

**A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-CONCEPT AND  
MANIFEST ANXIETY OF EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS  
AS A RESULT OF GRADED VS  
NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EXPERIENCES**

**BY**

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MANIFEST ANXIETY OF EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS  
AS A RESULT OF GRADED VS NONGRADED ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

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A Research Paper  
Presented to  
the Graduate Council of  
Austin Peay State University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in Education

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by  
Rebecca Lehman Brittain

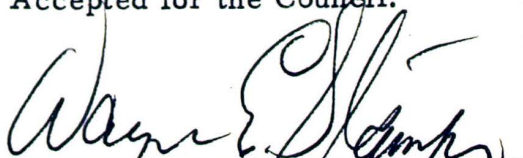
August 1973

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by Rebecca Lehman Brittain entitled "A Relationship Between Self-Concept and Manifest Anxiety of Eighth Grade Students as a Result of Graded vs Nongraded Elementary School Experiences." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education, with a major in Counseling and Guidance.

  
Major Professor

Accepted for the Council:

  
Dean of the Graduate School

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express sincere appreciation to Dr. Garland E. Blair, Professor of Psychology, Austin Peay State University, who assisted and counseled her during the course of the study.

Appreciation is extended to Mr. Clint Daniel, Principal of New Providence Junior High School, who made it possible for the author to administer the self-concept scale used as the basis of the study. Appreciation is extended also to Mrs. Joyce C. Caldarelli, guidance counselor, who assisted the author in giving the self-concept scale.

Very special appreciation is extended to the author's children, Lindy and Lee, for their patience and understanding, and to her husband, Richard, for his aid and continuing support and encouragement.



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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of the behavioral scientist is the understanding of the multifactoral components of the personality. Such understanding can most effectively and accurately be accomplished through empirical measurement and comparison of the coexistent factors in the personality complex (Cattell, 1965).

Individual differences in personality have been a major concern of psychologists and other behavioral scientists for decades. The measure of these differences is a project of monumental size. The publication of large numbers of articles in professional journals is clear evidence of interest generated by aspects of personality (Spielberger, 1966).

Numerous authorities like Spielberger (1966) consider the aspect of anxiety a major factor of the personality. Others such as Patterson (1961) consider the aspect of self-concept as a primary determinant of personality and behavior. Both of these factors serve important roles in the function of the personality and exert a major influence on the individual behavior, regardless of any possible interaction with each other.



While there are many definitions of self-concept (Combs & Snygg, 1959; Raimy, 1943; Rogers, 1951), it is generally considered the central aspect of personality which the individual derives from experience and uses as a frame of reference for self-evaluation and understanding, and in perception and behavior related to the self.

The significance of the self-concept may be seen in the position of Combs and Snygg (1959) who state that the self is essentially a social product that arises out of experiences with other people. Since the self-concept is a function of experience, what happens to the student while in school is particularly important in the development of the phenomenal self. In our society, aside from the family, school probably has more effect on the development of the individual's concept of self than any other agency. What happens to the student in school is important to the production of an adequate personality.

Since it is believed that students need to perceive themselves in a positive way, it seems reasonable to assume that the educational experiences provided them should be those kinds which help them see themselves as liked, wanted, and accepted, and to avoid educational experiences that destroy positive self-feeling (Combs & Snygg, 1959).

Jersild (1968) writes that experiences at school and attitudes toward school figure prominently in the child's evaluation of himself. Landsman (1962) states that the learning of the child is determined,

influenced, and in some instances, distorted by the child's perception of self.

Success and failure experiences in school significantly influence the way in which the student views himself. Those who encounter success in school tend to develop a positive self-concept while others who experience failure tend to develop a negative self-concept (Caswell & Foshay, 1957; Purkey, 1970) and oftentimes experience high levels of anxiety, as well.

Glasser (1969), Holt (1964), Morse (1964), and Jersild (1952), among others, feel that traditional school experiences have caused many of our students to weaken their concept of being a person of worth. Schools must provide experiences for the child that fulfill his basic need for successful identity.

During the recent past, interest in classroom organization and structure has increased, particularly interest in the nongraded school. Many school systems have developed nongraded plans or variations of this plan. The proponents of nongraded schools write of its superiority (Beggs & Buffie, 1967; Goodlad & Anderson, 1963; Tewksbury, 1967); however, other studies have shown some evidence of no-gain due to switch-over to a nongraded program (Carbone, 1961; Hopkins et al., 1965). There are contradictory research findings in this area. Also, the available research has dealt mainly with comparison of academic achievement of pupils in graded schools with that of pupils

in nongraded schools. Only one study found in the literature (Ramayya, 1972) included relevant personality variables in both the graded and nongraded elementary schools. However, no study found in the literature attempted to show whether exposure of Ss to six years of a non-graded elementary school program with its claimed merits are sustained at a no-gain, a gain, or a loss level after the switch-over to a graded junior high school program as compared to Ss previously exposed to a six-year traditional elementary program and continuing this graded program in the junior high school.

### Statement of the Problem

The primary focus of the study is to determine the relationship between the self-concept and manifest anxiety variables of personality of eighth-grade students as a result of graded and nongraded elementary school experiences after both groups experienced approximately seventeen months of the traditional junior high school pattern.

Other variables studied in the above context are (1) Behavior, (2) Intellectual and School Status, (3) Physical Appearance and Attributes, (4) Popularity, and (5) Happiness and Satisfaction.

### Statement of the Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be tested by statistical analysis of the data collected:



1. There will be no significant difference at the .01 level of confidence between the self-concept of subjects as a result of graded or nongraded school experiences.
2. There will be no significant difference at the .01 level of confidence between the manifest anxiety of subjects as a result of graded or non-graded school experiences.
3. There will be no significant difference at the .01 level of confidence between the behavior of subjects as a result of graded or nongraded school experience.
4. There will be no significant difference at the .01 level of confidence between intellectual and school status of subjects as a result of graded or nongraded school experience.
5. There will be no significant difference at the .01 level of confidence between the physical appearance and attributes of subjects as a result of graded or nongraded school experiences.
6. There will be no significant difference at the .01 level of confidence between popularity of subjects as a result of graded or nongraded school experiences.
7. There will be no significant difference at the .01 level of confidence between the happiness and satisfaction of subjects as a result of graded or nongraded school experiences.

### Basic Assumptions

In the development of the research the investigator assumed that:

1. The concept that a person has of himself is a determinant of his personality.
2. All forces acting upon the child influence his self-concept, and especially the influence and relationship with the "significant" people around him, family, friends, play-peers, and teachers.
3. No research studies could be found which have specifically attempted to show whether exposure of Ss to six years of a nongraded elementary school program with its claimed merits are sustained at a no-gain, a gain, or a loss level after the switch-over to a graded junior high school program.
4. It is assumed that the instrument used in estimating the personality variables studied is sufficiently valid for use in the exploratory study.
5. Further, it is assumed that pupils responded frankly and honestly in their self-concept evaluation as there was no pressure exerted to cause them to feel necessary to do otherwise.

### Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study are listed as follows:

1. Temporal limitation: It is recognized that the Self is relatively

stable over time but is subject to change; therefore, the self-concept of each subject reported in the study is the concept of that particular individual at the moment that he was tested.

2. Methodological limitations: The study of students' self-concept was further limited to the aspects of the self-concept which could be measured by the specific instrument employed. Pencil and paper tests are limited in revealing only what the individual is willing to communicate. Some critics of the self-report (Allport, 1955; Combs & Snygg, 1959; Combs & Soper, 1957; Combs, Soper, & Courson, 1963; Cronbach, 1960) used in the study of self-concept state that self-report and self-concept are two entirely different things. Combs and Snygg (1959) and Combs and Soper (1957) list factors which may influence an individual's self-report. They are: (1) clarity of awareness, (2) availability of adequate symbols of expression, (3) willingness to cooperate (4) feeling of personal adequacy, (5) feeling of freedom from threat, and (6) social expectancy. On the other hand, Rogers (1951) has stated that self-reports are valuable sources of information about the individual. Strong and Feder (1961) believe that every evaluative statement the individual makes about himself can be considered a sample of his self-concept.



### Definition of Terms

1. Self-Concept. For the purpose of the study the self-concept is defined as "an organized, . . . consistent conceptual pattern of perceptions of characteristics of the 'I' or the 'me,' together with values attached to these concepts" (Rogers, 1951).
2. Ideal Self-Concept. The ideal self-concept is the self one would like to be.
3. Manifest Anxiety. For the purpose of the study the manifest anxiety is defined as that form of anxiety which is observable, and therefore, capable of being identified. It embodies the behavioral responses of fear and apprehension (Bledsoe, 1962).
4. Self-Esteem. Coopersmith (1967) defines self-esteem as the evaluation of the self which the individual makes and customarily maintains. It is a personal judgment that the individual makes about himself.
5. Graded Schools. Tewksbury (1967) defines the graded school as one that is divided into six levels or grades. The work to be accomplished at each level or grade is clearly defined. There are usually specified skills, topics, and textbooks designated for each grade. Each individual is to do the work assigned to that grade during the year. If the work is not satisfactorily completed, the individual will be retained in the grade to repeat all of the work.

6. Nongraded Schools. The nongraded school denies limitations of grade structure and is organized so that the individual student may develop physically, mentally, and socially as rapidly or as slowly as his abilities permit.

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents an examination of empirical studies on the self-concept, anxiety, and graded school experiences as compared to nongraded school experiences. Previous investigations relevant to the present project have been divided into five major categories:

- (1) Constructs in Self-Concept; (2) Previous research with self-concept;
  - (3) Constructs of Anxiety; (4) Previous research on anxiety; and (5)
- Previous research comparing graded and nongraded schools.

#### Constructs in Self-Concept

As a theoretical construct, the self has ebbed and flowed with the currents of philosophical and psychological thought since the seventeenth century. René Descartes (1644) first discussed the "cogito" or "self" as a thinking substance in his Principles of Philosophy. Following his lead, thinkers such as Leibnitz, Locke, Hume, J. Mills, J. S. Mills, and Berkeley subjected the self to vigorous philosophical examination (Diggory, 1966; Hamachek, 1965).

As psychology emerged into its own as a science, the self, as a related construct, moved with it. William James (1890) was among the first who gave importance to the concept of self. He defined a



person's self as the total of all that he can call his. Due to the work of James and others, the self occupied a prominent place in psychological writings at the turn of the twentieth century.

As behaviorism swept into the fore of psychological thinking during the first forty years of the century, the self received scant attention, and all but disappeared as a theoretical construct worthy of note. It has only been in recent times that the self has emerged anew and has been revitalized in psychological thought (Hamachek, 1965).

Mead (1934) developed the symbolic-interactionist theory pertaining to the self. He said that the self arose from the social process. It depended upon the interaction of the individual in the group. The process of relating one's own organism to others in interactions that are going on, in so far as it is imported into the conduct of the individual with expressions of "I" and "me," constitutes the self.

Allport (1943) included the concept of self as being essential in his theory of personality. He identified seven aspects of selfhood and postulated that the self acts consistently with the remainder of the personality. Allport's views are essentially in agreement with Lecky's theory of "self-consistency" (Lecky, 1945).

Raimy (1948) was the first to develop methodology for measuring self-reference changes during psychotherapy. Because he observed that positive changes took place in the self-reference during successful

counseling, the self-concept emerged as an important variable in counseling evaluation.

Theorists such as Combs and Snygg (1959), Raimy (1943), and Rogers (1951, 1961), among others, have assigned the self-concept a central position in their theories of personality and suggest that the individual's self-concept is a major factor influencing his behavior. The "phenomenological" notion of the self-concept is clearly defined by Combs and Snygg (1959), who wanted to develop a method for predicting the behavior of individuals in specific situations. In developing this method they assumed that all behavior is dependent on the individual's personal frame of reference, his "phenomenal field," which is the world as it appears to him at any given moment. The fundamental aim of all behavior is the preservation and enhancement of the phenomenal self. The core of the phenomenal self is the self-concept which consists of those perceptions about the self that seem most vital or important to the individual.

Brownfain (1952), Perkins (1957), Allport (1960), and Hughes (1964) have written of the self-concept as ways in which the individual perceives himself in many situations together with the objects, people, ideas, and values that he views as characteristic of himself. Simply stated, it is what the individual believes about himself.

Moustakas (1956) maintained that the validity of objective assessment of the self-concept is empirically questionable.

He wrote, "The self is not definable in words. Any verbal analysis tend to categorize or segment the self into communicable aspects or parts. The self can only be experienced. Any attempt to convey its meaning verbally must be based on function or structure and on language which can be partially understood" (pp.11-12). He added that even the most accurate of tests can somewhat distort the real self.

The opposite approach is represented by experimenters such as Patterson (1961). They feel the necessity for definitions and measurement of self-concept are indispensable steps toward the understanding of human behavior. Consequently, their concepts and definitions are so structured as to facilitate empirical research. Behavior is generally congruent with the self-concept.

In reading the empirical literature pertaining to the self-concept theories, Wylie (1961) found a bewildering array of hypotheses, measuring instruments, and research designs. She discovered that the theories are in many ways ambiguous, incomplete, and overlapping.

### Previous Research with Self-Concept

There have been numerous studies of various facets of the self-concept. One study by Williams and Cole (1968) attempted to relate self-concept to several dimensions of the child's experiences that are considered fundamental to successful academic adjustment. Using 80 6th-grade Ss, they found significant positive correlations between

self-concept measure and the variables of conception of school, social status at school, emotional adjustment, mental ability, reading achievement, and mathematical achievement.

Hawk (1958), using a sample population of 123 adolescent boys and girls, studied the concept of self as a variable in adolescent behavior. He found that boys and girls who saw themselves essentially as they would like to be expressed a higher degree of self-confidence and less uncertainty about themselves than did those Ss who had greater ego discrepancies. His findings suggest that the self-concept is an important variable in adolescent behavior.

Brookover, et al. (1965), reasoning from the symbolic-interactionist theory of Mead (1934), attempted to relate evaluation of significant others (parents, experts, and counselors) to self perception of ability and school achievement of low achieving, junior high school students. Significant increases in both self-concept of ability and grade-point average were effected by working with parents who represented academic significance to their children. "Expert" and counseling treatments failed to induce significant changes in either self-concept or achievement. Brookover's group concluded that it is more efficacious to work through established significant others such as parents than to attempt to develop new significant other as bases of influence.



The stability of the self-concept has withstood scrutiny by many researchers. Brownfain (1952) explored this factor and discovered that Ss with stable self-concepts were better adjusted than those with unstable self-concepts. Harris (1971), employing the technique for measuring scholastic self-concept used by Brownfain (1952), found the scholastic self-concept was a relatively stable dimension of personality for both early and middle adolescents. In her investigation of the stability of the self-concept in adolescence, Engel (1956, 1959), using eighth and tenth graders, obtained data by testing and retesting 172 Ss over a two-year period (1954-1956). Subjects whose self-concept was negative on the first testing were significantly less stable than Ss whose self-concept was positive in 1954.

Using college students and adults as Ss, Taylor (1953) found that self-concept remained relatively stable over time intervals up to 7-1/2 months. His findings suggest also that the self-ideal is more stable than the self-concept, that the difference between self-concept and self-ideal is reduced in repeated self and self-ideal descriptions, and that positiveness of the self-concept tends to increase with repeated self-description.

In his study of self-concept, ideal self-concept, and achievement, Chickering (1958) found no stable relationship between self discrepancy and school effort. Achievement appeared more closely related to the actual self than to the ideal. Coopersmith (1959), however, found that

low self-concept was associated with high achievement when high achievement need (Ideal self) was present.

A more recent study with elementary school children was completed by Campbell (1965). This study was based on data from fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. He reported support for the hypothesis of a positive relationship between Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and achievement as measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Support was also found for the hypothesis that the relationship decreases at progressively higher grade levels, that there is a more pronounced relationship for boys than for girls, and that girls have higher levels of self-concept than boys.

Coopersmith and other social scientists (1968, 1967, 1960, 1959) have conducted a series of studies of self-esteem applying the techniques of modern clinical, laboratory, and field investigation. Their Ss were a representative sample of normal, white American, middle-class boys whom they followed from preadolescence to early adulthood. Starting with thorough examinations of their self-esteem and their abilities, personality traits, attitudes, behavior and family background, the researchers observed how they fared in dealing with school, job, and social demands as they grew up. The research has provided a conceptual framework that might serve as a guide in further investigations of self-esteem.

Using the case-study method, Sears and Sherman (1964) did an in-depth study of eight essentially normal children from a moderately well-to-do suburban community. All of these children were in the fifth and sixth grades. The purpose of this research was to gain understanding of how children's feelings of self-esteem develop in the school setting, what influences their self-esteem, and how self-esteem, in turn, influences their motivations to learn and achieve. The analysis of these eight cases involving real children with real problems can be studied to gain better understanding of causes and remedies for individual and social problems in general.

Jersild (1952, 1968) had approximately 3,000 young people from fourth grade through college write compositions on the topics, "What I Like About Myself" and "What I Dislike About Myself." He found that experiences at school and attitudes toward school figure prominently in the children's evaluations of themselves. At almost all levels (except college), experiences at school were mentioned more often in describing what they disliked about themselves than what they liked about themselves. According to the children, life at school weakens rather than strengthens their feelings of personal worth.

### Constructs of Anxiety

The etymological setting of the concept of anxiety is plagued by ambiguity, semantic confusion, and inconsistent definitions

(Levitt, 1967; Malmö, 1966; Spielberger, 1966). In fact Cattell and Scheier (1958) located more than 300 proposed definitions for the construct of anxiety. Only recently has scientific methodology endeavored an empirical definition and measurement of the ageless, confusing, and unstructured construct of anxiety (Levitt, 1967; Spielberger, 1966).

The first recent attempt to explicate the meaning of anxiety within the context of psychological theory was Freud (1936) who regarded anxiety as "something felt," an unpleasant condition characterized by apprehension or distressful expectation.

More recently, English and English (1958) have defined anxiety as an "unpleasant emotional state in which a present and continuing strong desire or drive seems likely to miss its goal; a fusion of fear with the anticipation of future evil; marked and continuous fear of low intensity; a feeling of threat . . ." (p. 35).

### Previous Research on Anxiety

There is general agreement among authors such as Levitt (1967) that individuals with relatively high predispositions to anxiety concurrently report more susceptibility to threats to the self than do other individuals. An easily threatened person is more likely to have a comparatively poor opinion of himself because of chronic feelings of insecurity. In the case of achievement and test anxiety, he feels a high state of anxiety because he doubts his ability to achieve or perform



successfully. It does not necessarily follow that he actually is a poor achiever; he merely perceives himself as underachieving (Levitt, 1967).

Coopersmith (1967, 1959) contends that high levels of distress, tension, and negativeness are most likely found in a person with low self-esteem. Persons with high regard for themselves "are expressive, happy, and relatively free of anxiety; persons with low self-esteem are less expressive, less happy, and relatively anxious" (1967, pp. 133-34).

In light of this information, it is not surprising that studies such as those of Wheeler (1962), Chickering (1958), Taylor (1953), and others conclude that there is a very significant inverse relationship between anxiety and self-concept. Groups of high-anxious Ss consistently reported lower mean scores in self-concept, and conversely, low-anxious groups reported high levels of self-concept.

Rosenberg (1965) did an extensive study of self-esteem with Ss being juniors and seniors in high school in New York State. Numerous variables were explored. One finding relative to this research has to do with anxiety. He found that low self-esteem is a distressing state that sets into motion a train of events that lead to anxiety.

Bledsoe et al. (1962), using fourth and sixth graders as Ss, studied their self-concepts in relation to their academic achievement, intelligence, interest, and manifest anxiety. They found no significant relationship between the measures of self-concept and measures of

academic achievement; however, a significant negative relationship between anxiety and self-concept was reported. Those Ss who expressed a greater number of worries or anxiety also assigned to themselves a lower self-rating.

Cattell and Scheier (1961) and Symonds (1968) found that academic failure is related to anxiety. Academic failure leads students to lower their levels of self-evaluation and to become self-defensive. Anxiety generated by failure directs the individual's attention away from the learning task. Efforts must be made to reduce anxiety in the classroom so that learning can take place.

### Graded and Nongraded Schools

For over one hundred years the graded school has been the dominant pattern of elementary school organization in America. The graded school programs seem to imply that all children should be subjected to the same content at the same time and at the same rate because they are in the same grade and approximately the same age. The children are expected to operate within this rigid framework (Buffie, 1967).

A natural concomitant of the above educational practice is non-promotion. The child who is unable to succeed repeats the grade. However, today numerous writers contend that our traditional school experiences emphasize failure to the detriment of the child and his

concept of being a person of worth (Caswell & Foshay, 1957; Glasser, 1969; Goodlad & Anderson, 1963; Holt, 1964; Jersild, 1952; Morse, 1964; Purkey, 1970).

During recent years there has been growing interest by educators in modification of the traditional graded elementary school to suit the needs and abilities of individual children. Accordingly, a number of schools have initiated nongraded programs at the elementary level (Goodlad & Anderson, 1963).

Nongrading is basically a plan to implement continuous pupil progress through a series of achievement levels rather than grade, i.e., first, second, third. The nongraded school has a more healthy emotional climate for learning since the individual is permitted to learn at his own rate of speed according to his own abilities, and without the fear of failure (Lewis, 1969).

Although there have been numerous studies of various personality variables (Coopersmith, 1967, 1960, 1959), only a few (Beggs & Buffie, 1967; Buffie, 1962; Hillson et al., 1964; Williams & Cole, 1968) have dealt with the self-concept and manifest anxiety facets of children relative to the change in the organizational structure of the school program.

Superior effects of the nongraded school have been reported in several studies (Beggs & Buffie, 1967; Hillson et al., 1964). Hillson et al. (1964), investigated the effects of the graded and nongraded

primary organization on reading achievement of entering first graders of the academic year 1960-61. At the end of one and one-half years, an analysis of grade level achievement on three achievement tests favored the nongraded organization.

Carbone (1961), using fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade pupils, compared the achievement and mental health of graded and nongraded pupils. He found that graded pupils exhibited higher achievement than the nongraded pupils. He also found that the mental health of the two groups was not significantly different.

Hopkins et al. (1965) compared the reading vocabulary and comprehension of pupils having their primary-school experiences in nongraded classes with those of comparable pupils in graded classes. At the end of the third year of schooling, there were no significant differences in reading ability between the nongraded and graded classes.

As the studies cited above indicate, there have been contradictory research findings in this area. Also, the available research has dealt mainly with comparison of academic achievement of pupils in graded schools with that of pupils in nongraded schools.

Only one study in the literature (Ramayya, 1972) included relevant personality variables in both the graded and nongraded elementary schools. It is thought that the personality measurement, a higher level of self-esteem, in the nongraded program, was probably a result of



individualized instruction, absence of failure in courses, and provision for progress at one's own rate.

## Chapter III

### METHOD

#### Pupil Population and Sample

The Ss for the investigation were eighth grade students attending New Providence Junior High School, Clarksville-Montgomery County School System, Clarksville, Tennessee. Fifty-six Ss (35 girls and 21 boys) who were eighth grade students at the time of the study and had attended the nongraded Woodlawn Elementary School for the six years of their elementary education were matched by sex and achievement with fifty-six eighth-grade students randomly selected from the eighth-grade population who had attended other graded elementary schools in the Clarksville-Montgomery County System for the six years of their elementary education. Total number of Ss used in the study were 112. Achievement was based upon the stanine score in Reading earned by each S on the Metropolitan Achievement Tests administered during the Fall 1972. These two groups were compared on relevant variables using the t test for correlated samples.

### Description of the Instrument

The instrument used to measure the students' self-concept was The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale (The Way I Feel About Myself), a scale designed by Piers and Harris (1964) whose original pool of items was developed from Jersild's (1952) collection of children's statements about what they liked and disliked about themselves. Items were written as simple declarative sentences that were answered "Yes" or "No." In the pilot study 164 statements made up "The Way I Feel About Myself" which was administered to 90 children from the third, fourth, and sixth grades.

The scale presently has 80 items with a high score indicating a more positive self-concept. Those who score between the 31st and 70th percentiles (raw scores of 46-60) are considered average. Means have ranged from 48 to 60. Standard deviations have ranged from 9 to 15. The mean of the normative sample is 51.84 and the standard deviation is 13.87. The median is 53.43 (Piers & Harris, 1969).

Most of the reliability information is based upon the original standardized scale of 95 items. Piers and Harris (1964) found coefficients ranging from .78 to .93 employing the Kuder-Richardson and coefficients of .87 and .90 employing the Spearman-Brown formula. A retest after four months yielded coefficients of .72, .71, and .72. In his study, Wing (1966), using the shorter 80-item scale with 244

fifth graders, found on a two-month and four-month test-retest coefficients of .77. Based upon these findings, the scale is considered to have good internal consistency and adequate temporal stability.

The validity of the instrument was determined by comparing the Piers-Harris with Lipsitt Children's Self-Concept Scale. Using 98 special education students ranging from 12 to 16 years of age as Ss, Mayer (1965) obtained a correlation of .68.

Cox compared the Piers-Harris with problems checked on the SRA Junior Inventory for 97 children in grades 6-9. He obtained a correlation of -.64 between the Piers-Harris and big problems reported by Ss on the SRA Junior Inventory and a correlation of the Piers-Harris and health problems of -.48 (Piers & Harris, 1969).

The instrument was developed for graded 3-12 and requires approximately a third-grade reading knowledge. On an individual basis it could be used below that level. Variability of scores tend to decrease with age of S.

The scale consists of 80 items or sentences such as "My classmates make fun of me" and "I am nervous when the teacher calls on me." The Ss were instructed to respond to each item by circling "Yes" or "No" depending upon whether or not they considered the item descriptive of themselves. The higher the score on the scale the better would be the self-concept.



### Research Procedures

The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale (The Way I Feel About Myself) was administered to all Ss in small groups or individually by the investigator or a guidance counselor employed at the school. The students were tested during their English classes but in a different location in the building.

Before distributing the scale, the examiner talked to the students about the value of finding out how boys and girls really feel about themselves, in order to help them, and the necessity, therefore, for a completely honest response rather than a socially desirable one. It was stressed that this was not a test, that there were no right or wrong answers, that results would not affect their school grades, and that they would be kept confidential.

After the test booklets were distributed, the examiner assured that each child had a pencil and then showed the Ss how to fill out the identifying data. After completion of identifying data, the examiner had the Ss turn to the instructions and read these aloud. It was stressed that Ss should circle either yes or no for all items. There were to be no omissions and no double circles, even if they found some items hard to decide.

Since the scale is written on a third-grade reading level, the Ss were instructed to read silently and respond to individual items.

In most instances the S had completed the test in 15-20 minutes, but there were no time limitations imposed.

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS OF STUDY

This chapter is devoted to the description and analysis of data and results of the statistical computations. The findings in this chapter are reported in the form of tables and the discussion which accompanies them is arranged in an order corresponding to the hypotheses listed in Chapter I.

Hypotheses 1 and 2. The hypotheses were stated as follows:

1. There will be no significant difference at the .01 level of confidence between the self-concept of subjects as a result of graded or nongraded school experiences.
2. There will be no significant difference at the .01 level of confidence between the manifest anxiety of subjects as a result of graded or nongraded school experiences.

Table I shows the computations of the self-concept scores of students with nongraded school experiences as compared with students who experienced only the graded school program. The t ratio for the two groups was .344 which is not statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.

Table I also shows the computations of the manifest anxiety for the two groups. The  $t$  ratio for the groups was 1.183 which is not statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.

Hypotheses 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. The hypotheses were stated as follows:

3. There will be no significant difference at the .01 level of confidence between the behavior of subjects as a result of graded or non-graded school experiences.
4. There will be no significant difference at the .01 level of confidence between intellectual and school status of subjects as a result of graded or nongraded school experiences.
5. There will be no significant difference at the .01 level of confidence between the physical appearance and attributes of subjects as a result of graded or nongraded school experiences.
6. There will be no significant difference at the .01 level of confidence between popularity of subjects as a result of graded or nongraded school experiences.
7. There will be no significant difference at the .01 level of confidence between the happiness and satisfaction of subjects as a result of graded or nongraded school experiences.

Table II shows the computations for the additional cluster scores as measured by The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale. For the Behavior cluster there was a measurable  $t$  ratio of .742 which is



not significant. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted. For the measurement of Intellectual and School Status there was a  $t$  ratio of .355 which is not significant. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted. There was a  $t$  ratio of .225 for Physical Appearance and Attributes which is not significant. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted. For the Popularity cluster score there was a  $t$  ratio of .675 which is not statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted. For the cluster score of Happiness and Satisfaction there was a  $t$  ratio of .107 which is not statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.

TABLE I  
Self-Concept and Manifest Anxiety Scores

Self-Concept	Nongraded $\bar{x}$	Graded $\bar{x}$	<u>t</u> ratio
56Ss (ea)	57.66	58.27	.344
Manifest Anxiety	Nongraded $\bar{x}$	Graded $\bar{x}$	<u>t</u> ratio
56Ss (ea)	8.04	8.54	1.183

TABLE II  
Other Cluster Scores

Cluster	Ss	Nongraded $\bar{x}$	Graded $\bar{x}$	<u>t</u> ratio
Behavior	56 (ea)	15.61	15.29	.742
Intellectual and School Status	56 (ea)	11.18	11.39	.355
Physical Appearance and Attributes	56 (ea)	6.38	6.48	.225
Popularity	56 (ea)	8.48	8.77	.675
Happiness and Satisfaction	56 (ea)	7.34	7.38	.107

## Chapter V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research project was undertaken to determine the relationship between the self-concept and manifest anxiety variables of personality of eighth-grade students as a result of graded and nongraded elementary school experiences after both groups had experienced a period of time in a graded junior high school.

Hypotheses were formulated, one related to the measurement of the self-concept and one related to the measurement of manifest anxiety. Other hypotheses formulated included the variables of (1) Behavior, (2) Intellectual and School Status, (3) Physical Appearance and Attributes, (4) Popularity, and (5) Happiness and Satisfaction as measured by The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale.

The study presented several limitations which were classified as:

1. Temporal Limitations: The Self is relatively stable over time but is subject to change; therefore, the reported self-concept could be affected by temporal changes in the individual's life.
2. Methodological Limitations: Paper and pencil tests are limited in themselves.



Although many studies have been conducted on the self-concept, very few are directly relevant to this project. It is difficult to summarize the investigations because of the differences of opinions and results, differences in samples, and differences in methods and procedures used to measure the self-concept. In reading the empirical literature pertaining to the self-concept theories, Wylie (1961) found a bewildering array of hypotheses, measuring instruments, and research designs. Today, of course, there are even more.

The same holds true for the studies of anxiety. In fact, more than 300 definitions of anxiety have been proposed (Cattell & Scheier, 1958). The concept of anxiety is plagued by ambiguity, semantic confusion, and inconsistent definitions (Levitt, 1967; Malmö, 1966; Spielberger, 1966).

The instrument used to measure the self-concept, manifest anxiety, and other personality variables of Ss was the scale entitled The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale (The Way I Feel About Myself) designed by Ellen V. Piers and Dale B. Harris. The scale has eighty items, with a high score indicating a more positive self-concept. Six personality factors have been identified. Using these factor responses, a cluster score may be calculated. For all cluster scores, the higher the score the more positive is the attribute.

The sample for the study was composed of 112 eighth-grade students at New Providence Junior High School, Clarksville-

Montgomery County School System, Clarksville, Tennessee. Fifty-six Ss (35 girls and 21 boys) who were eighth-grade students at the time of the study and had attended the nongraded Woodlawn Elementary School for the six years of their elementary education were matched by sex and achievement with fifty-six eighth-grade students randomly selected from the eighth-grade population who had attended other graded elementary schools in the Clarksville-Montgomery County System for the six years of their elementary education. Achievement was based upon the stanine score in Reading earned by each S on the Metropolitan Achievement Tests administered during the Fall 1972.

The Hypotheses were tested statistically by comparison of means using the t test of the direct difference method for matched pairs.

## CONCLUSIONS

According to the findings of this study, one can conclude that:

1. For this particular sample population, there were no statistically significant differences between the self-concept and manifest anxiety scores for the students with nongraded and graded elementary school experiences.
2. The mean scores in the study are 57.66 for the students with non-graded schools and 58.27 for those students with only graded school experiences. These scores may be compared with the mean of the

normative sample which was 51.84. However, the authors stated the norms should be used with caution because they are based on data from one Pennsylvania school district and are generalizable only to similar populations. Other studies reported means ranging from a low of 50.4 to a high of 60.40.

3. There were no statistically significant differences between the cluster scores on other personality variables for the two groups of students. However, information obtained from the cluster scores are only tentative at this time. No cluster score norms were provided, and the authors recommend the most appropriate use for cluster scores is in further research.

4. Most studies to date comparing Ss with graded and nongraded school experiences have attempted to evaluate the children's performance in skill subjects such as reading. Conflicting results have been reported (Beggs & Buffie, 1967; Carbone, 1961; Goodlad & Anderson, 1963; Hillson et al., 1964; Hopkins et al., 1965; Tewksbury, 1967). Only one study in the literature (Ramayya, 1972) included relevant personality variables in both graded and nongraded schools. The investigator found no literature comparable to the present study. Due to the lack of research in various non-academic factors, it is premature at this time to judge the value of nongradedness.

5. In his analysis of graded and nongraded school structures, Tewksbury (1967) places them at opposite ends of a continuum; however,

in further analysis, he renders the opinion that neither type of school is completely one way or the other. In actual practice one is apt to find a mixture of gradedness and nongradedness. The typical graded school of today is not fully graded. The investigator believes this to be true about the graded schools in the Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools that the Ss attended; however, the matter was not explored.

### IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. It is suggested that an effort be made by guidance counselors and classroom teachers to secure as much information as possible about the students' backgrounds, home conditions, etc., in order to meet the needs of the individual student.
2. Changes in the organizational structure of the school alone will not be enough to produce the benefits usually cited in support of non-gradedness. If schools are to be organized to promote the continuous progress of each student, instruction must continue to move toward individualization. School faculties have much work to perform in helping students improve in academic achievement and personal adjustment.
3. Landsman (1962) stated that indications are that the early self-concept is stabilized in the pre-school years. In view of this, one may assume that some children begin school with a strong or negative self-concept. Changes in the self-concept may occur throughout life. For



this reason, those working with children should realize that events in the child's life can shape the self-concept. If the learning events in school are exciting, meaningful, and fulfilling for the individual, the development of an emotionally healthy person should be evidenced. On the other hand, learning events which threaten the individual's feeling of self-worth may result in avoidance of learning with a resultant lowering of the self-concept. Teachers can do much in structuring the classroom activities so that students may feel accepted as persons of worth who have something worthwhile to offer.

4. The school should identify students who view themselves negatively, to determine the causes for the low self-appraisal, and to work on a program of amelioration. As Williams and Cole (1968) make clear, there are few factors more fundamental to a child's success and happiness than the way he sees himself.

5. The review of the literature and the study on graded and nongraded school experiences in shaping personality variables suggest the need for continuation, refinement, and reevaluation of the nongraded school structure.

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