographs of other children in the class with whom they would like to associate with in each story. The third, a projective test, doll play was also given to each subject. The doll play consisted of two scenes, one with parents and one with peers, in which the subject was to act out or tell about the ending of the scene.

Two block designs which were set up to insure success for all subjects preceded the mildly frustrating experimental task. The main objective of the experimental task was to have the subjects experience a failure situation in the task. The length of time the subject worked on the experimental task was assumed to have a relationship to his level of self-esteem.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were formulated from the data collected in the study.

Null Hypothesis 1: There will be no difference in the length of time spent on the experimental task by children
with high, medium or low self-esteem. Null Hypothesis 1 was rejected due to the fact that the three measures of self-esteem were not significantly different from each other and from the experimental task; and there was a low, but significant relationship between two of the measures (teacher's ratings and sociometric ratings) and the experimental task.

Null Hypothesis 2: Children with high, medium and low self-esteem will show no differences in their expectations for success (level of aspiration) in the experimental task. Null Hypothesis 2 was accepted due to the fact that the subjects had overwhelmingly positive expectations for success.

No conclusions could be made about the background variables in relation to self-esteem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The investigator feels that conducting a similar study with an older sample would be beneficial. The self-concept itself at this age level appears to be somewhat unstable and self-evaluations may also be quite fluctuating. A wrong action by a teacher or another child may suddenly lower a child's easily influenced level of self-esteem. In this way the retesting of the three self-esteem rating instruments (teacher's ratings, sociometric ratings and doll play) and the experimental task with an
older sample may yield completely different results and a stronger relationship between the three self-esteem rating instruments and the experimental task.

The sociometric rating instrument of self-esteem may also be a better predictor of self-esteem with an older sample. At an older age friendships have been more firmly established and, in general, children are more socially oriented.

Conducting a similar study using a different experimental task is also recommended. The experimental task used in this study was related to achievement motivation in the subjects. It is felt that self-esteem may not be related directly to achievement motivation at the preschool level, thus the self-esteem ratings may have had a weak relationship to the experimental task.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
BIBLIOGRAPHY


13. Mead, George. Mind, Self and Society. Chicago and


**TEACHER'S RATINGS OF CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR**

The children's behavior must be rated on a scale from one to five. The most positive response is at one and the most negative response is at five. The midpoint is three and shows evidence of equal characteristics of both extremes of the scale. The children should be rated on a consensus basis. The supervising teacher and the associate teacher of each class should rate each child together and use their consensus of opinion on the final ratings. The entire class of children must be rated at one sitting. The children should be rated in a group in reference to each other. First, read the list of characteristics defining the behavior and then proceed with the rating.

*Adapted from Leland Stott, Children's Behavior Check-List.*
Circle the appropriate response

Name of child

Raters

Date

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DEFINITIONS OF END-POINTS OF THE RATING SCALES

Factor A: Social Ascendance (Leadership) and Self-Sufficiency versus Lack of Leadership and Need for Presence and Support of Others.

Rating Position #1

1. Usually dominates other children through his abundance of ideas.
2. Usually original and inventive in all aspects of behavior.
3. Usually adjusts well and rapidly to a novel situation.
4. Usually independent of adults in most behavior. Also independent of other children. Does not always need the support of another child or adult to play with.
5. Usually always persistent and generally accomplishes a task in spite of difficulties.
6. Usually is able to defend his own right with other children.
7. Usually responds quite positively to the advances of other children.
8. Usually resourceful in dealing with difficult situations.

Rating Position #5

1. Never contributes ideas to other children.
2. Never original or inventive. Copies other children.
3. Has a severe adjustment problem in a novel situation.
4. Very dependent on adults as well as other children. Cannot function unless aided by an adult or another child.
5. Does not persist at any activity. Is not able to endure a task long enough to ever complete it.
6. Is never able to defend his own rights with other children.

Factor B: Personal Responsibility versus Irresponsible Impulsiveness.

Rating Position #1

1. Usually is cooperative and responsible in most aspects of the physical and social environment.
2. Usually adjusts and goes through daily routine willingly.
3. Usually is thoughtful of others.
4. Usually is unselfish. Will share equipment and give up equipment to another child when not using it.
5. Usually does not take another child's possession
without first asking permission.
6. Usually is able to accept success quietly and knows when he has done a task successfully.
7. Usually is a "good sport".
8. Usually is truthful.
9. Usually has predictable behavior. Has stable behavior.

Rating Position #5

1. Is not cooperative and responsible.
2. Has severe adjustment problems with daily routine and must be coaxed into participating in the routine.
3. Disregards others feelings. Disrupts others activities.
4. Is selfish. Keeps equipment for long periods after finishing use of it. Will not share equipment with others.
5. Is constantly taking others possessions without asking for their permission.
6. Always has trouble detecting his success in an accomplished task. When finally recognizing his success tends to "show off" and tries to gain the recognition and attention of others.
7. Is easily frustrated by failure.
8. Has unpredictable behavior.

Factor C: Domination versus Compliant and Retiring.

Rating Position #1

1. Usually gives commands with an air of authority and finality.
2. Usually fights for his place as leader.
3. Usually submits to another only after a struggle to dominate.
4. Usually is outgoing. Likes to dominate and stand out in a group.
5. Usually always defends his own rights.

Rating Position #5

1. Never gives commands to others.
2. Never tries to any degree to attain the leadership of a group of children.
3. Submits to another child who will take the initiative.
4. Is retiring and restrained. Wishes to be in background.
5. Does not defend his own rights.

Factor D: Social Effectiveness versus Social Ineptitude

Rating Position #1

1. Usually unaffected, spontaneous and natural in behavior
2. Usually has self-confidence.
3. Usually is able to make friends easily.
4. Usually is able to contribute ideas to the group although not the leader.
5. Usually gives demonstrations of affection.
6. Usually is sympathetic and protective towards other children.

Rating Position #5

2. Has extreme difficulties in making friends.
3. Does not contribute ideas to the group.
5. Displays no degree of sympathy or protection towards other children.

Factor E: Personal Security versus Insecurity.

Rating Position #1

1. Generally proceeds as usual with routine in the presence of visitors.
2. Usually able to accept criticism by peers.
3. Usually does not get jealous of other children.
4. Usually generous in sharing activities and possessions with others.
5. Usually even tempered. Seldom disturbed or cries.

Rating Position #5

1. Has extreme adjustment problems when in the presence of visitors.
2. Is not able to accept criticism or rejection by peers.
3. Quite often evidences jealous feelings towards other children.
4. Has much difficulty in sharing activities and possessions with others.
5. Easily disturbed or cries often.

Factor F: High Self-Esteem versus Low Self-Esteem

Rating Position #1

1. Usually has positive attitudes towards self.
2. Has expectations for success in social relationships and in the physical environment. (Has self confidence)
3. Usually has positive attitudes towards world in general.

Rating Position #5

1. Has extreme negative feelings to self.
2. Seems unhappy and poorly adjusted.
3. Never confident in behavior.
4. Has negative attitudes towards world in general.
APPENDIX B

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONSES TO THE DOLL PLAY
CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONSES TO THE DOLL PLAY

Prearranged categories of responses were set up to measure the various levels of self-esteem reflected in the child's responses to both scenes in the doll play.

First Scene

High self-esteem responses (which reflect high sense of personal responsibility) are as follows:

1. Child tells parents about the broken glass.
2. Child cleans up the broken glass and tells the parents.

Medium self-esteem responses:

1. Child disregards the broken glass and continues to play in the livingroom.
2. Child leaves broken glass and goes to another room in the house to play.
3. Child cleans up the broken glass.
4. Child stays in livingroom and just sits there.
5. Child runs outside to play.

Low self-esteem responses (reflect lack of personal responsibility):

1. Child hides the glass and runs outside to play.
2. Child cleans up the broken glass and does not tell parents.
3. Child may get upset. Cries or pouts.
4. Child may continue playing in the livingroom trying to knock down further breakable objects.
5. Child hides the glass.
6. Child says parents will punish her.

Second Scene

High self-esteem responses (which reflect self-assertion):

1. Child stays and tries to play with new toy.

Medium self-esteem responses:
1. Child stays and watches all the other children play with the new toy.
2. Child leaves the group of children. He goes home and comes back with his own toy to join the children in play.
3. The child tells his parents.

Low self-esteem responses (reflect self-doubt):

1. Child leaves the yard and goes away.
2. Child gets upset. May pout and cry.
3. Child grabs the toy away from another child. He may start a fight.
4. Child grabs the toy and breaks it.