

Summer 1972

## EVALUATION OF THREE SELF REPORT MEASURES IN THE EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF UNDERACHIEVERS

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EVALUATION OF THREE SELF REPORT MEASURES IN THE  
EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF UNDERACHIEVERS

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A Thesis

Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington State College

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

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by  
Jane Melville

August, 1972



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Three self report measures were employed to identify the underachievers among 51 third graders. Ability was assessed by the California Test of Mental Maturity. Achievement was measured by the Stanford Achievement Test and final GPA. Results were nonsignificant, but in the predicted direction. Self reports of students average or below in ability, SAT, or GPA were significantly lower, although most of these students were not defined as underachievers.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The underachieving child is causing increasing concern among educators. These are the children who fail to perform satisfactorily in their school work despite adequate sensory functioning and intellectual ability in the average to superior range. Such underachieving children appear even among those who attend well-equipped schools staffed with competent teachers.

The concern of educators is well founded. Gowan (1964) estimates that some 15 to 40 percent of today's students may be functioning far below their intellectual potential. Tolor's (1969) findings indicated underachievement in 26 percent of the students in an affluent suburban school, one with excellent teachers and facilities. It is estimated by Satir and Cardon (1969) that 3 percent of our most able children, approximately 75,000 of the top ability students, are high school dropouts each year. They further noted that potential dropouts may be identified by their chronic or acute low level of achievement.

The problem of underachievement is compounded because there is confusion and disagreement about what to do for the child

whose performance does not match his ability. Primarily, there is a lack of understanding about the cause of his behavior.

The traditional method of identifying the underachiever is the comparison of a student's grade and/or achievement scores with his estimated ability as assessed by nationally recognized and standardized tests. This post facto procedure only tends to confirm the teacher's subjective appraisal of intellectual functioning. It doesn't explain or indicate causes; it provides few remedial clues, much less any preventive ones. As Bateman (1964) has stated, the diagnosis and remediation of underachievement are but two parts of a single process. They cannot be thought of separately; an understanding of one initiates the other.

In attempting to understand this process, researchers are looking at the child as a functioning entity--socially, emotionally, and educationally. All these factors contribute to the total personality, behavior, and performance of each individual student.

The child's social-emotional development begins in the home. Using the Thematic Apperception Test, Morrison (1969) found strong indications that behaviors associated with the onset of underachievement in elementary children can be traced to unsatisfactory relationships in the home.

Gnagey (1969) relates the stories of underachievers Billy and Mark. Though Billy's scores place him within the normal range of

intelligence, he is repeating the fourth grade and is still the "dumbest kid in class." In class and on the playground he is defiant and aggressive. His high-strung mother alternately ignores and harshly punishes him, erratically providing good meals and clean clothes. There is neither time nor place for homework, and no approval for his small accomplishments, at home or school. Billy copes by "tuning out" his mother's conflicting demands. He also "tunes out" much of what goes on in the classroom.

On the other hand, Mark has a high level of intelligence and is the son of a successful business man. At home he is over-protected and over-indulged; at school he is inattentive and unresponsive. As a result of his parents doing so many things for him, he feels inadequate and unable to succeed at anything. His poor grades and the frequency with which his parents point out his faults serve to reinforce this attitude.

In counseling sessions with high school underachievers and their parents, Gurman (1970) found these students perceived their parents as contradictory. Some demanded adult level responsibility from their children while denying them the right of self determination on matters of importance to the child. Others allowed much individual freedom but little parental guidance in the constructive use of this freedom. The one attitude was interpreted by the students as lack of



trust in them and their abilities; the other was construed as rejection or indifference.

The privations of homes in the lower socioeconomic levels also contributes to underachievement. The material elements of early learning--the books, magazines, paper, pencils, crayons, trips, and other stimulating, enriching experiences--often are lacking. The parents themselves may have had little schooling and see scant value in a high school diploma, let alone college training. Children from such a background may be as eager to learn and as enthusiastic about school as the middle class child, but enter school with the handicap of little intellectual stimulation in their background.

The relationship during these early formative years are of major importance for through them the child has been acquiring an image of and feelings about himself as a separate person. Through his interactions with others, predominately parents, siblings, and peers, he begins to see himself as approved or disapproved, acceptable or unacceptable, capable or incapable, which determines the degree of positive or negative self image he has.

The child may appear to be functioning optimally within the familiar environs of home and playmates. However, Baker and Madell (1972) reported that behavioral inadequacies which are usually not operative or deterministic of behavior may become so under stressful conditions. Thus, the child may be somewhat deficient in social skills,

handicapped by environmental limitations, or lack adequate adaptive behaviors or emotional control which will permit him to cope successfully with the stress of being thrust among strangers in the regimented competition of the classroom.

Holt (1964) places most if not all the blame for poor achievement on the school system itself. Holt describes the average five- or six-year-old as an eager, curious, competent learner before he enters school. It is the pressure to conform and compete found in most schools that dull his curiosity and initiative. Among other things, he learns to be afraid of not having the right answers. He discovers that pleasing others, especially the teacher, is more important than finding out about the world. He learns to fake, bluff, and "sling the bull" to "con" the teacher into thinking he knows what he does not know or into doing for him what he cannot do for himself.

Attwell (1968) cites ability grouping as a factor because it may increase feelings of superiority and inferiority to the detriment of the low achiever. He also scores "loquacious" teachers and parents who are always lecturing, advising, and reminding the child to do his work. This contributes to the lack of initiative which he and others (Symonds, 1949; Passow & Goldberg, 1968) feel is one characteristic of the underachiever's behavior.

Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968) investigated the effects of teacher expectations upon student achievement. These expectations



of achievement were in the form of belief in the child's ability to increase his academic performance, a positive attitude that, in fact, the child was going to spurt or "bloom." Subsequent studies such as the one by Meichenbaum, Bowers, and Ross (1969) tend to confirm that expectations of high performance do increase actual accomplishment both by that student and by the class as a whole. They also spell out clearly the effects of teacher neglect on the child from whom little is anticipated; he, as a result, produces even less efficiently.

School systems in general place a high value on academic achievement. Children are expected to compete, to aspire towards top grades, high achievement test scores, and the honor roll. Often only those students with high ability and high achievement perceive their teachers' attitudes towards them as approving and accepting; the less adept children may feel ignored or even rejected (Davidson & Lang, 1960; Spivak, 1969; Glasser, 1969). Purkey (1970) finds evidence that the educational process in the typical school increases any negative feelings the child may hold about himself and his abilities. School becomes a place associated with boredom, fear, and failure. Lewis (1968) espouses a similar view.

To the child who comes to school with a negative self concept we can add those whose self esteem has been warped, not by earlier interactions, but by the school experience itself. With our insistence upon competition as a way of life, upon scholarly excellence as a measure of worth, and upon external rewards for achievement, we often entrap students into a feeling of worthlessness that

keeps them from achieving the very things we wish them to achieve [p. 175].

The differences between those who achieve and those who do not show up on personality tests as well as on academic measures. Research with the California Test of Personality, Elementary Form, by the team of Teigland, Winkler, Munger, and Kranzler (1966) revealed highly significant differences between achievers and underachievers, with the pattern of underachievement well established in the fourth grade subjects. Eight of the scales--Sense of Personal Worth, Feeling of Belonging, Freedom from Nervous Symptoms, Social Standards, School Relations, Community Relations, Sense of Personal Freedom, and Social Adjustment--differentiated between the groups at the .001 confidence level. The difference was also significant between the groups for Self Reliance, Freedom from Withdrawing Tendencies, Social Skills, Anti-Social Tendencies, and Family Relations. The under-achievers were rated as less well adjusted on all scales.

Bachtold (1969) found the identifying factors from the IPAT Children's Personality Questionnaire to be lack of credulity and self control in underachieving fifth grade girls and lack of emotional stability and sensitivity in the boys.

On the college level, Vaughan (1967) discovered that non-achievers scored significantly higher on the Ma (hypomania) and Pd (psychopathic deviate) scales of the MMPI. He interpreted this as

evidence of a trend toward over-activity, impulsivity, and lack of staying power.

The overall profile of the underachiever that emerges is that of a child who idles away his time, day dreaming or fiddling around. He attends neither to the teacher's instructions nor to the task at hand. He or she may be a behavior problem in class and on the playground, continually moving about, tormenting, distracting others, balking, bullying. Conversely, the child may be one of the "invisible" ones, shy, withdrawn, unnoticed. Sociograms would rarely show him chosen by many as friend or task-group member.

All these factors relate to the psychological development of the individual--the manner in which each becomes a unique personality. The results are impressive, but the tests themselves are unwieldy tools. They require skilled administration and interpretation. Even more important, they are not suitable for use with children of primary age to identify the potential low achievers. There are strong indications that it is in the first years of school that preventive or remedial procedures must begin.

Analysis of the cumulative academic records of eleventh and twelfth graders by Shaw and McCuen (1960) revealed lower GPA's for the underachievers in the first grade, with these differences becoming significant at the .01 level by the beginning of third grade. At the kindergarten level, Wattenberg and Clifford (1963) found ego strength

to be more predictive of second grade reading achievement than the mental ability test given at the same age.

The child's present self concept, developed out of past interactions, is an important variable in determining his performance in the classroom. Children are usually acutely aware of the differences between their own and others' performances. The traditional school further accentuates the difference by its system of reward and approval for achievement. Therefore, it becomes important to identify the potential or actual low achiever at the earliest possible moment since an individual's perceptions of and feelings about himself continue to develop out of his interactions with his environment.

While the child's self concept is open to change, the process is slow (Pietrofesa, 1968, 1970; Peters, 1968). It occurs as the child assesses himself in the light of his experiences and through his comparisons of himself with those around him. Even more important, the change can be in a positive or negative direction depending on these experiences and comparisons (Kelley, 1962). Since a person behaves in a manner compatible with his image of himself, his behavior may be best understood by knowing what his behavior means to him and how he feels about himself. If the first grader begins to believe himself to be incapable of learning, then his classroom performance will reflect this. "What he believes to be true, is true, insofar as determining his actions is concerned" [Ringness, 1968, p. 345].

Each successive failure serves to reinforce any negative feelings he may hold about himself, increasing his anxiety and defensiveness.

This in itself would be enough to lower his effectiveness as a student. According to Kaplan (1970), the child who feels capable and competent will be motivated by the discomfort of anxiety over possible failure. He will study for the test or work for the grade that brings approval. The child who has already experienced failure many times, who is unable to respond in a constructive way, will be overwhelmed. Hirsch and Costello (1970) reported almost identical results. They found that while fear of failure often stimulated the achievers to greater effort, it immobilized the underachievers, leading to continued failure.

Six years of research by Sarason and his associates (1960) emphasize the deleterious effects of anxiety and defensiveness on school performance. The individual's failure and his negative self image become a self perpetuating cycle. This grows increasingly critical each year. As his performance falls even lower, the child's concept of his capabilities and worth likewise plummets.

Numerous studies have established the relationship between low self esteem and lack of academic success. These span the entire educational years from the elementary level (Coopersmith, 1967; Hughes, 1968; Peper & Chansky, 1970) through high school (Shaw & Alves, 1963; Binder, 1965) and college (Thelan & Harris, 1969; Lum, 1960). Data reported by Bricklin and Bricklin (1967) indicated that 80



percent of those children not utilizing their potential fail to do so because of emotional tension, tension resulting from derogatory or conflicting feelings about themselves, their behavior, ability, performance, ad infinitum.

Two discoveries add to the critical nature of the problem.

First, although review of the cumulative records revealed that underachievement begins at the first grade level, the low achiever cannot be identified readily by grades or test scores this early. While the difference between achieving and underachieving boys was significant by third grade, the difference between the girls was not significant until the sixth grade (Shaw & McCuen, 1960). Other studies have borne this out, indicating that different measures may identify underachievement in males and females. Girls were more frequently identified earlier by the national tests results while grades differentiated between the boys (Pippert & Archer, 1963). The predisposition to or actual underachievement may be present in the earliest years of school but cannot be accurately diagnosed until the later years. By then the pattern of failure with its concomitant corrosive effect on self esteem has been well established.

Secondly, the difference between those who achieve commensurate with their ability and those who do not tends to increase every year. As these children fall further and further behind in intellectual skills, they come to feel increasingly less capable and worthwhile as

Ahammer and Schaie (1970) found indications that ego strength becomes increasingly accurate in predicting achievement by the sixth grade.

The professed aim of education has never been just good grades or high achievement test scores. The primary goal is to provide the child with the skills to become an integrated, fully functioning, productive individual. The child whose potential is hampered by negative feelings about himself, whether they are labeled poor self concept, low self esteem, or insufficient ego strength cannot become a fully functioning person (Maslow, 1962; Combs, 1964). Remediation is most effective in the early stages of any problem; early identification of the potential underachiever therefore becomes imperative.

Self reports and self ratings may provide the answer. Moustakas (1965) feels that the individual's evaluation of his feelings and attitudes is more valid than any outside diagnosis. Combs, Soper, and Courson (1963) feel that the self report of the child may not correspond with his self concept as measured by trained observers, but they agree that the children's self reports are reliable. They state that while the need to protect himself may interfere with completely accurate self perception, they accept children's self ratings as "honest, accurate statements of their attitudes [about themselves]" [p. 497]. These factors led the writer to attempt to develop a battery of self report measures for use in identifying the potential underachievers among primary children. Most often, only the children with above average

ability are compared, as the student who is average or below cannot vary as widely. Hopefully, as measures are refined, it will be possible to diagnose any negative self attitude that contributes to the individual's learning problems. For this reason, all children tested will be included in this survey.

### Focus of the Study

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a relationship between the child's feelings about himself as measured by the self report scales and academic achievement measures?
2. Will there be any significant differences in the self report scores of males and females?
3. Will there be significant differences in the self report scores of children classified as achievers (A) and underachievers (UA)?
4. Will some combination of the three self report measures used in this study prove to be a better predictor of underachievement than any one singly?
5. Will male underachievers be identified more frequently by GPA rather than achievement test scores? Will the reverse hold true for female underachievers?

### Definition of Terms

**Achiever: (A)** A student who has an achievement score (either Stanford Achievement Test or Grade Point Average) that is no more than two T score points below or that is higher than the T score on the ability measure (California Test of Mental Maturity) will be designated an achiever.



Underachiever (UA): A student who has an achievement rating on either SAT or GPA that is three T score points below their T score on the ability measure (CTMM) will be designated an underachiever for the purpose of this study.

Self Report Measure (SRM): Instruments used to assess the student's reported feelings about himself.

Combined Self Report Scores (CSR Scores): Mean score for all of the SRM scores combined.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

This study was designed to determine the relationship between measures of self report and academic achievement. Self report measures were administered and scores compared to ascertain the degree of their relationship to ability and achievement.

#### Subjects

The entire third grade of Cle Elum Elementary School, approximately 60 students in three classrooms, was tested. Permission for testing was obtained from the principal and cooperating teachers.

#### Description of the Tests

Ability was measured by the California Test of Mental Maturity (CTMM) which is

. . . an instrument for appraising mental development or mental capacity. It reveals information that is basic to any interpretation of present functioning and future potential in a relatively specific but critical area of human activities [Sullivan, Clark & Tiegs, 1957, p. 2].

For the purposes of this study, ability will be expressed in terms of the Intellectual Status Index (ISI), an adjusted score derived from the language and non-language subtests in relation to IQ and mental age as defined in the manual.

Achievement was appraised using the scores from the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) as expressed by the battery median (SAT-Mdn.), and by the final grade assigned by the teacher for the second semester. Scores on the SAT permit appraisal of the student's achievement in relation to a standardized national population, while the GPA will be more representative of the local school population.

Both the CTMM and the SAT are part of the regular school testing program and were administered by the teachers prior to students being given the three self report inventories. All five of the measures were given in the ninth month of the third grade.

The instruments employed to measure self esteem were chosen to meet the following criteria. (1) Previous use with and standardization norms for elementary children. (2) Statistically significant correlations had been obtained between these self concept measures and academic achievement. (3) The statements or words could be read orally without affecting their reliability. (4) The measures could be administered in a group rather than individually. (5) Administration, scoring, and interpretation would be relatively rapid and simple. (6) Each instrument would appear to measure a different aspect of the child's feelings about himself. (7) The format, administration, and language would be appropriate for use with even younger children.

The first self report measure (SRM-1) chosen was The Way I Feel About Myself, by Piers and Harris (1964). It had been

standardized on third, sixth, and tenth grade classes. Originally containing 95 statements, it was first standardized on 365 boys and girls. Item analysis identified 80 items that significantly discriminated between the high and low groups. Further study confirmed that there were no significant differences in scores between males and females.

The 80 declarative statements comprising the present scale can be answered "yes" or "no," and assess seven areas consisting of: status, behavior, anxiety, popularity, masculinity and femininity, appearance and prowess, and happiness and personal satisfaction. Each item is scored as high (indicating adequate self concept) or low (inadequate self concept). The authors suggested that the total number of high and low scores be recorded on the front, for a total of 80 points. This was done, but for the purposes of this study, only the high points were used as the pupil's score. Thus, the larger scores indicated higher reported self esteem.

The Children's Self Concept Scale (Lipsitt, 1958) was chosen for the second self report measure (SRM-2). It is a self rating scale containing 22 descriptive adjectives. Nineteen of the adjectives were rated positive and the remaining three negative. Although this instrument covers facets of the child's self concept similar to those in SRM-1, it is a differential scale. This allows the child to rank his answers by degree from "not at all" to "all the time," rather than "yes" or "no," as in the first measure. Scoring was on the basis of one point for the

first column to five points for the last column, with the exception of the three negative adjectives which were scores in inverse fashion. The possible range was from 20 to 110, with the higher score indicating more positive feelings about the self. This instrument was originally standardized on approximately 300 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders.

The third self report measure (SRM-3) was included on the basis of research by Jones and Grieneeks (1970) and Jones and Strowig (1968). Their results indicated that the student's concept of himself as a student "proved the most effective and consistent predictor, even better than the SAT" [Jones & Grieneeks, 1970, p. 203]. No specific information on their instrument was available. Fox, Luzski and Schmuck (1966) stated that "the way a pupil feels about his peers, his studies, and his teacher is one of the major factors determining how much he will benefit from this classroom experience" [p. 9]. Their instrument was designed to assess the climate of the classroom, and from it were chosen those items that pertained more specifically to the individual and the interpersonal relationships within the class. The authors referred to their measures as tools and suggested they be adapted to meet the needs of the user. A suggested variation of interest to this researcher concerned adaptation of their instruments for use with children as young as kindergarten age.

The three SRMs and instructions for their administration appear in Appendices A and B.

### Procedure

The SRMs were administered by the researcher to all the children in a classroom simultaneously. The instruments were given to each student to mark individually, with directions (see Appendix B) read aloud to ensure understanding and to facilitate the administration process. Instructions for marking their responses were given, and any words that might not have been understood were discussed prior to administration. The children had been given many tests. To reassure them, the researcher explained that on these tests, they would know all the right answers since they would be telling about themselves. The SRMs were numbered and color coded for each room to provide a feeling of anonymity and protection of confidence. Each question or word was read aloud, repeated if necessary, and time allowed for marking responses. Two 45 minute time periods were required for testing each room. SRM-1 was administered first; the remaining two measures were given a week later. At that time, appropriate directions (see Appendix B) were again read to the children prior to administration.



## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

The data were tabulated by the researcher and scores on all measures--ability, achievement, and SRMs--were converted to T scores to facilitate comparison. Multiple correlations were obtained by using the Fortran IV computer at the computer center at Central Washington State College. The data for all tests and inventories were punched and checked for accuracy by the researcher. Correlations were obtained for males and females separately as well as for the combined group.

Differentiation according to the stated criteria was made between achievers (A) and underachievers (UA) and the appropriate t test was used to determine significance. Scores again were compared separately for males and females, as well as for the groups.

Stability of the self report was determined by comparing scores on SRM-1 with the combined scores of SRM-2 and SRM-3, which were given one week later. In view of the differences between the measures themselves, the .618 correlation (Table 1) was accepted as indicative of reliable self reporting by the children as well as stability over time. Table 1 shows the correlations between the SRMs singly and in

combination for the entire sample. Outcomes of the research are reported in the same order as the questions directing the study.

TABLE 1  
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SRMs SINGLY AND IN COMBINATION  
FOR TOTAL GROUP, N = 51

SRM	1	2	3	CRS	1&2	1&3
2	.585					
3	.557	.705				
CRS	.834	.885	.869			
1&2	.893	.887	.708	.965		
1&3	.891	.729	.873	.964	.911	
2&3	.618	.927	.920	.950	.866	.866

Note: All correlations significant beyond .01

The relationship between feelings of esteem for one's self as assessed by the three self report inventories and the designated achievement criteria are shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4. For the total group (Table 2) the correlation between SAT, GPA, and all SRMs except one were significant at .01 or .05. SRM-3 (Concept of Self as Student) showed the highest relationship to the SAT as predicted, with the  $r = .37$  significant at .01. SRM-2 in combination with SRM-3 proved to be only a slightly better predictor of GPA ( $r = .38$ ) than SRM-3 or the CRS ( $r = .37$ ), also significant at .01.



TABLE 2

CORRELATION BETWEEN SRMs, SAT, & GPA  
TOTAL GROUP, N = 51

SRM	1	2	3	CRS	1&2	1&3	2&3
SAT	.15	.27*	.37**	.30*	.24*	.29*	.35**
GPA	.26*	.33**	.37**	.37**	.33**	.35**	.38**

TABLE 3

CORRELATION BETWEEN SRMs, SAT, & GPA  
BOYS, N = 17

SRM	1	2	3	CRS	1&2	1&3	2&3
SAT	-.27	.25	.49*	.19	.01	.12	.39*
GPA	-.08	.29	.47*	.27	.13	.23	.41*

TABLE 4

CORRELATION BETWEEN SRMs, SAT, & GPA  
GIRLS, N = 34

SRM	1	2	3	CRS	1&2	1&3	2&3
SAT	.32*	.27	.29	.34*	.33*	.34*	.30*
GPA	.31*	.28	.27	.34*	.33*	.33*	.30*

\* Level of significance = .05

\*\* Level of significance = .01

There appeared to be some difference in the self reports of males and females, as shown in Tables 2 and 3. SRM-1 and all combinations of SRMs were significantly related to the girls' SAT scores and GPA while negative though non-significant correlations were obtained for the boys. An inverse relationship between the boys' ability score and SRM-1 was noted with the  $r$  of  $-.51$  significant at  $.01$ . SRM-3 proved to be the best predictor of both SAT and GPA for the boys. SRM-2 by itself and in combination was unimpressive.

The primary purpose of this study was to ascertain any measurable differences in children's reported feelings about themselves that would discriminate between As and UAs. Using the criteria established, 32 students were classified as As and 19 as UAs. Mean scores for both groups on all measures are shown in Table 5. With the exception of the correlation between the SRMs and the ability score, all differences were in the predicted direction but did not reach significance.

TABLE 5

## COMPARISON OF MEAN T SCORES FOR As AND UAs

	Abil.	SAT	GPA	SRM-1	SRM-2	SRM-3	CSR
As (N = 32)	46.5	50.9	52.0	50.5	50.2	50.1	50.3
UAs (N=19)	52.7	49.9	48.9	48.2	49.1	48.2	48.7

The A and UA categories were further divided into male and female. The UA boys (Table 6) ranked significantly higher in ability and also had better scores on the SAT than the A boys, but earned a lower GPA. In comparing SRM scores, all the UA boys' scores were lower than the As' but not significantly so.

TABLE 6

## COMPARISON OF MEAN T SCORES FOR A AND UA BOYS

	Abil.	SAT	GPA	SRM-1	SRM-2	SRM-3	CSR
All (N = 17)	45.2	49.1	47.5	45.4	45.5	46.2	46.2
A Boys (N = 10)	41.9	47.4	48.8	46.5	45.7	47.7	46.3
UA Boys (N = 7)	49.8	51.7	45.9	43.7	45.1	45.2	46.1

The UA girls (Table 7) also displayed higher ability scores than A girls; however, both SAT and GPA were lower.

TABLE 7

## COMPARISON OF MEAN T SCORES FOR A AND UA GIRLS

	Abil.	SAT	GPA	SRM-1	SRM-2	SRM-3	CSR
All (N = 34)	50.6	51.2	52.2	51.8	51.3	53.8	51.3
A Girls (N = 22)	48.5	52.5	53.4	52.3	51.4	52.1	52.0
UA Girls (N = 12)	54.3	48.8	50.8	50.8	51.1	48.6	50.2

The SRM scores were indicative of lower self esteem among the UAs, but were not statistically different from chance.

Further study of the data revealed that of the 32 As, 9 had ability T scores below 40, indicating intellectual functioning at or below the sixteenth percentile. These ranged from T 28 to T 39, with comparable achievement scores. CSR scores were 43.2 for the five boys and 47.5 for the four girls, with a combined mean of 45.1. This was even lower than the CSR score mean for the UAs. There is the possibility that the inclusion of these low ability achievers obscured the differences in self report between the As and UAs.

Although all the SRM differences between the As and UAs were indicative of the UAs having lowered feelings of esteem for themselves, the lack of significance ruled out any one or any combination of them as predictors of underachievement.

The difference between achievement measures in identifying male and female UAs is shown in Table 8. More boys were identified on the basis of grades alone. UA girls displayed lower scores on both SAT and GPA, with only 2 of the 12 labeled UA on the basis of GPA.

The range of ability scores of the 19 UA students was from 47 to 63, with one exception, a boy whose T score was 33. The mean ability score, as shown in Table 5, was 52.7 for the combined group, 49.8 for the boys (Table 6) and 54.3 for the girls (Table 7). In all cases, the ability level of the underachievers was higher than the

achieving students. This difference has also been noted in other studies.

TABLE 8  
NUMBER OF UAs IDENTIFIED BY SAT, GPA, & BOTH

	SAT	GPA	Both
UA Boys (N = 7)	1	5	1
UA Girls (N = 12)	4	2	6

Discovery of the lower reported self esteem among the children with lowest ability led the researcher to compare the CRSs of students who were average and above in ability and achievement (50+ T score points) with those scoring average and below (49 T score points or less). The results are shown in Table 9. The CRS difference between both ability and SAT scores was significant at .005. GPA appeared to have a lower relationship to reported self esteem, but the differences were still pronounced with the probability of it being due to chance at .01.

TABLE 9

COMPARISON OF MEAN CSR SCORES BETWEEN  
LOW AVERAGE AND HIGH AVERAGE GROUPS

	Ability	SAT	GPA
High-Average Students	52.6**	51.6**	52.2**
N	25	26	25
Low-Average Students	46.8**	44.0**	46.8*
N	26	25	26

\* Level of significance = .01

\*\* Level of significance = .005



## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

The results of the present study have indicated a strong positive relationship between ability, achievement, and the child's reported feelings about himself and his abilities. All three SRMs correlated significantly with the SAT and GPA. Contrary to Piers and Harris's (1964) and Lipsitt's (1958) standardization data, however, a wide response difference between boys and girls was noted. This discrepancy suggests that different personality variables operate between the sexes to determine academic functioning. This compares with the findings of Bachtold (1969) and of Werner (1966) who reported that while the personality profile for UA boys resembled that of conduct problems and delinquents, the UA girls were more heedless and excitable than the As. The A girls in this study apparently had stronger positive feelings about their social relationships, personal worth and appearance, based on the higher relationship for girls between SRM-1 and achievement, than the boys. The A boys more often reported feeling successful as a student and having a positive relationship with the teacher as assessed by SRM-3. This is further supported by Jones' data; he reported that scholastic expectations and attitudes seemed

more important to A boys while A girls revealed a stronger identity development.

In spite of the relationship between achievement and self report, no significant relationship between the SRMs and under-achievement was apparent. Several factors may be functioning to obscure identification of the UA by self report measures.

1. The SRM differences between the As and UAs were all in the predicted direction except on the ability measure. This surprisingly showed the UAs to be higher in ability than the As. In view of the highly significant difference in reported self concept between children who were average and above in ability, SAT and GPA, and those who were below (Table 9), it is possible this factor is responsible for the nonsignificant difference.

2. All facets of the self concept may not have the same relationship to achievement. Of the seven areas assessed by SRM-1, for example, status and anxiety might be hypothesized as more important determinants of classroom performance than popularity. Coopersmith (1969) reported that popularity appeared to be more highly related to behavior and poise than to the individual's own judgment of his worthiness.

3. There may be different factors determining achievement for boys and girls. As previously discussed, the results revealed that SRM-1 was significantly correlated with the girls' ability and



achievement, while SRM-3 proved to be the highest predictor of achievement among the boys. Further research needs to be done to identify these variables.

4. The child in the average range of ability may be responding to the pressure of competition with those of superior ability. He may actually be an adequate achiever functioning at his ability level, but feels inadequate, unimportant, that he "doesn't quite measure up." His self report would tend to reflect this. Parents and teachers do not always react to a "C" as average, or to being "average" as an acceptable condition. Too often, the truly "average" child is the neglected one--neither brilliant enough to be frequently praised and recognized nor slow enough to warrant special attention and help.

5. The three SRMs were administered approximately a week after a long and rigorous testing period during which the children had taken both the CTMM and the SAT. It was also the end of the year and some final tests had been given with more to come. The children's anxiety level may have been higher and the need to protect themselves greater. Bosier (1972) reported that a student recently experiencing academic failure may try to retrieve his former level of self concept by increasing his defensiveness, denial, and rationalization. Cohen (1959) reported that children with low self esteem were more readily affected by negative, threatening information. Conversely, those with high self esteem were not strongly influenced by the negative, but

responded to optimistic positive communications. It could be inferred from this that the timing may have been poor. More significant and reliable self reports of the child's usual self concept might be obtained during a period of relatively low stress.

A significant point brought out by this research is the wide difference in reported self esteem between those children with average and higher ability, GPA, and SAT scores, and those who are average and below. It becomes even more significant when the distribution of As and UAs is compared. The majority of the UAs had ability and SAT scores that placed them with the average and above children, while the below average group were predominately As. In spite of the UAs lower mean CRS, the differences in reported self esteem between the groups was highly significant.

This could be an isolated statistic due to chance as no research appears to have been done dealing directly with this aspect. Most studies on underachievement, as mentioned previously, are concerned only with the children possessing average or above ability since their achievement can vary more widely. However, there are numerous studies exploring the influence of the school atmosphere on pupils' self perceptions that support this finding. Notable among research previously mentioned are reports by Davidson and Lange (1969), Attwell (1968), and Meichenbaum, Bowers, and Ross (1969). In yet another investigation, Purkey, Graves, and Zellner (1970) obtained

data indicating a gradual and continual increase in the positive self concept of third, fourth, fifth, and sixth graders in an innovative, team-teaching, non-graded school in comparison with those children in a traditional school. Not only did the self ratings of students in the new school increase, but a sizable decrease was recorded in the self reports of children in the traditional school. They made special note of the student-centered educational practices in the experimental school that they felt contributed to the students' more positive self concept.

Provisions were made for individual differences without attaching the stigma of failure and without placing a child outside his normal peer group. . . . Pupils were continually regrouped on the basis of individual differences as growth occurs and progress is made. . . . Children are permitted early to participate in setting their own learning goals. Teacher and child work together to establish new tasks in the learning process. . . . The school provides success experiences and maximum freedom for exploration for all children. . . . Academic failure and yearly detention have been eliminated [p. 167].

This humanistic approach stresses the development of positive self esteem in both pupils and teachers. It may also prove to be a most effective ameliorator in the problem of underachievement.

The relationship between success in school and high self esteem has been clearly established. The problem of identifying the precise operational factors remains. More critically, so do the children whose total functioning is being impaired. The results of this study suggest the following avenues for further exploration.

Any further research to be conducted should include factor analysis of the individual self report items as well as of the personality variables and self perceptions they purportedly measure to determine those that discriminate between UA and A.

Teacher ratings and peer ratings, which have been shown to have a high degree of relationship, could be used to supplement and verify the students' ratings of their self esteem. This could provide a validity check or "lie scale" for those students whose need to protect themselves is too great to allow accurate self perception or self report.

The differences in self esteem needs between boys and girls in relation to school achievement could be explored and identified. Research could establish the relevant variables in both self reports and observational assessment methods.

The situation is critical. Underachievement is not just a problem for the twelve or so years spent in public schools; the implications reach much further. The child who fails now to develop all his facilities and abilities is a potential underachieving adult.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

This study assessed the usefulness of three self report measures singly and in combination in identifying academic under-achievers. In spite of the significant correlations between the self report and achievement, no SRM or any combination of them proved to be a reliable predictor of underachievement. The following points were supported by this study.

1. Different personality variables appear to function for boys and girls in relation to underachievement. "A" boys hold higher opinions of themselves as students. "A" girls, while valuing themselves as students, also report themselves better adjusted socially and emotionally.
2. Underachieving boys tend to express lower self esteem than comparably underachieving girls.
3. Underachievers displayed a higher mean score on ability measures than the achievers.
4. Low ability achievers, e.g., those with ability and achievement scores below 40 T score points, report having a poorer self concept than underachieving students.



Suggestions for further research that emerged are:

1. Factor analysis of self report items in relation to the personality variables which they represented.
2. Use of teacher-peer ratings to verify the students' self ratings.
3. Analysis of the different self esteem variables between boys and girls that determine school achievement.
4. Comparison of students attending traditional schools with those enrolled in the newer nongraded, team teaching programs that emphasize individualized learning. Ability and achievement as well as self concept should be evaluated.



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## APPENDIX A

### SELF REPORT INVENTORIES



## APPENDIX A

## SELF REPORT INVENTORIES

## THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT MYSELF (SRM-1)

Here is a set of statements. Some of them are true of you and so you will circle the YES. Some are not true of you and so you will circle the NO. Answer every question even if some are hard to decide. There are no right or wrong answers. Only you can tell us how you feel about yourself, so we hope you will mark the way you really feel inside.

1. My classmates make fun of me	Yes No	13. It is usually my fault when something goes wrong	Yes No
2. I am a happy person	Yes No	14. I cause trouble to my family	Yes No
3. It is hard for me to make friends	Yes No	15. I am strong	Yes No
4. I am often sad	Yes No	16. I have good ideas	Yes No
5. I am smart	Yes No	17. I am an important member of my family	Yes No
6. I am shy	Yes No	18. I like being the way I am	Yes No
7. I get nervous when the teacher calls on me	Yes No	19. I am good at making things with my hands	Yes No
8. My looks bother me	Yes No	20. I give up easily	Yes No
9. When I grow up I will be an important person	Yes No	21. I am good in my schoolwork	Yes No
10. I get worried when we have tests in school	Yes No	22. I do many bad things	Yes No
11. I am unpopular	Yes No	23. I can draw well	Yes No
12. I am well behaved in school	Yes No	24. I am good in music	Yes No

25. I behave badly at home	Yes No	42. I often volunteer in school	Yes No
26. I am slow in finishing my schoolwork	Yes No	43. I have a pleasant face	Yes No
27. I am an important member of my class	Yes No	44. I sleep well at night	Yes No
28. I am nervous	Yes No	45. I hate school	Yes No
29. I have pretty eyes	Yes No	46. I am among the last to be chosen for games	Yes No
30. I can give a good report in front of the class	Yes No	47. I am sick a lot	Yes No
31. In school I am a dreamer	Yes No	48. I am often mean to other people	Yes No
32. I pick on my brother(s) and sister(s)	Yes No	49. My classmates in school think I have good ideas	Yes No
33. My friends like my ideas	Yes No	50. I am unhappy	Yes No
34. I often get into trouble	Yes No	51. I have many friends	Yes No
35. I am disobedient at home	Yes No	52. I am cheerful	Yes No
36. I am unlucky	Yes No	53. I am dumb about most things	Yes No
37. I worry a lot	Yes No	54. I am good looking	Yes No
38. My parents expect too much of me	Yes No	55. I have lots of pep	Yes No
39. I usually want my own way	Yes No	56. I get into a lot of fights	Yes No
40. I feel left out of things	Yes No	57. I am popular with boys	Yes No
41. I have nice hair	Yes No	58. People pick on me	Yes No
		59. My family is dis- appointed in me	Yes No
		60. I wish I were different	Yes No

61. When I try to make something, everything seems to go wrong	Yes No	71. I would rather work alone than with a group	Yes No
62. I am picked on at home	Yes No	72. I dislike my brother (sister)	Yes No
63. I am a leader in games and sports	Yes No	73. I have a bad figure	Yes No
64. I am clumsy	Yes No	74. I am often afraid	Yes No
65. In games and sports I watch instead of play	Yes No	75. I am always dropping or breaking things	Yes No
66. I forget what I learn	Yes No	76. I cry easily	Yes No
67. I am easy to get along with	Yes No	77. I am different from other people	Yes No
68. I lose my temper easily	Yes No	78. I think bad thoughts	Yes No
69. I am popular with girls	Yes No	79. I can be trusted	Yes No
70. I am a good reader	Yes No	80. I am a good person	Yes No

APPENDIX A

SELF REPORT INVENTORIES

THE CHILDREN'S SELF CONCEPT SCALE (SRM-2)

	not at all	not very often	some of the time	most of the time	all of the time
1. Friendly					
2. Happy					
3. Kind					
4. Brave					
5. Honest					
6. Likable					
7. Trusted					
8. Good					
9. Proud					
10. Lazy					
11. Loyal					
12. Cooperative					
13. Cheerful					
14. Thoughtful					
15. Popular					
16. Courteous					
17. Jealous					
18. Obedient					
19. Polite					
20. Bashful					
21. Clean					
22. Helpful					

## APPENDIX A

## SELF REPORT INVENTORIES

## CONCEPT OF SELF AS STUDENT (SRM-3)

YOUR NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ TEACHER'S NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ BOY GIRL

1. When I'm in school, I
  - a. usually feel wide awake and very interested.
  - b. am pretty interested, a little bored part of the time.
  - c. am not very interested, bored a lot of the time.
  - d. don't like it, feel bored and left out.
2. How hard are you working on learning what is taught?
  - a. Very hard.
  - b. Quite hard.
  - c. Not very hard.
  - d. Not really working on learning.
3. Compared with the others in the class, how hard are you working in schoolwork?
  - a. Harder than most.
  - b. A little harder than most.
  - c. A little less than most.
  - d. Quite a bit less than most.
4. Compared with the work of others, my schoolwork is
  - a. Much better than most.
  - b. A little better than most.
  - c. Not quite as good as most.
  - d. Much worse than most.
5. Being in this class with this teacher has
  - a. Mostly good things.
  - b. More good things than bad.
  - c. More bad things than good.
  - d. Mostly bad things.

6. In this class, how often do the pupils act friendly toward one another?
- a. Always.
  - b. Most of the time.
  - c. Sometimes.
  - d. Hardly ever.
7. I think my teacher likes me
- a. Very much.
  - b. Quite a bit.
  - c. I'm not sure she likes me.
  - d. She doesn't like me.
8. In this class, how often do other pupils act friendly toward you?
- a. All the time.
  - b. Most of the time.
  - c. Sometimes.
  - d. Hardly ever.



## APPENDIX B

### DIRECTIONS TO SUBJECTS

## APPENDIX B

## DIRECTIONS TO SUBJECTS

Directions for introducing and administering The Way I See Myself.

I am Jane Melville. Your teacher said you would help me with a study I am doing at the college in Ellensburg about boys and girls. You have taken a lot of tests lately, haven't you? (Pause) How would you like to take a test in which you would know all the answers? (Pause) This is just that kind of test because it wants to find out how you feel about yourself! And you are the only one who knows just how you feel. You are the only one who knows all the right answers for you. It doesn't matter what anyone else puts down if that is right for him. Nobody will answer all the sentences the same way, because we are all different. Just put down the way you honestly feel about these statements most of the time.

These tests have no effects on your grade here at school. No one will know your scores, not even me. Do you see this little piece of paper on the front? That is the only thing that will have your name on it, and when all the scores are written on it, I will cut the name off all the slips. All I will use in my study are the scores from all the tests added together. (Pass out tests.)

So that we can stay together and not have to talk to others to ask about a word you don't understand, I will read each question out

loud twice. You are to circle either the Yes or No for each statement. (SHOW TEST) Sometimes it will be hard for you to decide which way to answer. That is because we don't always feel the same way. Think about how you usually feel. It is very important that you put down the way you really, honestly feel most of the time. Do not skip any of the statements.

Let's go over some of the words as they may be new to you. Do you know what disobedient means? Tell me--Who knows what unpopular means? ----- Are there any other questions? Is there anyone who does not have a pencil? If you break your pencil, raise your hand; I will bring you another. Is there anyone who is not sure what to do?

Now, please put your name on this little piece of paper on the front. (Pause--observe.) Please tear it off like this (show) and hand it up to the front. Are you all ready? (Begin with first statement.)

## APPENDIX B

## DIRECTIONS TO SUBJECTS

Directions for introducing and administering the Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Concept of Self As Student.

Here are some different tests with your name tag on them. Be sure you get the test with your name. Now, please put either B for boy or G for girl up in the corner--like this. You can also put a circle around the right one on your test sheet, like this (demonstrate).

Please do not tear your name off this little slip as I must check to be sure I have three tests for all of you. Now, will you again tear off the slips and hand them in.

These tests are like the others; they tell about you so you know all the right answers. On this first test, I will read the stem--do you know what "stem" means? It is this part of a sentence after the number (show), like this. After I read the stem, I will read all the completing lines, those lettered a-b-c-d. After I read them all, you decide on your answer. If you feel better hiding your answers, you may do that. Do you all understand? First I read the stem and all the completions, then you mark your answers. Ready?

This next one is called an adjective check list. Do you see these columns? At the top of each one are some words (read them aloud). Down the side are the adjectives. Adjectives describe things, like

friendly, happy, kind. Now for every adjective, we will put the words I AM in front of it, this way--I am friendly. Then we will look at the columns, and read across until we find the one that tells how we feel, about ourselves. So, we will read "I am Friendly--not at all, not very often, some of the time, most of the time, all of the time." (Point to columns as reading.) You decide which one fits you best of all and put your check mark in the one that is right for you. Is anyone not quite sure what to do yet? Are you all ready? (Pause for questions if in doubt.)

## APPENDIX C

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING AND SCORING

### SELF-CONCEPT SCALES



## APPENDIX C

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING AND SCORING  
SELF-CONCEPT SCALES

## Grades III-XII

## THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT MYSELF

1. Before distributing the scale, the examiner should talk to the students about the value of finding 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. Particularly for research purposes, the obtaining of norms should be stressed, rather than individual scores. It should also be stressed that the scale will have nothing to do with their school grades, and will be kept confidential. At this stage in the development of the scale, it is not recommended that they be used by teachers for screening purposes.
2. Because of difficulties in reading, instructions and items should always be read aloud by the examiner in Grades III and IV. It has been found desirable to read them aloud even with Grades V and VI, since this keeps the group together and too busy to share opinions. From Grade VII on, only instructions need be read.
3. Items should be read clearly twice without haste, but not so slowly that second thoughts or distractions will occur. After a few items, the examiner can usually determine the optimal pace for that class. A few moments can be given at the end for the slower members to finish. Although there is no time limit, 20 minutes is usually ample.
4. Students should be told that they must circle either the Yes or the No for all items. There should be no omissions and no double circles, even when some items are hard to decide. It has been found helpful to have an additional proctor go up and down the aisles making sure all children are marking the items correctly, and keeping up with the examiner.
5. One or two words in the scale are difficult for younger groups and may be explained. "Disobedient" is one of these, "unpopular" another. It is also permissible to answer one or two other questions at the beginning, particularly with reference to the all-or-none quality of the items. It should be explained that everyone feels differently at different times, but that they should mark the item the way they generally feel.  
Additional questions are usually unnecessary and should be discouraged. Otherwise the "worrier" or the class clown will constantly question.

## METHODS OF SCORING

The Way I Feel About Myself was scored according to the

following instructions:

Items are scored in the direction of high (adequate) self-concept. It is suggested that the total number of "highs" be added and written on the front of the scale, and then the number of "lows" be added and written below it. These should sum to 80.

1. No	21. Yes	41. Yes	61. No
2. Yes	22. No	42. Yes	62. No
3. No	23. Yes	43. Yes	63. Yes
4. No	24. Yes	44. Yes	64. No
5. Yes	25. No	45. No	65. No
6. No	26. No	46. No	66. No
7. No	27. Yes	47. No	67. Yes
8. No	28. No	48. No	68. No
9. Yes	29. Yes	49. Yes	69. Yes
10. No	30. Yes	50. No	70. Yes
11. No	31. No	51. Yes	71. No
12. Yes	32. No	52. Yes	72. No
13. No	33. Yes	53. No	73. No
14. No	34. No	54. Yes	74. No
15. Yes	35. No	55. Yes	75. No
16. Yes	36. No	56. No	76. No
17. Yes	37. No	57. Yes	77. No
18. Yes	38. No	58. No	78. No
19. Yes	39. No	59. No	79. Yes
20. No	40. No	60. No	80. Yes

The Children's Self-Concept Scale is made up of 22 trait-descriptive adjectives. Nineteen of these are positive and 3 are negative. Scoring was on a basis of 1 point for the first column, 2 points for the second column, and so forth to 5 points for the last column, except in the case of the 3 negative adjectives which were scored in inverse fashion.