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The Effects of Nonpromotion on Achievement and Maturation in the Junior High School

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THE EFFECTS OF NONPROMOTION ON ACHIEVEMENT AND MATURATION
IN THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL



A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington State College



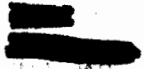
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education



by
Alma C. Spithill
May 1965

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS PERSISTENCE

Education and its policies have been under attack for twenty-five centuries, but never so intensely or persistently as in the United States during the past eight years. The attacks of the advocates of preparation for war and the "get-tough policy" for education are based on opinion and assumption, yet they have a devastating effect. Educators, weakened by self-doubt, cooperate with, even encourage, the ultimately damaging policies that go along with "getting tougher"--more and more grouping coupled with increased demands for a set level of achievement. With their techniques for handling the gifted and the dull they are dividing children into two intellectual classes, the elite and the second-class citizen.

As a natural outcome of the push to eliminate "coddling" and "spoon-feeding" the practice of nonpromotion is on the rise. During this school year thousands of teachers in this country will be faced with the decision of whether to retain or promote many of their students. Ultimately one million school children will be retained at a cost of about one-half billion dollars. In light of such circumstances it seems essential that the practice of nonpromotion be evaluated on the basis of its accomplishments. If this evaluation reveals that the values for which nonpromotion was

designed do not result, and that there is, in fact, reason to believe that an opposite effect is occurring, it is imperative that educators be made aware of the findings, and that they have the wisdom and courage to direct policies and practices accordingly.

The writer has shared with many teachers and administrators their ideas regarding valid reasons for retaining certain children, and concludes from these discussions that immaturity is a more frequent reason than underachievement for retention in a grade. Teachers are aware that achievement depends, to a great extent, on ability, and they tend to give this serious consideration in making their decisions about who will be retained and who will be promoted. However, if a child resents doing required work, if he seems overly dependent, and if his relationships with others are awkward and babyish he is classified as immature. It seems to the writer that when these qualities of immaturity appear in the underachieving child, they almost guarantee his retention to give him an extra year to "catch up".

Twenty-five years ago, Henry J. Otto (21:128), in a study of values believed to result from failure in the elementary school, found that, of the fifty-two principals involved in the survey, 34 per cent believed that repeating a grade assured mastery of the subject matter, and 24 per

cent felt that it "adjusted" the immature child. Four other values were suggested, but these were essentially sub-values of the above two. Seventy-one per cent of the respondents agreed that nonpromotion had some value.

The values believed to be inherent in the practice of nonpromotion haven't changed essentially in the past quarter century. Goodlad and Anderson, as a result of investigations with groups of teachers in many parts of the country, found seven reasons why teachers choose to retain certain children:

1. Certain children do not make sufficient academic progress during a given year to profit from the work of the grade above. (This reason, the most commonly presented, often is expressed simply as "lack of achievement".)

2. We cannot go on indefinitely pushing children up. ... If we don't insist on certain standards now children will be unprepared for what must inevitably come later.

3. The teacher in the grade immediately above expects the children to come prepared; it is just too bad for the children if they are sent up unprepared.

4. Continued inability to do the work of the grade is discouraging and frustrating to the children. They are better-off if retained in a grade level where they can gain some success and satisfaction

5. The presence of slow learners in the class presents a hindrance both to children and to teachers who already are badly overloaded. Retaining slow learners will reduce this problem.

6. Immature children, by repeating a grade, will find more suitable playmates and work companions.

7. Promotion of all is unfair to those who have come up to grade standards. These more able students come to represent equal reward for obviously inferior performance (12:212).

Reasons one, two, and three, directly or indirectly, assert that some children will achieve better if they are retained. The implication is that this improvement will be evident later on, and that the child will be better off for it. Reasons four and six suggest that failure will lead to the retained child's greater success and satisfaction, to a reduction in his frustrations, and ultimately to a level of maturity commensurate with his peers. The implication of numbers five and seven are not clear.

In summation then, the proponents of the nonpromotion policy see inherent in it two basic values: First, as a result of his retention, the slow learner will have a more adequate background to compete in future grades; he will feel more adequate and less frustrated. Second, retention will give the immature child time to catch up. The consequences then should be a higher level of academic achievement and a pattern of behavior which indicates an appropriate level of maturity.

Despite the fact that there are few concepts as illusory and as little understood as that of maturity, the use of the term "immature" in reference to children's behavior and attitudes is almost universal. Few terms in education have been so loosely over-used, and with so little understanding of their real meaning. Two widely accepted theories

relating to maturation are the theory of developmental tasks and the theory of self-concept.

Though immature behavior in children is readily observable, the explanation for its presence is a complex thing. There is strong evidence to support the theory of developmental tasks proposed by Havighurst and others as an explanation for the process of maturation. Each period in a child's life is crucial to the development of some particular psychological area, though he may be developing in other areas at the same time. If the period passes without maturation of the concept associated with the task, the opportunity is lost because the crucial time for another task arises. This is not to imply that the resulting damage is forever irreparable, but Lecky (16:197) suggests that during the crucial period for a developmental task a pattern is easily acquired; in later life "violent forces" are required.

Staton discusses the relationship between developmental tasks and their appropriate chronological periods, and immaturity as it is manifested in adolescents:

Refusal to meet responsibilities in a mature fashion, failure to perform work which he should perform, lack of self-discipline in the adolescent period are natural results of failure to successfully complete the developmental tasks of duty and accomplishment appropriate to the primary and elementary school years (27:48).

Staton further suggests that the essential ingredient in the development of the senses of initiative, autonomy, and

accomplishment is the trying and successful doing of things-- achievement. If the retained child achieves better following retention, if his pattern of adolescent behavior and attitudes compares favorably with that of most of his peers, retention accomplishes at least part of what teachers believe and hope it will accomplish; at the same time it disputes the now widely accepted theory of developmental tasks.

The elusiveness of the concept of maturity is attested to by the fact that there are no standardized instruments which purport to measure it. Achievement tests, to be sure, are measures of degree of intellectual maturity, but maturation encompasses other psychological areas. That a person behaves in accordance with his conception of himself is an accepted principle among many clinical psychologists. Self-concept refers to the way a person perceives himself and how he perceives others and his environment in relation to himself. Recent research in the area of self-concept indicates that it is used frequently as an explanation for variations in human behavior as are heredity and environment. Staton (27:48) relates self-concepts and developmental tasks. "...many of the problems encountered in adolescents will be found to have their roots in a failure to achieve maturity in an area of the self-concept which is particularly identified with a specific period of time." It is this

writer's opinion that a person's perceptions of himself and others are so intimately related to maturity that the measure of one is descriptive of the other. If the retention does, in fact, lessen frustrations and provide increased feelings of adequacy, the self-concept of the child who has experienced retention should compare favorably with that of his peers.

CHAPTER II

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY AND PLAN OF APPROACH

I. THE PURPOSE

Most studies of the effects of nonpromotion have been done at the elementary level and during the years immediately following the experience of nonpromotion. The proponents of nonpromotion logically argue that studying the effects so closely on the heels of the disturbance, which the experience of failure might have caused, is not indicative of the long range effect. A study of delayed effect might very well indicate that the advantages of later improved level of achievement and more appropriate level of maturity would far outweigh the disadvantage of a temporary sense of failure. Goodlad (10:306), in referring to the research of both McElwee and Sandin, stated that though their research revealed a greater incidence of troublesome behavior among nonpromoted children, that further experiments with carefully controlled situations needed to be conducted.

The purpose of this study is to determine, through controlled procedure, if differences in levels of maturity (intellectual, social, and emotional) exist between a group of nonpromoted students and a group of their regularly promoted peers, following a considerable time lapse from the

experience of retention. This is not to determine whether or not school failure is damaging, but rather to determine whether or not it accomplishes those objectives for which it was designed and for which it is perpetuated, and perhaps, in so doing, to determine if nonpromotion serves a worthy purpose.

II. EVALUATION OF NONPROMOTION PRACTICES

Relatively little significant research has been done with the problem of nonpromotion. There was a fifteen-year period after 1940, the year Sandin did his study, during which the question received virtually no attention. Then, in 1954, Coffield (3:234) reexamined the level of achievement of the nonpromoted child at all levels of the elementary school. He found that promoted low achievers did better than their non-promoted pair-mates. In the same year Goodlad (10:301-308) published the first complete study of the personal and social adjustment of the nonpromoted elementary school child. His concluding remark was that promotion and nonpromotion, "merit no rightful place in forward-looking educational thought and practice."

Although the evidence favoring regular promotion far outweighs the opposing point of view, two studies, one published in 1939 and the other in 1940, strongly support the premise that retention results in better social adjustment

and improved patterns of behavior. Frances (7:187-188) and Templer (29:259-260) both concluded that the traumatic effects of nonpromotion are highly overrated; that actually nonpromotion, in most cases, is beneficial. They concluded that when students repeat a grade their confidence increases, their attitudes toward school improve, and they become more stable emotionally.

Because of the dearth of recent research regarding the achievement of the nonpromoted child the 1936 studies of Farley and Arthur are still being referred to and quoted. Farley (6:37-39) made two studies in Newark, using two equated groups of children. They were equated on the bases of Intelligence Quotient and Chronological Age. One group was made up on repeaters and the other of potential repeaters. Farley concluded that *repetition* of a grade could not be relied upon to improve achievement, but that instead it tended to discourage effort and inhibit normal progress. Grace Arthur (1:203-205) made a similar experiment and observation: The average repeater in the first grade (usually for underachievement in reading) made no more progress over a two-year period than did those of the same mental age, who were promoted, did in one year.

Despite its lack of control, Sandin's study of the social and emotional adjustments of nonpromoted pupils is one

of the most comprehensive regarding behavior and attitudes. Regarding behavior characteristics Sandin concluded as follows:

...children as well as teachers assigned reliably more unfavorable behavior to all slow-progress pupils than they did to all regular-progress pupils, both as to behavior likely to be exhibited in relation to school work and behavior in their relations with fellow classmates (25:97).

He found, further, that the general attitude of the slow-progress student toward school was less favorable and less indicative of mature adjustment than that of the normal-progress student. "Many of them wished to quit school and many were easily discouraged or considerably worried about their future school progress."

Robinson (22:6), in a study of the causes of truancy, included the effects of failure as one. These effects, which he secured from clinical studies of children, were a weakened sense of security, and a loss of self-confidence and self-esteem. The secondary effect was the replacement of interest by resentment which in turn resulted in aggressive or restrained behavior.

Obviously it is not possible, through research, to conclude that definite cause and effect relationships exist between nonpromotion and lower levels of achievement and social and emotional immaturity, since there is no way to

determine how much better or worse the failed student would have done had he been promoted. As long ago as 1926 such far-sighted realists as J. J. B. Morgan were talking about the psychological values of success and failure:

Struggle is not undesirable or harmful. It is struggle, on the contrary, which gives stamina to the individual. The crucial thing to see is that the adjustment that is made as a result of the conflict is one that will ultimately benefit the individual. Character is not made by introducing hardship for the sake of hardship, but by the natural interaction between ego and reality. The trouble comes when one cannot retain his ego in battles which prove too much for him. It is just such a situation which makes life unbearable for some unfortunate individuals and causes them to adopt peculiar reactions in an endeavor to save themselves (20:339).

Research may never prove that the experience of school failure causes a child to adopt peculiar reactions, but research strongly suggests that there is reason to doubt that nonpromotion serves any worthy purpose; that it may be, in fact, an example of hardship for hardship's sake.

III. PLAN OF APPROACH

Because of the great number of variables which affect a child's rate of maturation it is obviously impossible to secure complete control. It was decided that by using a matching technique, rather than equated groups, greater control would be exercised. This would increase the homogeneity of the two groups. The following plan for the

selection of students to be studied was proposed:

1. Select a junior high school that draws from several elementary schools which represent a wide range of nonpromotion. For example, one school retained approximately two per cent of its primary students while another retained sixteen per cent the previous year.

2. Match, child for child, a group of seventh graders who had experienced nonpromotion in elementary school with a group of regularly-promoted eighth graders; a group of nonpromoted eighth graders with a group of regularly-promoted ninth graders; as many nonpromoted ninth graders with regularly promoted ninth graders as possible. The matching criteria were to be mental ability (I.Q.), chronological age, and sex.

3. Students on whom there were not adequate records, who had been absent more than forty-five days the year of failure, or who suffered from severe physical or personality disorders would be eliminated.

4. It was decided that, if during the year of the study, a student transferred or dropped out of school, his pair-mate would also be dropped.

5. Selection of groups was to be done early in the school year in order to accomplish as early as possible preliminary evaluating and matching.

The above plan resulted in the selection of two groups of junior high school students. The first was composed of fifty-two nonpromoted seventh, eighth, and ninth graders; the second of fifty-two regularly-promoted pair-mates, matched for mental ability, chronological age, and sex.

Two hypotheses, tested as null hypotheses, were proposed for investigation:

1. There are no significant differences in level of achievement for regularly-promoted and nonpromoted junior high school students.

2. There are no differences in degree of social and emotional maturity in regularly-promoted and nonpromoted junior high school students.

If a child has matured normally he should be performing to capacity and at a level common with his peers; he should be as acceptable to his teachers as are his peers; he should be as accepting of self, school, and others as are his peers. Evaluation of these factors depend on using instruments which give a picture of achievement and performance; instruments which give teachers an opportunity to rate their perceptions of the child, and which give the child an opportunity to reveal how he feels about himself, his school, and others.

CHAPTER III

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN OF THE STUDY

I. SELECTION OF GROUPS

The junior high school selected for the study had a total student population of 730. It draws its students from six elementary schools whose rates of nonpromotion vary from approximately one per cent to fifteen per cent, with an average of about five per cent. Its students are representative of different socio-economic levels, but are largely from middle class families. They come equally from urban and rural living situations, and their fathers are employed as airplane factory workers, farmers, merchants, woodsmen, mill workers, and professionals. The writer originally planned to use socio-economic level as a factor in matching. This, however, was not possible because of the great reduction in size of sample imposed by the other three factors.

Since the number of variables used in matching was limited to three, it was recognized that other important factors were not being considered - primarily socio-economic level and verbal and non-verbal ability differences. In spite of their not being essential to this study, the researcher felt that final inferences would be something less than complete, if no information about these was included.

Socio-economic level has been regarded as a variable in the differential achievement and adjustment of children in school. A five-point scale was devised from the Census Bureau's twelve occupational categories. The head of the household of each child was labeled as professional and technical, semi-professional, skilled, semi-skilled, or unskilled. Each was assigned a value ranging from five to one. The occupational categories for the sample fell into a percentage pattern similar to that listed for urban Washington State in the 1950 census. The mean score for the regularly-promoted group was 2.98 and for the nonpromoted group 2.64. A computation of the difference yielded a t of 1.55, which was not significant.

There is unquestionably a high degree of relationship between verbal and non-verbal ability, yet the two seem to measure independent factors to a considerable extent. The verbal scores and the non-verbal scores were separately compared. The mean verbal I.Q. for the regularly promoted group (100) was 4.37 points higher than that of the non-promoted group (95.63). The non-promoted group had a mean non-verbal I.Q. (101.54), 2.50 points higher than the regularly-promoted group (99.04). Computations for differences yielded t 's of 1.10 and 1.24 - neither significant.

Though the regularly promoted group's socio-economic

and verbal-ability levels seemed more favorable than those of the nonpromoted group, the degrees of difference could not be considered significant, and for this reason it was presumed that neither of these factors would influence, in an important way, the major results of the study.

Permanent record cards, health cards, and cumulative folders were examined to select a tentatively nonpromoted group. Eliminations were made on the bases of available information, health, and attendance. Of the original group of sixty-seven students fifty-two remained. Of these, eighty-three per cent had been retained at the primary level; two had failed more than one grade. The group was divided by sex, making a group of thirty-three boys and a group of nineteen girls (Table I). A pair-mate was selected for each student from the approximately 475 remaining eighth and ninth grade students.

The California Test of Mental Maturity (CTMM) is administered in the Auburn School District at the fifth and seventh grade levels. Eleven students had been given individual intelligence tests. The results of these were used. When there were two CTMM scores for a student, the higher one was used. Given the chronological age, mental ability level, and sex, the final selection of pair-mates for the nonpromoted group was made randomly. In the instances

where more than one pair-mate existed the names of all possibles were placed in a box and one was drawn. (These never exceeded four.) No student differed more than five months in age or more than eight I.Q. points from his pair-mate. Because of the limited sample no extra cases were maintained. In the case of a transfer the student's pair-mate was also dropped (Table I, II, III).

II. SELECTION OF EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Securing measurements of achievement was a simple task since each student in the sample had taken the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) at the sixth grade level. It was decided that two measures should be used in order to include both the factor of amount of learning, as reflected in a standardized achievement test, and the factor of classroom performance as reflected in grade-point averages. The groups were compared on three of the scores from the ITBS: the composite, the total arithmetic, and the total language. Grade-point averages were computed for eighth and ninth graders from their academic grades for the spring semester of the previous school year. For seventh graders the first semester grades of the current school year were used.

The problem of securing measurements of maturity was much more difficult because teachers' ratings and self-ratings are essentially qualitative.

TABLE I
COMPOSITION OF THE NONPROMOTED GROUP

Grade Failed	Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9		Total		Per Cent
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
1	2	0	1	0	0	1	3	1	7.7
2	11	7	2	2	1	0	14	9	44.2
3	2	1	7	4	2	0	11	5	30.7
4	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	5.8
5	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	5.8
6	0	1	1	0	1	0	2	1	5.8
Total	16	10	12	7	5	2	33	19	

TABLE II

CHRONOLOGICAL AGE DISTRIBUTION OF PROMOTED
AND NONPROMOTED STUDENTS

Chronological Age in Months	Promoted	Nonpromoted
185 - 189	1	2
180 - 184	4	6
175 - 179	8	3
170 - 174	7	9
165 - 169	14	14
160 - 164	11	11
155 - 159	7	7
Total	52	52
Mean	168.35	168.54
Standard Deviation	7.79	8.24
t-values	1.38	
Probability	<.001	

TABLE III

DISTRIBUTION OF MENTAL ABILITY (I.Q.) SCORES OF
PROMOTED AND NONPROMOTED STUDENTS

Range in Scores	Promoted	Nonpromoted
120 - 124	2	2
115 - 119	4	4
110 - 114	3	3
105 - 109	7	8
100 - 104	10	8
95 - 99	8	8
90 - 94	6	5
85 - 89	7	9
80 - 84	4	4
75 - 79	1	1
Total	52	52
Mean	99.21	98.92
Standard Deviation	11.07	11.22
T-value	.84	
Probability	<.001	

It was decided before the study began that the best instruments to measure the factors of social and emotional maturity were the Haggerty-Olsen-Wickman Rating Schedule B, and the Behavior Preference Record. However, it was discovered early in the study that neither of these standardized instruments was still in print. As a result a five-point rating scale was devised from the above rating schedule and each child was rated by three different teachers (Appendix A). After considering a Q-sort technique and a sentence-completion technique, it was finally decided that a self-rating scale based on the latter would be as effective and more expedient to administer. The preliminary evaluation was completed by the end of October. Teacher ratings were secured in November, and the self-rating was completed at the end of the first semester. The collection of all data was accomplished by February. At this time summarization of the results in terms of scores, and the conversion of scores and rating data into quantitative form for statistical treatment was undertaken. Means and standard deviations were computed in order to facilitate the comparison of one group with the other. Most important was the determination of whether or not differences existed between the two groups. In order to ascertain with what degree of confidence the findings could be accepted as true, that is, not resulting from chance, the

significance of differences between the two groups was obtained by the two-tailed test as described in Statistical Methods in Educational and Psychological Research, by Wert, Neidt, and Ohmann.

CHAPTER IV

ACQUISITION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

I. GENERAL PLAN

The technique selected to accomplish the statistical analyses was dictated in part by the null hypotheses and in part by the method of selection of the groups. The basis for the selection of the experimental group (designated in analysis X_1) was the experience of nonpromotion at the elementary level. The control group (X_2) was composed of regularly-promoted pair-mates, selected on the basis of sex, mental ability, and chronological age. Differences in the variables being tested would, therefore, not be attributable to the variables used in matching. Pairing was feasible because of the limited size of the experimental group. It was necessary, however, to limit the number of restrictions to the above three, since increasing it would have made it virtually impossible to find a true matching pair.

It is possible, in comparing two groups selected in the above manner, to test the null hypotheses using the two-tailed test of significance. Whenever the members of two groups are paired on the basis of one or more characteristics, pertinent to the criterion about which the groups are to be compared, the samples are regarded as correlated. Such a correlated design may be evaluated for a significant

difference between two means by using a t-test for correlated groups.

Prior to securing the evaluation data, analysis of the data used to equate the groups was necessary. The range in chronological age of the nonpromoted group was from 156 to 189 months at the time the study began. The regularly promoted group ranged in age from 155 to 188 months. The range in I.Q. was, again, nearly identical; 78 to 123 for the nonpromoted group and 79 to 122 for the regularly promoted group. This information is reported in Tables I, II, and III. The mean ages were 168:35 and 168:54 months; the mean I.Q.'s were 99.21 and 98.92. A computation of the differences between the two means and the two variances yielded a t-value of 1.38 with the criterion of age and a t-value of .84 with the criterion of mental ability. These t-values (below 1.68) with fifty degrees of freedom, indicate that no significant difference existed between the two groups so far as age and mental ability were concerned; in other words, that the experimental group was matched with the control group by age, I.Q., and sex.

II. ACHIEVEMENT DATA

All students in the experiment had taken the Iowa Test of Basic Skills at the sixth grade level. This meant

that they were being measured from one to five years past the experience of nonpromotion. Approximately ninety per cent had been failed at least two years prior to this testing. The temporary sense of failure which may follow grade repetition should therefore have had no effect on the test results. Though standardized achievement test scores seem to bear some relationship to grade-point averages, amount of learning, and performance in the classroom need not necessarily correlate. For this reason it was decided that both factors should be considered in determining the variable of achievement or intellectual maturity.

The focus of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills is on generalized intellectual achievement rather than content achievement per se, which seems to be a more appropriate kind of evaluation for this study. The reliability coefficients of the tests are unusually high. They range from .84 to .96 for the major tests, while the composite reliability coefficients for the whole test range from .97 to .98 for the different grades (2:16). Although scores are given in percentiles, provision is made for their conversion into grade equivalents, which facilitated computation and analysis of data.

It has been observed that frequently a child retarded in the area of language need not necessarily be retarded in the area of arithmetic, or vice-versa. This was

the reason that three scores, arithmetic, language, and the composite were used.

The total language score on the test is a composite of the four language skills subtests which include spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and usage. One person in each of the groups had not completed the language tests, so the total N used for this computation was 100. The mean grade equivalents for the promoted group and the nonpromoted group was 6.96 and 6.19 respectively. The standard deviations were .8797 and 1.0492. With forty-nine degrees of freedom and a t-value of 4.11, the difference between the two groups was significant beyond the 0.01 level (Table IV).

The arithmetic section of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills is divided into two parts--arithmetic concepts and problem solving. Since it is a better test of arithmetic understanding than of routine computational skills, again it seemed an appropriate measure for this study. Computation of grade equivalents for the promoted group and the nonpromoted group yielded means of 6.76 and 6.30 and standard deviations of .690 and .642 respectively. With fifty-one degrees of freedom and a t-value of 3.99 the difference between the two groups was significant beyond the 0.01 level (Table IV).

As a composite the test measures basic general educational attainment. It seemed to the writer that since

TABLE IV
 DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON THE IOWA TEST OF BASIC SKILLS
 ADMINISTERED MIDWAY THROUGH GRADE SIX

Interval	LANGUAGE		ARITHMETIC		COMPOSITE	
	Pro- moted	Nonpro- moted	Pro- moted	Nonpro- moted	Pro- moted	Nonpro- moted
8.5 - 8.9	1	3	1	0	0	0
8.0 - 8.4	8	1	1	0	2	1
7.5 - 7.9	7	3	7	3	8	1
7.0 - 7.4	11	5	7	4	8	8
6.5 - 6.9	6	6	18	13	9	10
6.0 - 6.4	11	11	11	15	15	11
5.5 - 5.9	8	8	4	11	8	14
5.0 - 5.4	0	9	1	3	1	6
4.5 - 4.9	0	5	0	1	0	0
4.0 - 4.4	0	1	0	0	0	0
Number	52	52	50	50	51	51
Mean	6.96	6.19	6.76	6.30	6.66	6.27
Standard Deviation	.88	1.05	.69	.64	.746	.714
t-values	4.11		3.99		3.55	
Probabilities	< .01		< .01		< .01	

the composite score included work-study skills it should be somewhat less a measure of total academic facility than the previous two tests used, and that the level of difference might then be lower. Computation yielded a mean of 6.66 and a standard deviation of .735 for the promoted group; a mean of 6.27 and a standard deviation of .714 for the nonpromoted group. With fifty degrees of freedom and a t-value of 3.55, the difference between the two groups was significant beyond the 0.01 level (Table IV).

Grading is the appraisal procedure for subject matter achievement in the classroom. However, since many extraneous factors such as attitude, effort, behavior, and attendance enter into the concept of classroom achievement, the broader term, performance, seems to be more exact than the term achievement. In spite of the many inadequacies of any marking system, grading still remains the primary device for labeling and sorting students, and the basis, at least in great part, for many failures. In no other area of comparison, however, did the groups differ so profoundly as in their classroom performance. The academic grades from the spring semester of the 1963-64 school year were used for eighth and ninth graders, and the grades from the fall semester of the 1964-65 year were used for seventh graders. Because two people had dropped from the study by the time all grades

were in and recorded, the total number for this computation was 100. The mean grade point average for the regularly promoted group was 2.01; for the nonpromoted group 1.51. The standard deviations were .670 and .685, respectively. With forty-nine degrees of freedom and a t-value of 4.34, the difference between the two groups was significant beyond the 0.01 level (Table V).

III. TEACHER RATING DATA

The judged values of nonpromotion, discussed in Chapter I, suggest that the child who shows signs of being emotionally, socially, and intellectually less mature than his peers should be held back a year because he will be more likely to behave and achieve more appropriately with a younger group. Consequents upon this, he should, from then on, present fewer behavior problems because his environment will always be less demanding than it would have been had he remained with his original group. It was the purpose of the teacher ratings to determine whether or not teachers perceived the nonpromoted child to be as mature as his peer of the same age and ability.

The authors of the Haggerty-Olsen-Wickman Behavior Rating Schedules (HOWBRS) felt that in spite of the limitations of scales they would prove valuable in improving

TABLE V
 DISTRIBUTION AND DIFFERENCES IN GRADE POINT AVERAGES
 OF PROMOTED AND NONPROMOTED PUPILS

Interval	Promoted	Nonpromoted
3.50 - 3.99	2	1
3.00 - 3.49	2	0
2.50 - 2.99	4	1
1.50 - 1.99	13	10
1.00 - 1.49	8	16
0.50 - 0.99	3	8
0.00 - 0.49	0	3
Total	50	50
Mean	2.01	1.51
Standard Deviation	.670	.685
t-value		4.34
Probability		< .01

research in the area of behavior problems of children. The measures of reliability of their scale have varied according to the authors, from .60 (rater equivalents) to .92 (internal consistency). Although the schedules are no longer in print, no substitute rating instrument is at present available which is so adaptable to the traits of the young adolescent. In their original form the items in Schedule B of the HOWBRS, were stated as questions. In the improvised scale, used for this study, the item was stated positively followed by a five-point scale for judging. For example, the items which originally read, "Is his attention sustained?" was altered to read, "Is able to sustain a long attention span." Each statement was rated as one of the following: almost always, frequently, occasionally, seldom, and never. Quantitative values of 4, 3, 2, 1, and 0, respectively, were assigned to the responses. From the thirty-five items on the original scale, sixteen were used. They were divided equally in reference to physical, emotional, social, and intellectual maturity. Each of 102 children was rated by three teachers--each by his English and mathematics teachers. The third rating was made by a social studies, music, science, or art teacher. Two items were deleted before statistical computation was begun, because more than half of the twenty-four teachers involved felt uncertain about answering one or

both of the items. For example, the statement "Is Courageous" was omitted by more than half. No bias for promoted or non-promoted was apparent in the omissions.

In the analysis of data the total cumulative points from three ratings were used for each child. A maximum score of 168 was possible. The range for the nonpromoted group was 61 to 151; for the promoted group it was 71 to 164. The means of the two groups were 105.28 and 113.91, respectively. The standard deviations were relatively large for this measurement--21.73 and 19.69 (Table VI). Analysis of differences yielded a t-value of 2.33. With 50 degrees of freedom and a t greater than 2.01 the probability that the difference between the two groups was due to chance is less than 0.05. This analysis, which compared the groups on factors of total development, indicated that promoted and nonpromoted students deviate significantly in composite teacher rating of social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development.

IV. STUDENT SELF RATING SCALE

At the time of this study there was no nonprojective instrument available for students of junior high school age to measure maturity of self concept. Among non-projective techniques sentence completion is one of the most expedient ways

TABLE VI

DISTRIBUTION AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PROMOTED AND
NONPROMOTED PUPILS ON TEACHER RATING SCORES

Interval	Promoted	Nonpromoted
160 - 169	1	0
150 - 159	1	1
140 - 149	1	1
130 - 139	10	5
120 - 129	8	7
110 - 119	7	10
100 - 109	12	6
90 - 99	5	8
80 - 89	4	7
70 - 79	2	2
60 - 69	0	4
Total	51	51
Mean	113.91	105.28
Standard Deviation	19.69	21.73
t-value	2.33	
Probability	< .05	

available to explore the feelings of any school-age group. For this reason and more specifically, because it is a technique which is convenient to use, takes relatively little time, and still provides feeling-level responses to a variety of situations, an open-end item questionnaire was selected. In 1959 Froelich and Hoyt (7:528) published a "Student Personal Data Blank". The writer secured permission from Science Research Associates to use 25 of the original 45 items in devising her questionnaire.

The resulting questionnaire was constructed in an orderly (not obviously so) manner to provide for a systematic tabulation of responses in the event that someone, later, might wish to do item analysis work with the material. The questionnaire was designed to begin with four non-threatening items to help the student get started with the process. Responses to items 5 through 25 fell into a pattern: (1) Attitudes toward self (5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23); (2) attitudes toward school (6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24); (3) attitudes toward others (7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25). There are two problems one often encounters using sentence completion: The difficulty of handling it statistically; and the rating of the concepts presented in the sentences. It was believed that judgment should be as free of bias as possible. Dr. James Kirkwood, child psychologist in private

in Tacoma, judged the questionnaires. Since each was identified by a letter number combination only, the psychologist had no way of knowing to which group a child belonged. The plan for evaluating the self ratings was to assign plus and minus values to each as follows: +2 -- definitely positive; +1 -- more positive than negative; 0 -- neither positive nor negative; -1 -- more negative than positive; -2 -- definitely negative.

Because the idea of self-concept encompasses not only one's attitudes toward self, but also attitudes toward others and toward one's world generally, the total score was assumed to represent a measure of self-concept and degree of psychological level of maturity. The sentences again and again gave evidence that it would be impossible to analyze separately attitudes toward self, school, and others. The following are examples of different completions given to items which were intended to reflect attitude toward self: I'm at my best when -- (1) I'm not at school, (2) I'm all alone, (3) I'm with other people' My greatest weakness is -- (1) School, (2) Not having friends, (3) Sex; I'd be happy if -- (1) There was no school, (2) If I ever knew what to do, (3) My mother would never die. It was interesting to note that the lowest score (-17) was given a regularly promoted child. The score was nine points lower than the next lowest

for his group and six points lower than the lowest in the nonpromoted group. This student receives average grades, was rated above average (119) on the teacher rating, and when the writer inquired about him later, he was described as quiet, serious, no discipline problem, appeared to be well-adjusted, having few friends, and a nice average boy. The following are examples of his completions: (1) The best part of school is getting out at the end of the day. (2) My friends like to make fun of me. (3) I enjoy being with animals because they don't try to embarrass me. (4) My best friends are my relatives. I don't have any at school. (5) I don't like teachers who - just teachers period. (6) I think that school is like a prison because you don't have rights. The ten people (five from each group) who scored -6 and lower gave many responses similar to the examples above; all expressed serious dissatisfaction with school, even where no reference to school was made in the item.

The possible range in scores was from a -42 to a +42. The promoted group's range was -17 to +20; the nonpromoted group's was -11 to +15 (Table VII). Analysis of data yielded a standard deviation of 7.55 for the promoted group and 6.12 for the nonpromoted. The means of the two groups were +4.6 and +2.3, respectively. In spite of the fact that the mean of one group was twice as great as the other,

TABLE VII
 DISTRIBUTION AND DIFFERENCES OF SELF RATING SCORES
 OF PROMOTED AND NONPROMOTED STUDENTS

Interval	Promoted	Nonpromoted
+20 - +24	1	0
+15 - +19	2	2
+10 - +14	11	3
+ 5 - + 9	12	10
0 - + 4	13	22
- 5 - - 1	6	9
-10 - - 6	4	2
-15 - -11	0	2
-20 - -16	1	0
Total	50	50
Mean	+4.6	+2.3
Standard Deviation	7.55	6.12
t-value		1.93
Probability		< .10

computation for significance of difference yielded a t of 1.93. With 50 degrees of freedom the difference is significant beyond the 0.10 level, but not at the 0.05 level required for confident rejection of the null hypothesis. Copies of the questionnaires are included in the Appendix.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study has dealt with the problem of the "non-effects" of nonpromotion--a practice which continues because many educators and parents are convinced that grade repetition will help the immature or underachieving child "catch up." It was not the researcher's intention to show that nonpromotion has a damaging effect; therefore, the difference between the two groups should not be construed as resulting from the experience of nonpromotion. Rather, the inference should be that those benefits purported to be obtaining from the practice of nonpromotion are in fact not being obtained. The final conclusion from this inference, based on the results of the experiment, should then be that the assumed values do not obtain from failing a child.

The comparison of concepts of self and others between the two groups yielded a t-value of 1.93 (probability .10) which does not permit the researcher to reject the second null hypothesis. The teacher ratings, yielding a t-value of 2.33, (probability .05), supports the rejection of the second null hypothesis, and indicates that the nonpromoted child is not perceived by teachers to be behaving as maturely as his regularly promoted matched peer. The data reflecting teacher judgments were secured by devising a fourteen-item,

five-point rating scale from the Haggerty-Olsen-Wickman Rating Schedule B; three teachers judged each child. A sentence-completion technique was used for the self rating scale. Each child completed twenty-one items, seven each, referring to concept of self, others, and school.

Four measures of achievement were used. Three were based on scores from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The fourth measure, intended to be indicative of classroom performance, was grade point averages. All four measures of academic achievement yielded t-values and probabilities allowing the rejection of the first null hypothesis. They were as follows: Language achievement--t of 4.11 (Probability .01); arithmetic achievement--t of 3.99 (Probability .01); composite achievement-- t of 3.55 (probability .01); grade point average-- t of 4.34 (probability .01).

As a result of this study the writer agrees with Wrightstone who concluded, after reviewing numerous studies: "in sum, the results of nonpromotion are shown to be not greater mastery of subject matter, but less; not greater homogeneity of mental ability in the grades, but greater diversity; not the building up of personality, but an undermining of it." (32:5).

The differences between the two groups on the bases of achievement measures are not surprising, since it would seem that the variation in achievement level should be even

TABLE VIII

SUMMARY OF DATA BETWEEN PROMOTED AND NONPROMOTED PUPILS ON
ACHIEVEMENT TESTS, GPA'S, TEACHER RATINGS
AND SELF-RATINGS

	Promoted		Nonpromoted		t	Probability
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
ITBS -- Language	6.96	.879	6.19	1.049	4.11	<.01
ITBS -- Arithmetic	6.76	.690	6.30	.643	3.99	<.01
ITBS -- Composite	6.66	.735	6.27	.746	3.55	<.01
Grade Point Average	2.01	.670	1.51	.685	4.34	<.01
Teacher Ratings	113.91	19.695	105.28	21.730	2.33	<.05
Self Ratings	4.6	7.55	2.3	6.12	1.93	<.10

greater after the elapse of several years following the experience of retention. For example, if two children are three years apart in level of achievement in school tasks at the end of the second grade, they should be ever further apart five years later, since the advanced child also moves at an accelerated rate. If this is the case nonpromotion does not reduce heterogeneity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Rates of retention between 1910 and 1940 declined from sixteen per cent to four per cent. It seems apparent that educators at least suspected that retention was not a sound solution to the problem of underachievement. During this period devices were initiated to replace it; semi-annual promotions, homogeneous grouping, and departmentalized instruction. The results of these turned out to be as disenchanting as the results of retention. During the past decade the national retention rate at the elementary level has risen to ten per cent. The voices of its most articulate critics are lost in the clamor to renew and support the grade standard theory which was first inaugurated more than a century ago. Because most failures occur at the primary level, it seems likely that the retention rates in these grades may now be running as high as fifteen to twenty per

cent in some schools. The writer found a school in her district with a first-grade retention rate of nearly sixteen percent.

Goodlad and Anderson suggest that universal automatic or social promotion will not guarantee either satisfactory pupil achievement or pupil adjustment. Their answer to meeting the needs of individual learners is: "By forgetting grades and grade standards, it is possible to provide educational habitats suited to the wide range of individuals who live in them" (12:40) Such a habitat can be provided in the ungraded classroom. Dispasquales, in his plea for the ungraded school, describes the psychological ill-effects of school failure on a child.

"His friends have left him behind. He has lost prestige. He is a year older in the same grade. Younger children are now in his class. Sometimes they know more and learn faster. He feels "dumb." He internalizes his difficulties daily, but there seems to be no escape. ...The specter of failure hovers continuously and the result is inevitable--on the surfact he develops a crust of indifference or hostility or a shell for withdrawal (4:130)."

There is little question among farsighted educators that the ungraded elementary school is the ultimate answer, and with this point of view the writer completely agrees. At the time of the Goodlad-Anderson study (1959), however, they found a total of only forty-four school districts - in twenty-three states - reporting nongraded programs in

operation. They observed, too, that even in the so-called nongraded school, nongrading is not firmly established; that, "... most existing nongraded schools are in considerable danger of regressing to graded structure." (12:215) Though the obstacles of tradition and habit make change in structure and organization difficult, they are not insurmountable. At best, however, the process will be a slow one. The question, therefore, is not what can be done ultimately, but rather what can be done in the interim.

It has been estimated that during the 1964-65 school year the school districts of the United States will, as a result of their nonpromotion practices, have expended approximately one-half billion dollars. It seems to the writer that there are alternatives which would be not only effective solutions to the problem, but which would accomplish the desired ends with certainly no more, and perhaps less, monetary expenditure.

Most school districts adhere rigidly to their own regulation regarding age of admission to first grade. It has been found that, in the typical educational system, children are ready to learn to read at age six. Because reading is the basis of most academic learning, age six has become the "regulatory" age of admission. The over-crowded condition in schools during the past decade has served to reduce

flexibility. Most parents are required to show proof of a child's age before he is admitted to school. Many bright four and five year olds have learned to read before coming to school; it is also true that many other children, bright or slow, may not be ready to learn to read until they are seven. Many school districts now employ, or have available to them, psychologists capable of carrying on a program of preschool testing. When a child is found to have a mental age of six years and with other growth factors being comparable, whether he is five, six, or seven, he is probably ready for first grade work. Until the primary unit (rather than grades 1, 2, 3) of the ungraded elementary school is generally accepted and permanently established as an educational practice, preschool testing may eliminate those failures which result from overplacement.

Because of the growing importance of the problem, the scope of the investigation should be expanded. This suggests that such an investigation would include a much larger sample and that it would, of necessity, make use of computers in the analysis of data. In a study such as this, ideally the research should be comparing the maturation of a non-promoted pupil with his maturation had he been promoted. Obviously since a pupil cannot be both failed and promoted at the same time the use of matching is introduced, as it

was in the study. It seems to the writer however, that even with the most careful matching a bias favoring the promoted pupil is automatically introduced; even though they are matched on ability, age, and sex, even on achievement and socio-economic status, as has been the case with other studies. There must be some factor, at least in the eyes of the teacher, which makes a difference. It is because of this factor that one of the pair is promoted while the other is failed. The writer can see only one way to avoid this bias. Select the total sample from all the potential repeaters in a particular grade (probably first or second). Divide them in two groups by pair-mating, then promote one group and fail the other.

The present study supports the conclusions of others regarding the relatively poor achievement records of non-promoted children. If there is any possibility that the graded system of school organization is interfering with the fulfilling of the child's basic need to feel worthy, accepted, and successful, it behooves educators to ask why--to investigate the effects of failure, criticism, and rejection that seem to be present in the graded system.

With the current and increasing emphasis on immaturity as a primary cause of school failure, a study limited to this question would be especially timely. If level of

maturity were the sole variable being considered, the matching variable of chronological age would not be used; pair-mates would, instead, be in the same grade. When drawing from a small population it is difficult if not impossible, to employ more than three variables in matching, therefore it is suggested that in place of chronological age, socio-economic level would be a pertinent factor. Because maturity is an elusive characteristic and difficult to measure, the writer suggests that until something better is devised, the scale constructed by Rogers from the Willoughby Scale of Emotional Maturity might be used as the measuring instrument. It is suggested, further, that judgment of responses be based on Rogers' description of maturity versus immaturity. According to Rogers, increased maturity in a person is reflected in attitudes and behavior, "which are less defensive, more socialized, more acceptant of reality in himself and in his social environment, and which give evidence of a more socialized system of values." (23:259)

The present study arose from the general experiences of six years' counseling with secondary school children. It arose, particularly, from observations of the "unsuccessful" child which led the writer to conclude, with Earl Kelly, that any experience which makes a child feel unable or unworthy is crippling. If a child is made to feel less than

he is, he will be able to do and become less than he might.

It is hoped that if this is read by educators who fear the growing tendency of our schools to divide and classify children as worthy and unworthy, this study will encourage those educators to look at the effects of non-promotion openly and courageously, and to respond appropriately. If there is a message in this study it is that there must be alternative ways of meeting individual needs, and that it is not reasonable to adhere dogmatically to practices which seem to be generally ineffectual.

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APPENDIX

Student's Name _____

Below is a list of behavior traits found in various degrees in children. Place a check in the most appropriate column after each trait to designate how consistently the trait occurs in your experience with this child. Please consider each trait separately.

<u>Behavior Trait</u>	<u>Frequency of Occurance</u>				
	almost always	frequently	occasion- ally	seldom	never
Shows intellectual alertness	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Is able to sustain a long attention span	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Thinks quickly but carefully	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Takes active interest in school work	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Is neat in personal appearance	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Behaves appropriately masculine or feminine	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Is courageous	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Is energetic and active	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

TEACHER-RATING SCALE

Respects authority	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Is courteous and accepting of others	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Is self-confident	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Readily adapts to new customs and methods	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Is even-tempered and self-controlled	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Is sympathetic and kind	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Is unsuspecting and trustful	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Does not worry without cause	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS: Below are 25 partly completed sentences. Read each one and finish it by writing the first thing that comes to your mind. Work as quickly as you can, but complete every item.

DO NOT WRITE IN
THIS SPACE

1. My hobbies are _____
2. I enjoy reading about _____
3. My favorite pastime is _____
4. On weekends I usually _____
5. My greatest weakness is _____
6. My favorite school subject(s) _____
7. I don't like people who _____
8. When the odds are against me _____
9. I dislike school subjects such as _____
10. The people I like best _____
11. I am at my best when _____
12. The best part about school is _____
13. My friends like to _____