California State University, Northridge

ATTITUDES AND INDIVIDUALIZED READING

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Elementary Education by Josephine Ruth Seymour

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ABSTRACT

ATTITUDES AND INDIVIDUALIZED READING

by

Josephine Ruth Seymour

Master of Arts in Elementary Education

July, 1972

The purpose of this investigation was to determine the effect the young child's attitude, his self-concept, his home and classroom environment might have on his learning to read. Information was sought on the differential effect a child's attitude would have on his achievement in reading. A check for significant differences was made between three groups of ten subjects each. Scores for boys and girls were checked for any significant differences between the groups. In addition, information was sought on the degree of relationship among the variables measured in the investigation.

Selected for the sample were thirty first and second graders, eleven boys and nineteen girls, from a middle-class elementary school. Twenty of the subjects remained in the same classroom setting with the same
teacher for two consecutive years. Ten of the group were in the classroom for one year. The balance of the class members was kindergarteners who moved into first grade in the same room the next year. The subjects were taught reading using the individualized approach.

No significant differences were found between the achievement of the three groups. No significant differences were found between the achievement of the boys and girls. Definite positive relationship was found between attitudes and reading achievement.

References are included.
CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND SETTING

Nobody sees what I can see,
For back of my eyes there is only me.
And nobody knows how my thoughts begin,
For there's only myself inside my skin...
But I feel just right in the skin I wear,
And there's nobody like me anywhere.
(Margaret Hillert, 1969).

Our world is fast becoming impersonal. Small won-
der that the young child cries out To-Whom-It-May-Concern:
"I'm unique! I'm an original!"

The computer age has him "numbered" for anything
and everything. With the flip of the switch, he can be
filed by digit according to his student number, his house
number, his phone number, or his zip code. Eventually his
advent into the adult world will add to his numerical
identity: a driver's license number, a social security
number, and numerous charge account numbers. The indi-
vidual is being threatened by the "system" to being re-
duced to the level of a computer card.

We, in education, must pay attention to his needs.
He is asking: "Who am I? What am I doing? Where am I
going?"

...the kind of question every student asks, if only silently. 'How is what we are doing and you are talking about related to me as a person? (Berg, 1966:40).

Since 1950, our western world is geared for identity, or role-oriented, rather than goal-oriented for survival. Our society neither makes real plans for people to succeed, nor does it accept failure (Glasser, 1971:20).

Glasser (1971) believes we must help people develop a better identity. He says we should teach children what we can, give them credit for what they do, and tell them to keep trying. Never should they be labeled failure. In 1916, John Dewey wrote that a progressive society counts individual variations as precious since it finds in them the means of its own growth. Ashley Montagu in a keynote speech at the Association for Childhood Education International Study Conference in Portland, Oregon, in March, 1964, said:

We impose a self upon the individual rather than help him toward the creation of his own self...and this is the great tragedy that befalls so many of us, and the real evil, which lies in the difference between what we were potentially capable of becoming and what we have in fact been caused to become.

Now in the 1970's, have we received the child's message when he says, "Look at me! I'm important! I have unique personal needs!"
Have we broken the lock-step of conformity which began in 1890 with the new era of compulsory education? During this era, grouping was begun by grades to reach like-age groups. Due to the rapid expansion of compulsory education at least partial awareness of some individual differences was forced upon the schools. However, the goal was still subject matter. Slowly and surely the pioneers of individualization, Parker and Dewey, spoke out (Kelihser, 1964:6-7). How far have we come from the 1890 like-age groupings? How near are the schools to being role or child-oriented? Are we still goal or subject matter oriented?

The McGuffey Eclectic Reader Series was the first clearly defined and carefully-graded series consisting of one reader for each grade in the elementary school. These readers of the 1830's and 1840's omitted beginning reading, which would be of primer level. In the 1970's, we have several pre-primers which precede the primer, and still have limited readers at each grade level.

In 1934, Nila Banton Smith predicted that basal readers would leave the American education scene in the next fifty years. Since the production of basal reading series has become such a lucrative business, educators will believe this prediction when the states no longer
mandate reading series to be used in the elementary schools.

Goodlad (1959) states that we need a better understanding of the learner realities before us. He goes on to say:

We act as though there were only shades of differences among learners—as though, perhaps, the brightest child were twice as bright as the dullest. Actually, the differences in reasoning among slow and bright children almost defy mathematical comparison. One is thousands of times more proficient than the other in certain kinds of abstract reasoning (1959:345).

In seeking appropriate teaching techniques, we do well to approach these differences as differences in kind (as between a cat and a human) rather than in degree. Thus, the pedagogical road to learning for the slow may not be more of what was good for the bright. Similarly, the best procedure for the bright may not be just a little less of methods that worked for the average (1959:345-346).

Every child who is learning to read will differ in every way we can measure him. He will differ in height, weight, his vocabulary, his visual discrimination, his auditory perception, his knowledge of stories, and in many more areas. It is obvious that with these widespread differences a teacher cannot have all children begin learning to read at the same place.

Educators need to cultivate positive self-concepts in children along with basic academic learnings.
the first few years of school, children seem to be lost, it could be that educationally, there is some excessive use of mass control and group techniques.

Children succeed in kindergarten because we accept kids as people. We do not get too upset if they do not learn everything. We still think they are good kids. In first grade, well, that is different! After all, they have to learn to read!

The beginning years in learning to read are a critical base that often affect a child's further successes in school (Wolfe, 1971: 144).

By an early age, the child's self-picture is fairly well integrated. The origin of the self lies in the early years, even before entry into school. Bayley (1964) found that the mother's affectional behavior toward her son in the first three years of his life was related to his friendship, cooperation, and attentiveness when he became a school child and an adolescent. This may be inferred to be a reflection of his feelings of security, a fundamental dimension of self-concept. At three years of age, life is not over, but his view of the world and of himself is already present. A child's view of himself is neither a mirror image nor an exact replica of his world's picture of him, but for many youngsters it comes quite
close.

Educators need to create nurturing environments in the schools in order that children's self-concepts will emerge as positive. A child with negative self-views may be as handicapped as a child with physical illness or physical impairment. We seem to have provided a nurturing environment in kindergarten. Now it behooves us to make classrooms as secure and children as successful in the school years beyond their initial entry into kindergarten.
CHAPTER II

SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE

Attitudes and Self-Concept

America is a complex civilization. All kinds of reading materials: signs, posters, magazines, books, newspapers, and even advertising, are a part of our American culture. Because reading is so interwoven throughout the American-way of life, reading becomes a necessity for intelligent living.

The American community says the child must read. If he does not, he is failed. Usually he takes the failure personally. Glasser (1971) says he thinks that we have not only failed him in reading but as a human being. The real reason he does not read is that he sees himself as a failure and sees no sense in reading.

Horn (1969) states that the British primary school is permeated with informal learning, geared to the individual, where the bright children forge ahead, and the slower ones are not branded as failures.

Certainly the English primary school child motivated by his own choice of activity,
working at his own pace and, therefore, obviously successful at each step, is able to learn more effectively (Horn, 1969:24).

Cook and Mack (1969) cite that the philosophy of education in England is a commitment to the individuality of the child. English children must not all begin to read at the same age. Prevalent is a special attitude toward children and a commitment to the dignity of children.

Douglass (1969) believes the pervasive concept in American education is the idea of failure. This concept is absent in Norwegian classrooms. Norwegians are highly individualistic. Their national character respects independence and the autonomy of the individual. The results of the Norwegian schools may best be described as a positive example of the self-fulfilling prophecy. They expect success and are optimistic about individual development. Parents consistently praise their children and are loath to find fault with their child's performance.

At the International Reading Association Convention in Anaheim, California in May, 1970, Eve Malmquist stated that children are not grouped according to good ability and poor ability in Sweden. Swedish teachers do not "homogenize" children and they do not talk about problems and failures. In Sweden they make haste slowly in beginning reading as children start school at seven
years of age. Malmquist conducted research which showed a definite correlation between achievement and personality and maladjustment; an overwhelming majority of children with low IQ's had more reading disability and were more nervous than good readers.

Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychological systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment (Allport, 1937:43).

William James, the noted psychologist, once said attitudes are more important than facts.

Rokeach (1968) defines an attitude as a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner. Attitudes seem to reflect quite consistently the primary form in which past experience is summed, stored, and organized in the individual as he approaches any new situation. An adult probably has thousands or tens of thousands of attitudes.

A person with a particular attitude is predisposed selectively to perceive, recognize, judge, interpret, learn, forget, recall, and think in ways congruent with his attitude; such selective responses, while mediated by an attitude, are not necessarily responses directed toward the attitude, object or situation itself (Rokeach, 1968:122).

An attitude system spills into a larger system, a
value system, which justifies one's own and other's actions, which morally judges self and others, and is used for comparing self with others. This value-attitude system supposedly is more or less internally consistent and will determine behavior, and a change in any part of the system can lead to behavioral change.

In 1964, Leon Festinger expressed astonishment over the absence of research and of theoretical thinking about the effect of attitude change on subsequent behavior. He thought we ought not to ignore this problem or simply assume a relationship between attitude change and subsequent behavior.

Pfink (1962) defines self-concept as the attitudes and feelings that a person has regarding himself. Hamachek (1965) says that everyone has a concept of himself or an image as an unique person or self, different from every other self. James (1890) pointed out the fact that each individual has many selves.

The self-concept consists of the individual's personal perceptions, the convictions he holds about himself. Any concept that involves the I, such as 'I am,' 'I like,' 'I do,' is part of the self-concept. The self-ideal is made up of the individual's attitudes about what he wants to be. Freud called this the ego ideal, and Rogers refers to it as the ideal self (Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs, 1963:25).
Encouragement is necessary for the child's development. He becomes what he is encouraged to become...Encouragement implies acceptance of the individual as he is (Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs, 1963:58,87).

The experience of success in the classroom situation is one of the most important needs of a child. In order for a child's self-image to be positive, he must discover his ability to succeed and develop a feeling of personal worth. He must have an image of himself as a worthwhile person and a successful learner.

Frank (1938) said that a life task of the child is to create for himself, out of his experiences and the teaching he receives, an image of himself and of the kind of person he would like to be.

Are we aware of how much of a child's self-image today must be comprised of success in learning to read? His right to be loved may be denied him by a parent or teacher because he has not learned to read, and yet, he may have done the best he could. Some children preserve their self-image by refusing to read because they cannot fail.

Hymes (1958) states that reading satisfies a basic craving. A child has to beg to have things read to him. Some words on the television screen make everyone laugh—he is curious—what did it say? Reading sells itself. A
child walks to the store, there is a "For Sale" sign on the house next door. A sign in the store says, "Today's Special," and each and every can and wrapper in the store has something to be read on it. Reading is advertised. However, a desire to read does not of itself insure reading success.

One of the greatest factors in a child's success in learning to read is his desire to learn to read (Lamoreaux and Lee, 1943:67).

A lack of desire to read may keep a child from achieving even though he possesses the other qualifications of learning. If a child has no interest in reading, it is a waste of time to try to teach him reading. It would be far better to spend an equal amount of time developing an interest.

The potential reading failure may enter school as an unhappy child who cannot free his energies for learning, or he may enter as a happy, well-adjusted child who fails to learn to read and becomes maladjusted because of his failure (Robinson, 1953:25).

Betts (1954) states that the question of when should the child read is asked often with the idea that a "yes" or "no" answer can be given. As there are all shades of gray between black and white, there are many shades of readiness. First-grade entrants vary all the way from those who are very definitely not prepared for
reading to those who have already achieved some success with reading activities. No scientist has been able to devise any one single basis for a "yes" or "no" answer to the question of when is a child ready for reading instruction.

Readiness seems to be so well understood in weaning children; there is also a time to sit up, a time to crawl, a time to walk, and a time to read. If the child is not ready to read, the instruction is not going to "take." If instruction does not "take"--the child fails. He soon becomes discouraged and dislikes reading to the point where he will not try. All too often, he wears the self-made label "failure."

Readiness is a time, and special drills or practice cannot produce it! In his book, *Before the Child Reads*, James L. Hymes, Jr. cautions us against the use of the term "building" readiness. He states that the two terms contradict each other. His point is well taken for maturity cannot be built, and, after all that is what readiness is.

Reading readiness is a stage in the continuous development of the child. In order to learn to read, a child's eyes must be developed to the point where print can be perceived. The ears need to develop adequate
hearing to detect varying sounds of the oral language. The brain has to be able to link visual symbols with their meaning. Motor control has to be developed to the point where books can be held and the pages turned. The eyes have to be able to follow a line of print. The speech has to be developed to be able to repeat sounds. And the child--above all--has to be able to give attention. A child's behavior indicates his readiness to read far better than does his score on a reading readiness test.

We, as educators, must attempt to eradicate the age-old fallacy which holds that a six-year-old is ready to read merely because he has passed his sixth birthday. Factors that influence reading readiness are complex and so closely meshed together that it becomes difficult to isolate a factor and say it contributes most to readiness for reading. Some can be developed in the school program--others must wait upon a child's individual maturation.

Chronological age is comparatively unimportant and should not any longer be considered the sole criterion for entrance to the first grade and the beginning of the reading process (M. Lucile Harrison, 1939: 30).

Harrison (1939) states that reading is an intellectual process, and, therefore, intellectual factors which foster reading readiness score as most important.
A child's mental age seems to rank higher in determining his readiness for reading. Waiting until a child reaches a mental age of six and one-half years can greatly decrease the chances of discouragement and failure. It seems that this should be our chief concern: To avoid the need for remedial reading—rather than letting it develop as a disease and then trying to diagnose it and prescribe a remedy! Not being able to read early does not indicate stupidity but rather a lack of readiness for the printed page. Failure in reading because he is not ready may develop into a negativistic attitude toward it. This may also be detrimental to the development of his whole personality. McKee (1949) cites that achievements in reading by the end of third grade are just as good when the introduction to reading in first grade has been delayed a half a year or more. Harris (1961) suggests that by taking the simple precaution of not giving children formal reading instruction until they are ready for it, much of the present retardation in reading can be prevented.

Children who fail in reading use many ways to show their failure: boasting, belittling, withdrawing. Many actually believe they are too dumb to learn to read. Children are more sensitive to failure than adults because they have not yet learned that everyone cannot succeed
one hundred per cent of the time. The child who fails in reading is marked as a failure before his classmates and he is constantly reminded of it in anything he attempts in the schoolroom. Thus, another "problem child" is created—he will not try to read because he knows that he will fail. Sometimes a child gains distinction because he cannot read. He can get attention by not reading. If a child fails in reading and does nothing about it, he is headed for disaster. One day he will have to face the fact that he cannot read. Dolch (1945) states that failure in reading is particularly damaging because everyone is expected to learn to read.

Gargiulo (1971) says if the reading experience is reinforced, a child will be motivated to transfer that skill to a new situation, and it might be said that he has a good attitude. He goes on to state that a child who meets constant failure, frustration, and discouragement, caused by working with reading material that is too difficult, will transfer these negative feelings about reading to learning and school in general. Since this lowers the child's concept of himself, he transfers this inability to read to every situation he meets and becomes certain that he will be unable to fulfill the task, whatever it may be, without even attempting it.
Shacter (1955) suggests the individual child should be accepted for what he is and for what he can do at his own level of development. Since enduring attitudes so often have their start in primary-grade experiences, this period in the educational program needs especially sympathetic awareness and alert handling from the teacher. The school child who becomes discouraged and disinterested may become seriously disturbed emotionally. Even a slight impairment can establish a handicap.

...the concurrent conscious experience of hostility and guilt makes it likely that the child's attitude toward himself will contain a consciously derogatory flavor...especially if the hostility and guilt are aroused in situations in which judgment is being passed on (the child's) adequacy, i.e., situations in which some assessment is made of the disparity between the child's behavior and parental expectation (Sarason, et al, 1960:14).

Reading ability or disability...must be taken into account as a potential factor closely associated with the expression of delinquent behavior in youngsters (Kvaraceus, 1971:53).

Deficiency in academic achievement tends to develop negative attitudes toward school and those who supervise them.

Gillham (1967) states that the ideas an adolescent has about himself did not come quickly.

Mouly (1968) states the self-concept is best conceived as a system of attitudes toward oneself. One's
concept of self rests in part on what he thinks others think of him. Attitudes are by-products of whatever is taught and are important because of the effect they will have throughout the child's life. A child's positive self-image will determine what he will be and what he will do. The curriculum needs to be set in line with the child's self-concept. The fact that we expect the child to succeed must be stressed as his first attempt at a task must be successful.

La Benne (1969) suggests that we cannot see the self-concept but we can observe behavior. How can we explain why some students attempt reading with confidence, while others are fearful in attempting it at all? Why do some accept failure without fear and others fear failure? Even a student with a positive self-concept has disappointments and negative experiences. One who can deal with negative situations is one who is essentially positive. He feels adequate to meet the challenge because he feels himself valuable and worthy due to many successful encounters.

In order to exploit an individual's likes and dislikes, interests, and attitudes, the obvious approach is to ask him about them. Rogers (1951) states the best vantage point for understanding behavior is from the
internal frame of reference of the individual himself.

During the last decade educators have become more concerned with students' attitudes as well as the development of their potential abilities. La Benne (1969) cites the fact that empirical and experimental data demonstrate a direct relationship between the child's concept of himself, his behavior, and his academic performance. Although there are many peripheral influences which impinge upon the child's self-concept, the school is a major contributing agent to the child's conception of himself.

Society's most priceless possession, the attitude of its children, has been entrusted to teachers. There is a need to scrutinize the present methods of teaching reading to determine whether they enhance the "self" or destroy the "self" status of students.

Mouly (1968) states that the self-concept has crucial implications for the individual's development. The individual's road map for living is a living-out of his self-image or self-concept.

Individualized Reading

Individualization of reading is absolutely essential if we are concerned with developing the self-concept of a child. Many children come away from school never
experiencing what they can do because they have no opportunity to discover for themselves.

Dodds (1967) says research has shown that children of the same chronological age differ in as many ways as they can be measured. The implication for instruction is that the best educational program must be highly personalized or geared to differing abilities and achievements. Research has made the individual learner more important than ever before.

Duffy (1967) states self-concept is closely related to reading success, and it is doubtful if a child who does not see himself as a reader will ever possess the reading habit. Since, as Anderson (1965) claims, the first year of life is the most important in the development of the self-image with each succeeding year becoming of lesser importance, it is imperative that the early school years reinforce a positive self-image for the child. Hamacheck (1965) says the teacher has less impact on the child's self-concept than the parents as the teacher enters the picture at a less helpless age. Lecky (1945) suggests:

If the teacher is to help free the pupil from his distorted picture of himself, she must first be significant to him. She must be able to see him as a more adequate person than others have seen him before. It is necessary to find the good in him and show it to him (Gillham, 1967:272).
Survey after survey shows that most youngsters are reading below grade level. Education is looking for answers. Those teaching reading are being frantically pushed for answers to why reading scores are low. Why are children not learning to read well? Are the right questions being asked? What is the end result of learning to read?

Is the end result of reading to read with a group? That is, to take a group of about six friends to the library, to each check out identical books, to sit down as a group and read them together, making sure each friend stays on precisely the same word on the same page at all times as you take turns reading to one another. Or, is the end result of reading to develop an individual's lifelong love for and interest in reading?

Reading skills and reading content are not all that important, but the self-identity of each child taught is of the utmost importance. Social scientists are overly concerned with social identity. They seem to stress the "we" more than the "I". The "I's" are people and they are important.

Barbe (1961) cites that the goal of reading is to help every child read as well as he can, and indeed that he love to read. He says we waste time teaching a sequence
of skills; the sequence is the child. When the child needs the skill, teach it to him. He also believes we spend too much time finding out what a child cannot do. Find out what he can do; teach to his strengths.

Things get in the way as you try to teach a child: his fears, hopes, needs, and quirks of personality. To get the best results, you have to work with all that too. Any child's capacity to learn is governed by a whole host of factors, most of them relating to his concept of himself. To the degree you individualize reading with success: 1) you reach deeper into each child, 2) you touch him along a wider front, 3) you engage a greater part of his being in the work and joy of learning to read.

The child must develop a self-worth that will propel him into the I-can-read attitude. When a child has a happy or successful experience in reading, he will enjoy reading and be predisposed to read. Small increments of success become motivation for further success. Until the self-concept of a child is such that he can permit himself to endure small failures, he will not put forth the effort to learn the complex abstract process of symbol deciphering called reading. He must have faith in himself before he will ever read.
There are needs which are general human needs... Among the most significant is the need to experience success—to feel capable in what one undertakes to carry through... A sense of competence is important. So a child must have tasks within the range of successful accomplishment (Shacter, 1955: 190-191).

One often hears the comparison made that the book from which a child learns to read must fit him as well as a pair of shoes. It seems we make children's shoes in many more styles and sizes to insure a near-perfect fit than we do books. The shoe salesman devotes his time one-to-one making sure the shoes fit the foot's boney structure, and that it neither crowds the foot nor rubs the foot. A number of shoes will be put through the test until the foot is shod.

When a child comes to school using a meager number of state-adopted reading texts, we press and mold the child to fit between the pages of one of the state reading series. When this initial "fitting" is done, all children who "fit" in the same book will be grouped together and will read together for that school year. Each child of a certain chronological age must read the same graded series, and let us not let him read any book below or above his grade level!

Yet, when that same child gets a pair of shoes, he
is not fitted according to his age, nor according to either
the style or the size the so-called "average" child of his
age would be wearing. Therefore, the analogy of fitting a
book to the child as you do a pair of shoes is not a good
one. If educators took a realistic view of the books pri-
mary children use to learn to read, they would be amazed
at what a "sloppy fit" most children are made to endure.

Herein lies the value of a personalized or in-
dividualized reading program which views the child as an
individual rather than as one of a group of thirty-plus
whatever graders. The advantages of personalized reading
progress for the pupil are: 1) permits him to meet one-
to-one with the teacher, 2) gives him feelings of success
and self-esteem. Gargiulo (1971) states that in individ-
ualized reading programs, ample reinforcement has a better
chance of getting to the children who most need it.

A study was made of the self-concepts of 102
fifth-graders grouped according to ability and taught
separately beginning with the first grade. Among the find-
ings Maxine Mann (1960) reported:

In the top section, 25 children gave positive
responses in terms of ability or achievement--
21 in positive "I" terms. No negative re-
sponses were made. In the next lower section,
Section Two, there were only seven responses
in terms of ability or achievement and in Sec-
tion Three only five. In Section Four, the
lowest, the fourteen responding in terms of ability or achievement gave negative responses--six in "I" terms, seven in "we" terms. It is interesting to note that there are no negative responses in Sections One and Two, few in Section Three, and only negative responses in Section Four.

Although studies examining attitudes and self-concepts are too limited to make conclusions, much of the evidence seems to not support grouping children according to ability. Ability grouping does not contribute to the development of desirable attitudes and healthy self-concepts, especially among slow learners.

If progress is of prime importance to American society, then individual variations must be guarded not eradicated.

Reading is usually pursued alone by a child who has learned to read and by adults. It is not a group activity. Flexible grouping, which exists for a brief period to satisfy a small group's interest or skill need, is probably more realistic. Russell (1949) states that three-groups-for-reading may be a ritual in some classes which has little more relation to children's needs than a one-group situation. In a flexible program, a child may at one time work by himself, ten minutes later he may be reading with a "partner," at another time he may be working with a group of five children, and later in the day he may do
audience reading or listening with the whole class. Accordingly, the teacher plans a wide variety of reading activities and makes accessible a great variety of reading materials so that each child may discover in reading something important for himself or his group. The individualized reading formula = the child + the right book + the right moment, which can never be recaptured.

Lloyd Alexander in a speech at the International Reading Association convention in Anaheim, California in May, 1970, stated, if the bookworm is becoming extinct, it is not due to DDT, but to TV. He believes we rely on highly-structured reading programs too much, as though it were a singular answer, when there are as many answers as there are students.

Lamy (1963) in her study of cause-effect shows a positive relationship between reading achievement and self perceptions that were inferred during kindergarten—before reading instruction—it gives strong support to the idea that self perceptions are causal factors in reading success and failure. Wattenberg and Clifford (1964) found that the measurement of self-concept during kindergarten was predictive of reading achievement.

Self-concept is as important to reading success
as is intelligence or mastery of the basic skills. Research supports the notion that an adequate self-concept is an important ingredient of reading success. As the child develops his reading ability, he comes to realistically see himself as one who can do things as one who can succeed.

Berretta (1970) states learning to make satisfying choices in reading may help him to see himself as capable of decisions in other areas of his life. The objectives of individualized reading are to develop the student's capacity to the maximum, and to develop a greater and more lasting interest in reading. Trusty (1971) writes after five years of individualized reading with third grade classes, children have enjoyed reading and parents continue to report that the children read from habit. It has become a part of their lives. They are readers, not just boys and girls who learned to read.

Environment

Home

Parents are even more involved than teachers in the teaching of reading. Roberson (1970) suggests parents are the first objects for a child's identification. When a parent shows that he enjoys reading and spends much of his
time reading, he is teaching his child to have a positive attitude toward reading. Identification, or modeling after the parent, builds values and forms attitudes. Such a child will spend much time with books and attach much value to them in imitation of his parent. Gargiulo (1971) states that behavioral psychologists debate whether there are inborn desires to read. They point out that in non-verbal ways parents reinforce the value of reading by having reading materials around and by enjoying reading themselves. Non-verbal reinforcement can and does often determine how well a child starts to read.

Ward (1970) says that a child finds out who he is from his parents. The mother who talks to her new baby is providing a good foundation for reading. The family that brings the infant to the family circle at mealtime is providing a social learning activity which is essential for learning to read. The cooing communication of a baby helps him to develop socially and verbally; both areas he needs to develop before he acquires reading ability. Good reading and good motor development go together; therefore, the baby needs to explore his environment by creeping, crawling, and manipulating harmless items.

From the parents' viewpoint, learning to read is the most important single function of the elementary
school. Since the child spends only one-fourth to one-third of each day during five days of approximately forty weeks in a year at school, the parents must become partners with teachers in helping their child learn and love to read.

According to the behavior studies of Gesell and Ilg, it is normal for an infant as young as fifteen months to sit on the lap of an adult and look at colored pictures and turn the pages of a book. The roots of reading begin to spread from the home which provides a parent or a parent substitute who reads books aloud to the child and talks to him about them. In 1969 Gallup International Research Organization interviewed mothers of 1,045 first-grade children for the Institute for the Development of Educational Activities to discover home factors which differentiated the successful and nonsuccessful children. They found that being read to regularly from age two on was one of the most distinguishing features of the successful children's home lives.

In a survey made by Napoli (1968), questionnaires were sent to the students and parents of eighth-grade classes. The honor students of good readers generally had more books and reading matter at home and more emphasis was placed on education in the home. All the results
seemed to indicate that the home environment greatly influenced the child's reading habits and ability.

Harris (1961) states that the educational level reached by a child's parents, their occupational status, and the number of books in the home are significantly related to the progress the child is likely to make in reading. Lower-class attitudes tend to place little importance on educational accomplishment or on reading. In Sweden, the parents' attitude and educational background are more important than socio-economic status in influencing reading.

Parents share with teachers the responsibility of teaching their child to read and to enjoy reading. Perhaps somewhere in our educational system, we need to prepare prospective parents for parenthood. All too few parents realize the importance the years before kindergarten will have in their child's acquisition of reading ability. When the child starts school, the parents' part in helping the child to read does not end.

Roberson (1970) states when the child brings home his first primer, or reader, or story book, the parents should find time to listen to him read and reward him with a pat on the back, a hug, a positive comment, or perhaps just time with the child so he may read and reread to an
enthusiastic listener. These rewards will be enough to generate further enthusiasm for reading. Gillham (1967) says it is highly important for the student that parents express confidence in their children's abilities.

Classroom

Education is atmosphere as well as instruction (Sir Richard Livingstone).

The atmosphere in a classroom must be right for individualized reading. The interaction between teacher and child should be happy and relaxed. The child must have confidence in his teacher. He must have confidence in himself and he usually has until someone stifles it. He must have confidence in the value or worth of his expression. There must be flexibility in time and freedom from pressures. The child is extremely sensitive to the emotional and social climate of a classroom.

Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs (1963) believe the school must take responsibility for more than the purely academic. It is responsible for helping to influence the way a child feels. The child's attitude predisposes him to act in a certain way. Any influence on attitudes is crucial because it relates so closely to the motivational set of the individual.
Attitudes develop gradually and incidentally and are formed by everything that goes on in the classroom as it affects the child. In the primary grades, a child is still in the process of formulating many of his concepts in relation to school and achievement. Encouragement is of particular importance at this level as it plays such an important part in the development of the child's learning style and ultimately his life style. His progress in school will be based upon his self-confidence.

In an atmosphere that is stimulating and encouraging, positive methods will dominate the teacher-child relationship. When a child is presented with an appropriate task, he will function more effectively. He will be accepted for what he accomplishes and no issue will be made of mistakes.

Mouly (1968) states that an adequate classroom is characterized by warmth, acceptance, trust, and openness to experience, as well as stimulation and encouragement. There is a need to convince the child that we trust him, and a need to allow him to participate in decision-making. The child must have the opportunity to meet with success as the basis for developing trust in his own competence. The adequate classroom promotes self-discovery by permitting the child to pursue his curiosity and, at the same
time, maintaining acceptance.

No person has an unlimited amount of energy available and the anxious child invests so much of his energy in his problems that there is little left over to conduct the ordinary affairs of life (Robert F. Peck and J. V. Mitchell, 1962:15).

Silberman (1970) defines the informal classroom as one where the child is self-directed, self-disciplined, and enjoys a task rather than working at it. The teacher no longer directs passively seated children, but provides several interest areas in which children do a variety of things of interest to them, at their own pace, for varying amounts of time, with the help of a teacher or teacher-aides.

La Benne (1969) believes people learn their identity, who and what they are, from the kinds of experience the growing-up process provides. He suggests that the development of the self-concept takes place in the reality of the classroom and in the midst of whatever dynamic exists in school activities. A teacher cannot help a student develop a positive self-concept by merely telling him he is a worthwhile and valuable person. Action-behavior is the only way a teacher can demonstrate trust and respect for each student, thereby helping each student develop his self-concept.
Self-concept is not observable by another person; however, his concept of self rests in part on what he thinks others think about him. Self-concept is a totally subjective and private experience.

All learning begins with something happening inside the child. How the child feels about himself determines how comfortable he is in school, how well he performs, and how much control he exerts over his actions.

When children are ability-grouped, there is a tendency to establish, reinforce, and perpetuate the individual's concept of his ability in a particular area. Children are much aware of the differences between ability groups and strongly desire to be in the highest group.

Borg (1966) found that random grouping favored concepts of self, acceptance of self, and feelings of belonging. It is far easier to measure academic performance than self-concept. In the light of Borg's study, ability grouping is a questionable practice for academic concerns, and appears to be quite unfavorable for developing a child's personality.

The mission of the teacher is clear: To help a child develop a positive self-concept, one must help him select experiences with a challenge, and yet, at the same time help assure him of opportunities for success.
Dreikurs (1968) states that a teacher creates a definite atmosphere in the classroom. The atmosphere is usually decisive in either creating a motivation to learn or in hampering it. Keener (1967) says in attempting to create an atmosphere in which growth of reading power will flourish, it is important that each small degree of progress made by youngsters be recognized. She believes individualized techniques give back to the child a sense of importance and worth. Further strengthening of the child's self-image occurs when he is able to make a contribution to the class which is uniquely his own—the sharing of a book that has delighted him with others.

The chief goal of an individualized reading environment is to make the child an independent reader but often the over-protective teacher, like the over-protective mother, will not let him become independent. In England, the teacher is a facilitator, a person who exercises discretion regarding the choice of materials for the classroom and the way he helps the child use these materials. He sets the atmosphere in which children move forward in rigorous inquiry-based pursuits, enjoying their self-chosen work. Perhaps his most difficult task is deciding when not to intervene.
In the August/September, 1969 issue of *The Instructor* magazine, Russell G. Stauffer states that we defeat our own ends if children feel they are being taught instead of they themselves being active learners. Our reading programs suffer because learning to read is the first major accomplishment of school and teachers approach it with overdirection. He feels children need to feel purpose and have a sense of internal direction.

Ashley Montagu in his book, *Quest for Self*, says the greatest gift a teacher has to offer to his children is his own personality; and when everything else is forgotten what will be left will be the personality—that is, the meaning—of the teacher. It is not the subject matter, the content that is the message; it is the method by which one teaches—one's personality.

Beginning with Kindergarten or first grade, the center of the child's extra-familial life, occupying almost half of his waking hours, is the school. The kind of teachers he has, the teaching methods he encounters, and the types of textbooks he is exposed to will have important effects not only on his progress but upon his capacity to meet and master new problems and challenges and, consequently, his self-confidence and self-esteem (P. Mussen, J. Conger, and J. Kagan, 1969:587-588).

Books in the numerous current reading series used in beginning reading programs are not written in the
language that children speak nor in the language which they hear spoken. One example is "Where are you going?" said mother. The assumption that "said" is more easily learned than "asked," if this is what the publisher is assuming, may only be in the publisher's or the author's mind. Certainly the sound of "a" in "said" is no easier to learn to say than the "a" in the word "asked." Yet, the young child uses each one correctly in his verbal language long before he comes to school. His reading books leave something to be desired when they are not written in the manner in which we normally speak.

John Holt (1967) believes we should give children time to get used to and familiar with the look of letters and words, before beginning any kind of formal reading instruction. This, he feels, is a very good reason for letting the child decide himself when he wants to start to read. He states nowhere is our obsession with timetables more needless and foolish than in reading. Too much is made of the difficulties of learning to read. Because we assume reading is difficult is the reason so many children have trouble with it. We go to no ends to "simplify" what is simple enough already. Children learn five thousand or more words before first grade; they learn verb forms and proper grammar mostly by themselves without
anything that we could call formal instruction. They learn to speak without all the worrying we do over reading.

Education is life, and children need to live more fully and more richly in school now, rather than at some ill-defined time in the distant future. Children learn as much, if not more from each other than they do from their teacher. Cronin (1966) believes children need to develop a sense of responsibility by letting them teach themselves and each other at least part time. He feels the real mission of the school is to teach the means for renewing and replacing obsolete facts and skills. Lee Lewin (1969) believes that unskilled teaching is an exercise in self-clarification. Children who teach must know what they teach, thereby strengthening their own skills.

By grouping children in multi-age groups, the five-year-olds are motivated because they want to be able to do what bigger children can do. With many different kinds of materials in the classroom that children can read, they soon use and discover how to read. In this setting, there are many children from whom they can get help and advice if and when they want it. In a classroom with a family-type atmosphere, the individuals have to figure out ways of living together.
Homogeneous age groups provide little opportunity for reference to what it is like to be younger and what it would be like to be older. Cross-age grouping provides opportunities for children to be older or younger, and to learn through living experience in school. The child can only be cooperative and social to the extent that he has learned to be. Clayton (1965) suggests that if teachers taught nothing, but merely kept groups of children alive and undamaged, the child would still learn a great deal from his age-mate society.

In Norway, there is no grouping by ability in the primary years and beyond. The Norwegians seem wholeheartedly committed to the concept of egalite or equality. The Norwegian child will have the same teacher for a minimum of four years or longer. There is time to understand and appreciate individual differences and time to succeed.

Teachers in England give children a chance to develop and practice independence and responsibility rather than just talk about it. A striking feature is the quality of student interaction in multi-aged grouping, where older children often take "teaching" roles. Since children at primary age levels exhibit strong desires to interact with and be individually accepted by their teachers, the
teacher in England may stop to listen to the children working together for a moment, and then tell them they are doing very well and to carry on. Wolfe (1971) states that a mere smile or gesture of approval may be enough reward to ensure added efforts by primary age readers as they seek success.

Above all—learning to read must be fun and a happy experience. It must also provide successful experiences from the very beginning to make children desirous of learning to read. A teacher enthusiastic over books and reading can do much to instill this desire in her pupils. A teacher's never ending patience with assisting every child to prevent failure in reading is a most necessary trait.

Individualized reading starts not with procedures but with a creative, perceptive teacher—-one who believes that children want to learn; who thinks with children rather than for them; who basically respects the individual behavior of every youngster; who works with children in orderly but not rigid ways (L. B. Jacobs, 1958:319).

The Prophet, speaking of children, says, "They have their own thoughts." When the teacher is wise indeed, he does not invite his students into his house of wisdom, but leads them instead to the "threshold of their own minds" (K. Gibran, 1958).
CHAPTER III

DATA DESCRIPTION AND RESULTS

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this investigation was to determine which combination of variables compared provides the most valid procedure for use as a measure of the relationship between a young child's attitude and his reading achievement. The test instructions were investigated using heterogeneous subjects under normal classroom conditions.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses investigated in this study were:

1. The reading achievement of the subjects in Group A, Group B, and Group C would indicate differences between the groups.

2. The Attitude Questionnaire would indicate differences between the subjects in the boy's group and the subjects in the girl's group.

3. Attitude variables would indicate a correlation with reading scores.
Variables Investigated

The independent variables investigated were (1) total "yes" responses on the Attitude Questionnaire, (2) child's attitude, (3) parental involvement, (4) parental modeling, (5) home environment, (6) self-concept, (7) classroom environment, and (8) sex.

Method

Subjects

Thirty subjects, first and second grade students, from Park View Elementary School, Simi Valley, California, for the school years 1969-70, 1970-71, and 1971-72.

Instruments

Stanford Reading Achievement, Primary II Test, Form W. Cooperative Primary Reading Tests, Forms 12A and 23A. Attitude Questionnaire consisted of two pages of twenty-four questions printed in fairly large manuscript. The words "boy" and "girl" appeared at the top of the questionnaire along with the words "code" and "date". The words "yes" and "no" appeared on the right-hand side behind each stated question (see Appendix A for sample questionnaire).
Procedures

Before the Attitude Questionnaires were handed to the subjects, they were reassured that there were no right or wrong answers. The classroom teacher conducting the survey said: "Your answer may be different from your neighbors." Additional reassurance was given that their answers would not affect their grades in any way. However, subjects were asked to please be sure that they answered every question.

The questionnaires were handed to the subjects by the classroom teacher. Subjects were each given a sheet of blank paper, which could be used to cover their responses if they wished. Each subject was encouraged to help his neighbor if he lost his place. Subjects were able to find the numbers if someone was having trouble. The teacher told the subjects: "Only your answer is important! Do not worry about how your neighbor answers."

Subjects were asked to circle the word "boy" or "girl" at the top of the questionnaire. They were also asked to enter the date. Subjects were asked to put their initials in the "code" blank. Initials were used as no two subjects had identical initials. This method also gave each more privacy.
Due to the age of the subjects and the fact that many did not read well, the questions were read to them. The number preceding the question and each question on the questionnaire were read twice to the subjects. They were asked not to spend too much time on each question. However, ample time was given for all to respond to each question. Subjects were to respond by circling either the word "yes" or "no" behind the question read. Responses of "yes" and "no" were used to make it easier for the young subjects to answer. Discriminating between degrees of positive or negative responses would have been very difficult with this age group.

The subjects were told to consider the question asked as something that would usually or often be true. For example, question number three: "Does mother read to you?" This question would be interpreted as meaning "often".

Subjects were encouraged to read along with their eyes as the questions were read. For this reason words such as "usually" were omitted. The vocabulary was particularly chosen to make it easier for the subjects to read along. Subjects who were able to read the questionnaire did read as they marked their responses. The
questionnaire was written in rather large manuscript for ease in reading by the subjects.

The subjects attended well to the task of answering the questionnaires. A subject's spontaneous vocal reaction to the questionnaire in the 1969-70 school year was: "That was fun! Can we do it again?" Prior to the survey another subject's response in 1972 was: "Oh good! I liked that!"

The questionnaires were used with the subjects early in June for three consecutive school years.

Results

Questions on the Attitude Questionnaire were grouped and identified as the variables listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Question Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Child's attitude</td>
<td>1, 2, 10, 12, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parental involvement</td>
<td>3, 4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parental modeling</td>
<td>18, 19, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Home environment</td>
<td>6, 7, 8, 9, 21, 22, 23, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Self-concept</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. School environment</td>
<td>14, 15, 16, 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Yes" responses for each variable were totaled for each subject. Combined "yes" totals for all subjects on each variable were obtained.
Subjects for 1969-70 are referred to as Group A; subjects for 1970-71 as Group B; and subjects for 1971-72 as Group C.

All three groups were given the same Attitude Questionnaire in June of 1970, 1971, and 1972.

Reading achievement grade equivalent scores were obtained from the tests mandated by the State of California. Reading tests were given in May for 1969-70, 1970-71, and 1971-72. Grade scores for the ten subjects in Group A were obtained from the Stanford Reading Achievement, Primary II Test, Form W. For the ten subjects in Group B and the ten subjects in Group C, grade equivalent scores were obtained from the Cooperative Primary Reading Tests, Forms 12A and 23A respectively. Form 12A was used for first graders and 23A was used for second graders.

Hypothesis No. 1 was rejected. No significant differences between the reading and questionnaire scores were found. The indication was that the three groups were too similar.

Hypothesis No. 2 was not supported. No significant differences were found between the reading scores and the questionnaire scores of the boy's group and the girl's group.
Hypothesis No. 3 was partially supported. The Pearson Product-moment Coefficient of Correlation was applied to the mean and standard deviation scores for each of the nine variables. There were significant differences at the .05 level of significance between reading score, questionnaire score, child's attitude, parental modeling, self-concept, classroom environment, and sex. See Table 1 for the correlation for each of the variables.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Score</td>
<td>2.353</td>
<td>.793</td>
<td>.6531*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire Score</td>
<td>16.266</td>
<td>2.874</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child's Attitude</td>
<td>4.500</td>
<td>.718</td>
<td>.5905*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Involvement</td>
<td>1.233</td>
<td>.989</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Modeling</td>
<td>2.066</td>
<td>.963</td>
<td>.3324 (N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Environment</td>
<td>5.066</td>
<td>.364</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept</td>
<td>.666</td>
<td>.471</td>
<td>.3703*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Environment</td>
<td>2.733</td>
<td>.928</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>1.366</td>
<td>.481</td>
<td>.0614 (N.S.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at the .05 level.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this investigation was to determine the effect a young child's attitude, his self-concept, his home and classroom environment might have on his learning to read.

Information was sought on the differential effect a child's attitude would have on his achievement in reading. Scores for boys and girls were checked for any significant differences. In addition, information was sought on the degree of relationship among the variables measured in the investigation.

Significance of the Study

Research suggests that young children beginning to learn to read are failing due to attitudinal factors. Children may classify themselves as failures and ultimately fail in school-oriented tasks of all types.
Analysis

This paper dealt with three concerns in regard to the young child learning to read: (1) the child's attitude and self-concept; (2) the use of the individualized approach to reading; and (3) the child's home and classroom environment.

The main interest of this study was how these concerns interact when the young child begins to learn to read.

There is ample evidence reported in the literature to indicate that there is substantial positive relationship between a child's attitude, self-concept, and success in learning to read. Studies by Lamoreaux and Lee (1943), Lamy (1963), Wattenberg and Clifford (1964), Duffy (1967), Cook and Mack (1969), La Benne (1969), Palardy (1969), Beretta (1970), Sebesen (1970), Gargiulo (1971), and Glasser (1971) among others, have demonstrated this positive relationship.

Of the nine variables in this study all but two show a direct correlation with reading achievement. Data in this study reinforce the fact that a child's attitude, including his self-concept, has a definite bearing on his success in learning to read.
In regard to the children's reactions to the questionnaire, it appears that children are seldom asked how they feel about things. More surveys need to be conducted with all ages of children.

Additional studies should be initiated with young children using larger and more representative samples. Data are needed to pinpoint the factors that precisely identify why "the-teacher-makes-the-difference." Data are also needed describing the elements which will help produce a positive self-concept in the child.
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Livingstone, Sir Richard (Source Unknown).


# APPENDIX A

## ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Boy</th>
<th>Girl</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Do you like to hear stories read to you?**  
   Yes  No

2. **Do you like to look at, and read books?**  
   Yes  No

3. **Does mother read to you?**  
   Yes  No

4. **Does father read to you?**  
   Yes  No

5. **Does someone read stories to you at home?**  
   Yes  No

6. **Does your mother work away from home?**  
   Yes  No

7. **Is mother home when you come home from school?**  
   Yes  No

8. **Do you have books you can read at home?**  
   Yes  No

9. **Do you have color TV?**  
   Yes  No

10. **Do you like to read?**  
    Yes  No

11. **Do you think you read pretty good?**  
    Yes  No

12. **Do you want to learn to read better?**  
    Yes  No

13. **Do you think it is important for you to learn to read?**  
    Yes  No
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Do you like the way we read in our room?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Do you like to read with a friend?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Do you like to read with your teacher?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Do you like to read in a big group?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Does your mother read books?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Does your father enjoy reading books?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Do you see mother or father read books often?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Does mother fix your breakfast?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Is mother home when you come to school?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Do you go to bed before 8:00 at night?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Do you watch TV every night?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>