

COUNSELING TOWARD THE IMPROVED SELF CONCEPTS  
OF UNDERACHIEVERS

by 6791

MARY ELIZABETH BLAKESLEE

B. S., Kansas State University, 1967

---

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1971

Approved by:

  
Major Professor

LD  
2668  
R4  
1971  
E59  
C.2

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The help and encouragement given by Dr. Herbert E. Kaiser, Dr. John W. DeMand, and Dr. Richard E. Owens is gratefully acknowledged.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. ORIENTATION TO THE PROBLEM .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	1
Clarification of Terms .....	2
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	4
The Presence of Underachievement in the Elementary School .....	4
The Development of the Self Concept .....	4
Concomitants of Underachievement .....	5
Home Environment .....	6
Peer Relationships .....	8
Attitudes toward School .....	9
The Self Concept and Underachievement .....	12
General Agreement .....	12
General Disagreement .....	17
Ideal Self Concept and Actual Self Concept .....	18
Perceived Peer Acceptance .....	19
Perceptions Related to School .....	20
Perception of Parental Acceptance .....	22
Effects of Counseling in the Elementary School.....	22

Chapter	Page
3. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	37
Self Concept and Underachievement .....	37
Ideal Self Concept and Actual Self Concept .....	37
Perceived Peer Acceptance .....	37
Perceptions Related to School .....	38
Perception of Parental Acceptance .....	38
Effects of Counseling on Academic Achievement .....	38
Recommendations .....	38
A Proposed Study .....	39
Implications for Teachers .....	40
REFERENCES .....	42

## Chapter 1

### ORIENTATION TO THE PROBLEM

An ever present problem in education is the student who is not succeeding as well academically as thought possible. Numerous studies have been conducted in an attempt to identify the underachiever, to identify the characteristics of the underachiever, and to change his behavior.

Much of the literature concerning the underachiever has dealt with secondary and college students. As a result, the majority of studies concerning the self concept and the concomitants of underachievement were conducted at the college and high school levels. It would seem necessary to identify such children earlier at the elementary school level so that, as a result of changing their behavior, such children could gain the maximum benefit from their education. The studies investigating the effects of counseling were conducted at the elementary school level.

Shaw and McCuen (1960), Maher (1969), and Downs (1967) stressed the importance of early identification of underachievers. They saw early recognition and attention as the key to the solution of the individual's difficulties.

#### Statement of the Problem

It is the purpose of this study to investigate whether or not the self concept of the individual child is a definite factor

in underachievement and if counseling toward the improvement of the self concept results in improved academic achievement. In an attempt to answer these questions, a review of literature dealing with scholastic underachievement and the self concept is presented.

### Clarification of Terms

Certain terms should be defined. One such term is self concept. Fine (1967:51) defined self concept as "the person one thinks himself to be, basing his view on his attitudes toward his own personality, body, character, role in life, capabilities, potentialities and opportunities." Fink (1962) saw the self concept as being the "attitudes and feelings that a person has regarding himself." The above definitions are in agreement as to the meaning of the individual's self concept.

The term self-ideal was defined by English and English (1958: 248) as "a standard of behavior for oneself; a personal condition toward which one strives." In the same source (1958:433) a Q sort was defined as:

a personality inventory in which the subject (or someone making judgments about him) sorts a considerable number of statements into piles that represent the degrees to which the statements apply to him. Each statement thus gets a score indicating relative strength within the individual of the quality or trait it represents.

Another term which is ambiguous is underachievement. Gowan (1955) defined underachievement as "performance which places the

individual thirty percentiles or more below his ability standing in the same group." According to Kowitz and Armstrong (1961), the under-achiever is one who is "not working hard enough to achieve the limits allowed by his abilities." Trotta, Rouff, and Daniels (1967) stated that the underachiever is "one who does not function at a level in keeping with his potential." The definitions of Kowitz and Armstrong (1961) and Trotta, Rouff, and Daniels (1967) are in agreement with the accepted definition by English and English (1958:570). They defined underachievement as "performance poorer than predicted from an aptitude measurement."

Individual counseling was defined as a one-to-one relationship with the counselor helping the counselee to understand himself, his problems, and helping him find new ways of dealing with his problems.

Group counseling was defined as a process in which the counselor works with a group of students helping them to discuss their problems, to better understand themselves and their behavior, and to discover new ways of approaching such difficulties. The number of students is usually limited to 5-12 persons.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following studies deal with the development of the self concept and some major concomitants of underachievement. Studies dealing with the self concepts of underachievers are also presented.

#### The Presence of Underachievement in the Elementary School

Teigland and others (1966) suggested that concomitants of underachievement found at the high school and college levels are also found in underachievers in the elementary school. They suggested that a pattern is fairly well established by the fourth grade and tends to continue as the child goes through school.

Gowan and Demos (1965:102-103) concluded that underachievement is present in children at the elementary school level. Their results indicated that male underachievers tended to receive lower grades than male achievers beginning in first grade and that this trend continued and increased in significance.

#### The Development of the Self Concept

Wilson (1957) proposed that a child's concept of himself as "lovable, worthy, capable of success, and secure in adult respect" is a result of the attitudes of people with whom he closely interacts. The findings of a study by Videbeck (1960) supported the view that self

concept is learned and that the "evaluative reactions of others play a significant part in the learning process."

Maeher, Mensing, and Nafzger (1962) were in agreement with the above. They found that both approving and disapproving reactions on the part of others who are important to the person are followed by increases and decreases in that person's own self evaluation.

Miyamoto and Dornbusch (1956) found that the responses of others influence the self concept. They also indicated that the way the person interprets such a response is even more closely related. Brookover (1959) expressed the belief that persons learn to behave by internalizing the expectations of others who are important to them.

Koppitz (1957) indicated that if a child learns to accept himself as "worthy of love and consideration because others treat him with affection and respect," then he in turn will feel love for others. The converse is also true. If he learns to think of himself as being inferior or unworthy of love, he will "tend to feel hostile toward others." Her findings suggested that personalities and attitudes of parents have significant effects on the self concept.

#### Concomitants of Underachievement

The preceding research dealt with the development of the self concept as it is related to the perceived interactions with persons important to the child. The following studies investigate the influence of home environment, peer relationships, and school experiences as they relate to underachievement.

### Home Environment

Barrett (1957) found that parents of high school underachievers tended to show a neutral or uninterested attitude toward education. They tended to be overanxious, or inconsistent in their attitudes toward the child. Generally, such homes tended to show evidence of conflict, authoritarianism by the parents, or domination by the child.

Rosen and D'Antrade (1959) conducted a study in northeastern Connecticut, working with forty family groups consisting of a father, mother, and son. The boys ranged from age nine to eleven, and were matched in age, race, IQ, and social class. Half the boys were under-achievers and half were high achievers. They found that parents of the high achievers generally showed more involvement, enjoyed problem-solving activities more, were more interested and concerned, reacted with more warmth and approval, were somewhat competitive, and had higher standards. Mothers of the high achievers were also quicker to show disapproval. They set higher standards and expected higher achievement.

They suggested that when the boy began his tasks, the parents encouraged him to succeed. The warmth, approval, assistance, and concern led to confidence and improvement on his part.

Morrow and Wilson (1961) agreed by stating that parents of achievers fostered positive attitudes toward school. They concluded that a supportive family atmosphere promoted academic achievement. Kurtz and Swenson (1951) concurred that a favorable home environment was related to achievement. They found that the home environment of secondary school achievers tended to be psychologically more favorable.

Such parents showed more interest, affection, and pride in their children. They found evidence which suggested that parents of under-achieving children might be more distant in their relationships with their children.

d'Heurle, Mellinger, and Haggard (1959) found both parental over-protectiveness and pressure for achievement to be positively associated with high achievement. Drews and Teahan (1957) attempted to determine the attitudes of mothers of both high and low achievers in the junior high school. They found mothers of high achievers tended to be more authoritarian and restrictive. They also seemed to have more punitive attitudes toward child rearing.

Passow and Goldberg (1958) discussed two characteristics which separated the family of the male achiever from the family of the male underachiever at the high school level. Fathers of achievers were employed in higher occupational groups while more mothers of under-achievers worked outside the home. Frankel (1960) found that fathers of the achievers were in top occupational groups and had more formal education than did their wives. More of the mothers of underachievers were working and they had at least as much schooling as their husbands. Families of achievers rated higher on a socio-economic scale.

Passow and Goldberg (1958) also indicated that disruptions of the normal family pattern due to the absence of the father by death or divorce was much more frequent among underachievers. Dale and Griffith (1965:54) too concluded that the nature of the home was the

decisive force in shaping the attitude of the child. In a few instances, the child was emotionally disturbed by some facet of home life which could not be changed.

In a study by Karnes and others (1961) the Parental Attitudes Research Instrument and a structured parental interview were used by a social worker to measure the attitudes of parents toward their children. The sample consisted of forty-one overachievers and forty-one underachievers in grades 2, 3, 4, and 5 who gave indications of being of better than average intelligence on the California Test of Mental Maturity, California Achievement Tests, teacher ratings, and the Binet vocabulary scale. *Parents of overachieving gifted children* were found to be less hostile and less authoritarian than parents of underachieving gifted students, but the difference was not significant. Parents of overachieving students tended to be more accepting toward their children. The influence of parental attitudes on school achievement was not clearly indicated by the results of this study. Although the attitudes of parents of overachieving students tended to be more favorable, consistent differences were found in only one of eleven areas investigated. This area was their satisfaction with the pupil's present school adjustment. From this study, they concluded that parents of elementary school underachievers and overachievers were not different in their attitudes toward their children.

#### Peer Relationships

A number of investigators have focused on the type of peer relations of achievers and underachievers. Barrett (1957) found that

high school underachievers win less acceptance from their peers. Kurtz and Swenson (1951) also found that achievers and overachievers had a greater number of positive peer relations than did underachievers.

Muma (1965) confirmed the hypothesis that students who are highly accepted by their peers are more successful academically than those who are not. Those who are highly rejected by their peers are less successful. Because the neglect group in this study was not significantly different from the control group, the hypothesis that neglected students are less successful academically than other students was rejected.

With a college population, Morgan (1952) found that awareness of and concern for others was positively related to achievement. Woodward (1968) expressed the belief that the underachiever tries to hide his anxiety by pretending to be carefree and happy. He is attracted to students who will accept him as a part of their group as he is.

#### Attitudes toward School

Lum (1960) selected female students on the basis of intelligence and grade-point average. She matched group means on the American Counsel on Education Psychological Examination with chronological age. Then she administered the Brown-Holtzman Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes and some of the Dole Vocational Sentence Completion tests. Her results indicated overachievers to possess stronger study motivation, more self-confidence, and greater capacity to work under pressure.

Underachievers showed a tendency to procrastinate and to rely on external pressures. She found no difference in declared study habits.

Morgan (1962) found high achievers at the college level to show maturity and seriousness, a sense of responsibility, self-confidence, awareness of and concern for others, dominance, and the motivation to achieve. Using an adjective check list with high school students, Shaw, Edson, and Bell (1960) found that achievers saw themselves as being stable, realistic, optimistic, enthusiastic, reliable, clear thinking, and intelligent. Male underachievers tended to see themselves as being immodest, reckless, relaxed, mischievous, argumentative, and restless.

Barrett (1957) found that underachievers showed a predominantly negative attitude toward school. While both achievers and underachievers showed feelings of inadequacy, achievers were more aware of their difficulties and were constructive in their efforts. Underachievers tended to withdraw and refuse to compete. Grossman (1969) used the Special Incomplete Sentences Blank to allow students to express their feelings regarding issues of concern to them. This blank was developed especially for this reason. Grossman indicated high achievers saw school as being less burdensome, had a higher self value, and were less rebellious toward authority. Their activity patterns tended to center around school. High achievers also tended to possess better academic skills and positive attitudes toward learning.

Frankel (1960) compared achieving and underachieving high school boys of high intellectual ability. Fifty pairs of seniors were matched

for this study. The following instruments were used to gather data: Differential Aptitude Tests, Kuder Vocational Preference Record, Mooney Problem Check List, school record, a student questionnaire of thirty-nine items prepared by the investigator, and the Hamburger Scale for rating socio-economic class.

Frankel indicated underachievers tended to show negative attitudes toward school in terms of poorer attendance, more disciplinary offenses, and less participation in extra-curricular activities. He found that underachievers generally tended to be less conforming and less happy at school.

The interest patterns of the group were quite different. Achievers showed greater interest in mathematics and science while underachievers were more interested in the mechanical and artistic areas.

The Mooney Problem Check List used in this same study revealed underachievers to be mainly concerned about their current scholastic difficulties. Achievers were primarily concerned with the future, such as the choice of a college or profession. Hummel and Sprinthall (1965) indicated the underachiever to be less planful and thoughtful in his approach to life. He tended to be fatalistic in his expectations concerning the outcomes of his effort. He was likely to prize the immediate and practical effects of work, and was less likely to relate his behavior to long-range goals.

Passow and Goldberg (1958) found a difference concerning grade expectations. Low achievers expected to pass, but did not anticipate

high grades. Using taped interviews, they concluded that underachievers recognized that they were capable of outstanding academic achievement, but showed strong resistance against making the effort. Borislow (1962) suggested that the underachiever has a poor conception of his scholastic performance.

A study of the adjustment of underachievers in the ninth and eleventh grades was conducted by Armstrong (1955). He found that underachievers were more influenced by the desires of others than they were by their own. Underachievers were regarded by their teachers as being uncooperative, undependable, and poor in judgment.

### The Self Concept and Underachievement

#### General Agreement

Taylor (1964) supported the belief that academic achievement is affected by the value a student places upon his own worth. Barrett (1957) too concluded that underachievers tend to lack a "feeling of worth as an individual."

Caplin (1969) investigated the relationship between the self concept and academic achievement using a sample group of 180 intermediate grade children from three elementary schools. The instrument used to measure self concept was developed at the Horace-Mann-Lincoln Institute of School Experimentation, Teachers College, Columbia University. It included fifty items designed to present clear examples of self-concept definitions.

Correlations between the scores on the self-concept instrument and the standard composite scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills were calculated. It was found that children having positive self concepts demonstrated higher academic achievement.

Caplin could not conclude from such findings that academic achievement was determined by the self concept. A cause-effect relationship was not determined, but Caplin felt that this at least gave educators and psychologists the right to look for such a relationship.

The subjects of a study by Shaw and Alves (1963) were eleventh and twelfth grade students in a high school of 1,600 who had an IQ of 110 or above as measured by the California Test of Mental Maturity. An achiever was described as being a student having a grade-point average in high school of 3.0 (B) or above. Underachievers had grade-points of 2.5 or below. Seventy-eight students were included in the final sample. The instrument used to determine self concept was the Bills Index of Adjustment and Values. Shaw and Alves indicated that male achievers reported more negative self concepts than did achievers and were less self-accepting. Results for females were not so significant.

Fink (1962) selected subjects from the freshman class of a rural high school. The grade-point average was determined for each freshman falling within the 90-110 IQ range on the California Test of Mental Maturity. The median grade-point was computed. Those whose grade-point averages were above this median were designated achievers and those whose grade-point averages fell below the median were

designated underachievers. The resulting sample consisted of twenty matched pairs of boys and twenty-four matched pairs of girls. Self concept was measured for each student using the following devices: California Psychological Inventory, Bender Visual Motor Gestalt Test, Draw-A-Person Test, Gough Adjective Check List (as completed by the student), Gough Adjective Check List (as completed by teachers), personal data sheet, and a brief essay describing "What I will be in 20 years."

Data were given to three judges. Two of the judges were school psychologists and the third was a clinical psychologist working with children. No attempt was made to define an adequate self concept. The judges were asked to determine the adequacy or inadequacy of each child using only the psychological data. The results of this study by Fink confirmed the hypothesis that an adequate self concept is related to high academic achievement. The conclusion appeared to be unquestionable for boys, but considerably less so for girls.

The purpose of a study by Lumpkin (1959) at the University of Southern California was to examine the relationship between the self concepts of a group of elementary school children and their achievement in reading. Fifty students were selected for intensive study. Pairs were matched on the basis of chronological age, mental age, sex, and home background. The children were compared on the basis of responses to a variety of psychological instruments designed to explore the self concept, teacher perception of the child, and peer status. Overachievers

revealed significantly more positive self concepts, higher levels of adjustment, and saw themselves as liking reading. Underachievers revealed mainly negative self concepts and desires to be different from the present self. Lumpkin deduced that in the group studied it could be stated with confidence that the accepted self concept of an individual influences his behavior and "may determine the direction and degree of his expression in academic work as well as his social relationships."

Shaw, Edson, and Bell (1960) studied juniors and seniors in high school and found that differences in self concept do exist between achievers and underachievers. The results for males appeared to be more conclusive than did the results for females. Male underachievers seemed to have more negative feelings toward themselves than did male achievers. Female achievers exceeded female underachievers significantly in their responses to only two adjectives. These adjectives were ambitious and responsible. They reached the tentative conclusion that female underachievers feel somewhat ambivalent about themselves. The investigators suggested that they may tend to see themselves both positively and negatively, or they may be confused regarding their feminine roles.

Wattenberg and Clifford (1964) found that generally the measures of self concept and ego strength obtained at the kindergarten level were predictive of achievement in reading two and one-half years later. They concluded that even as early as kindergarten, "self concept phenomena are antecedent to and predictive of reading accomplishment at the least." They stressed, however, that one could not conclude that what happens at school has no effect on the child's self concept.

One aspect of a study by Binder (1966) was the relationship of self concept of ability to academic achievement. The student sample included 345 ninth and 360 twelfth grade males and females from five randomly selected high schools deemed representative of rural Wisconsin. The Brookover Self-Concept of Ability Scale--General was used to measure the individual's concept of his academic ability. Overall grade-point averages were computed from the course grades for one semester. Percentile ranks on the Henmon-Nelson Test of Mental Ability determined academic aptitude. From this study, it was concluded that the "non-intellective factors identified show great potential as contributors to the explanation of variation in the grade-point average."

In a study of Bodwin (1959) the means of evaluating self concept was the Draw-A-Person Test which was validated for self concept with a pilot group. It was then revised and refined before being used in this study. The research group consisted of 300 subjects from the third and sixth grades of three elementary schools. The Draw-A-Person Test was administered to these children, achievement test scores were obtained, and correlations were calculated between reading and arithmetic disabilities and scores on the Draw-A-Person Test. Bodwin concluded that a positive and very significant relationship existed between an immature self concept and both reading and arithmetic disability.

Bruck (1959) used the same sample and instruments as did Bodwin (1959). He concluded that a significant and positive relationship existed between self concept and grade-point average at all grade levels.

In a series of studies with bright underachievers, Shaw and Brown (1957), Shaw, Edson, and Bell (1960), and Shaw and Grubb (1958) found differences existed between self concepts of achievers and under-achievers. They described male underachievers as seeming to have more negative feelings toward themselves than do male achievers.

Shaw and Alves (1963) were in agreement with the findings of the above studies. Their subjects were eleventh and twelfth graders. Instruments used were the California Test of Mental Maturity and the Bills Index of Adjustmant and Values. They indicated that male under-achievers reported more negative self concepts than did achievers and were less self-accepting. Male underachievers also saw others as being less self-accepting than did the achievers.

In related studies, Kurtz and Swenson (1951) and Blackham (1955) found that the self concepts of underachievers were lower than were those of achievers. Kimball (1963), Kirk (1952), and Roth and Meyersburg (1963) discovered that in attitudes toward himself, the under-achiever was self-derogatory and depressed.

#### General Disagreement

Peters (1968) studied the relationship between self-concept scores and underachievement with a sample of 164 high school seniors. She hypothesized that overachievers would have a higher self concept than would underachievers. The results of her study indicated that self concept as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale was not significantly related to achievement.

Holland (1959), as a result of a study at the college level, disagreed with the results of most studies found. He indicated that the underachieving student had positive self attitudes.

#### Ideal Self Concept and Actual Self Concept

Chickering (1958) selected two groups of students from two consecutive ninth grade classes. There were forty-nine in the first group and forty-eight in the second group. A self-report instrument was constructed and administered twice to each subject. The first time it was administered, the subjects were asked to describe themselves as they were right then. The second time, they were to describe themselves as they would most like to be. By correlating the two scores, he obtained a measure of the discrepancy for each subject. Academic achievement was measured using group achievement and group intelligence test scores. The results indicated that an inverse relationship existed between academic achievement and the discrepancy between actual and ideal self concept. Overachievers and underachievers differed in applying certain actual self-perceptions to themselves. Additional findings suggested that the ideal self concepts of the two groups were more similar than were their actual self concepts. The results suggested that the relationship between academic achievement and the discrepancy between the ideal and actual self concepts pertain mainly to differences in the actual self concepts.

McDonald (1965) selected a sample consisting of thirty-six achievers and thirty-six underachievers from fourteen fifth grade

classrooms representing eight elementary schools in upper middle class suburban communities of a county school system. The two groups were matched on the basis of IQ, reading score, sex, and classroom performance. Data were obtained from performance on the Perkins Q Sort, the Sarason Anxiety Scales, and the Harris Test of Lateral Dominance. Significant differences were computed. A major finding for underachieving girls was that they "showed a significantly lower congruency between self and ideal-self than did achieving girls." The same was true for boys, but the difference here was not significant.

#### Perceived Peer Acceptance

One hypothesis of the study by Karnes and others (1961) was that overachieving gifted children would see themselves as being more accepted by their peers than would underachievers. This was confirmed significantly. They indicated that a high degree of perceived peer acceptance was conducive to the academic success of gifted children. Another related hypothesis was that overachievers would show a higher degree of social maturity than would underachievers. The data did not support this expectation. Rather, overachievers and underachievers showed almost identical degrees of social maturity.

The study by Shaw and Alves (1963) also dealt with perceived peer acceptance. They indicated female underachievers were significantly more negative regarding how they saw others as perceiving them and also how others saw themselves.

Combs (1964) theorized that differences exist between under-achieving and achieving capable high school boys in the way they perceive their relationships with others. Instruments used in this study were the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale and a projective technique to measure self concept. Combs indicated underachieving boys see themselves as less adequate and less acceptable to others. Under-achievers also saw their peers and adults as less acceptable.

#### Perceptions Related to School

Lumpkin (1959) found that overachievers saw themselves as liking reading. Underachievers tended to be viewed by teachers as "manifesting high problem tendency."

Alexander (1963) conducted a study through the University of Michigan. Self concept and student self concept were measured by rating scales in which students compared themselves with their peer group on factors such as dependability, effort, etc. Self-acceptance was measured by a rating scale in which the students assessed their own inner feelings and attitudes. The Self-Concept scale and the Self-Acceptance scale were adapted from other research instruments. The Student Self-Concept scale was developed for this study. The sample consisted of 104 female and 146 male tenth graders from a suburban community. Alexander interpreted the results of this study as meaning that a "student's self-perception can be as significant a factor in school achievement as intelligence."

The correlation of Student Self Concept with Self Acceptance, Student Self Concept with IQ, Self Concept with IQ, and Self Concept with grades were significantly higher for males than for females. Alexander interpreted this to mean that the males generally had a more consistent self image than did the females and that the school situation was an integral part of their total self concept. The results for females were that they regarded the school situation separately from the total self concept and that the pressures and anxieties from one influenced the other to a lesser degree than in the case of males.

Williams and Cole (1968) studied eighty sixth grade students. They obtained significantly positive correlations between self-concept measures and concept of school, reading achievement, and mathematical achievement. Hughes (1968) found that children with high self concepts tended to earn higher grades than did children with low self concepts.

In a study involving children's perceptions of teachers' feelings, Davidson and Lang (1960) found that the children's perceptions of teachers' feelings toward them correlated positively with self perceptions and achievement.

McDonald (1965) found that "underachieving girls reported significantly more anxiety in test experiences than achieving girls." Achieving boys reported more test anxiety than did underachieving boys, but the results were not significant.

### Perception of Parental Acceptance

Karnes and others (1961) hypothesized that overachieving gifted children see themselves as being more accepted and valued by their *parents than do underachieving gifted children. They indicated that the trend was in this direction, but that the difference between the two groups was not significant.*

### Effects of Counseling in the Elementary School

Combs (1964) suggested the following with regard to the self concept of the underachiever:

*The underachiever cannot be treated in terms of any one facet of his problem. Underachievement must be understood to be a completely personal and consistent adaptation of the underachiever to his needs and capacities as he uniquely experiences them. It is because of this unique pattern of the perceptions that a basic reorganization of the self-concept must be effected if the underachiever is to be brought to the point where his perceptions can encompass success.*

Counseling is one way of meeting the individual needs of students.

Hall (1963) identified able students by using a test of mental ability. The cut-off point was one standard deviation above the mean of each group. A mean grade-point average was computed for each group, and all boys below one-half standard deviation above the mean were deemed underachievers. Pairs of underachieving boys were matched for ability, grade-point average, class in school, and socio-economic rating as determined by the father's occupation. Thirty-three pairs were studied at the fifth and sixth grades. Thirty-two pairs were studied at the eighth and ninth grades. At the eleventh and twelfth

grades, thirty-eight were studied. A concentrated program of individual counseling was planned for each grade level, and at the end of a semester, they were compared with the control group in terms of improvement in grade-point average. Students counseled were also compared before and after counseling in relation to their responses on a self-report card-sort.

Hall indicated that counseling did not bring about significant improvements in the grade-point averages of the underachievers at any grade level. Their responses on the self-report card-sort were, however, in a positive direction at all educational levels. Hall concluded that such reported changes in the self concept tend to indicate that perhaps increasingly favorable results might result over an extended period of counseling.

Shouksmith and Taylor (1964) studied the effect of counseling with thirty-six twelve and thirteen year old students. They were divided into three groups of twelve matched on the basis of IQ, age, sex, and achievement scores. Tests used were an OTIS Intermediate Test and the A. C. E. R. Reading-Arithmetic Battery. Twelve children were included in the experimental counseling group. Close individual attention and counseling were given these children. Other additional tests were given to these children in order to gain information useful in counseling. Each child was interviewed individually and also in small groups for periods ranging from twenty to forty minutes. This lasted for a period of six months. The number of interviews varied with the individual needs of the children. Group two was termed the

"Placebo" group. They received all the additional tests, but no counseling. The children in the third group were given the initial screening and the final appraisal tests. This group's identity was known only to the experimenters.

The counseling sessions were kept as informal as possible. A generally non-directive approach was taken, but occasionally a more directive approach was taken. Both encouragement and help were given when a child appeared to need direct support. Each counseling session was concluded with a summary by the counselor. At this time, arrangements for future meetings were made. The parents of children being counseled were seen twice, once at the beginning and again at the end. Parents were informed concerning the program and had a chance to ask questions. If a parent asked for help or guidance, such help was given if possible.

At the end of counseling, the testing was repeated. It was found that eight of those involved in counseling were no longer underachievers, although these subjects were not completely satisfactory in some tests. Three pupils reached an entirely satisfactory level. On the other hand, all of the Placebo group and ten of the control group were still regarded as underachievers.

Sociograms showed improved peer acceptance for those involved in counseling. Teachers reported these children were "co-operating more readily and showed improved social adjustment." No such improvements were noted for the Placebo group or the control group. Both

teachers and parents reported a change of attitudes toward school work on the part of those counseled.

Shouksmith and Taylor (1964) found that non-directive counseling had a "significant effect on the level of educational attainment of a group of high ability but under-achieving intermediate school pupils." One outside factor was the parental attitude toward the counseling.

It was noteworthy that the seven parents who co-operated most willingly in both the first and second meetings and who expressed most concern and were eager to help, had children who profited most from the counseling. On the other hand, there were three parents who even after long discussions at the outset of the experiment, were unwilling to let their children participate, and who failed to attend the second meeting. Significantly, their children seemed to profit least.

The subjects of a study by Lewis (1970) were third grade children from middle and upper middle class communities. The children were matched as to family income. Children were referred for counseling by their teachers. Thirty-four children received counseling. Thirty-five children received no counseling, but were in a school which had a counseling guidance worker. Thirty-five children were assigned to another group and were subjects of consultation. Thirty-five children received no consultation in school, but there was a consulting guidance worker in their school. Thirty-three children were in the fifth group and received no guidance in school. There was not a guidance worker in their school.

Previous to the study, children were tested in terms of sociometric status by means of a classroom sociogram. They were also tested as to personal and social adjustment as measured by the California Test of Personality.

Counseling for group one consisted of one hour per week of individual developmental counseling. The counselors tried to create an environment in which children would feel free to explore themselves, their behavior, and their surroundings. The counselors were active in helping the children in such explorations. Techniques they used were (1) support; (2) reflection and analysis, to help the child develop insights needed to explore alternatives and increase his self-confidence; and (3) confrontation, to help the child be more aware of himself and his behavior. Significant adults were also involved in creating a favorable environment outside of the counseling sessions. What was meant by consultation was not explained in the study.

After the twelve week period, both the classroom sociogram and the California Test of Personality were repeated. Concerning the classroom sociogram, no statistically significant differences among groups involved in counseling or consultation were revealed. However, the counseled group showed greater improvement in this area than did any of the other groups. The subjects of consultation received the second largest number of choices, but their improvement was no greater than the improvement of the group in a school with a counseling guidance worker but who had received no guidance. The trend was toward

improvement in both the groups receiving guidance and consultation. They concluded that "it is possible that behavioral changes did occur that might show greater impact after they had become more deeply embedded, and, therefore, more apparent to a greater number of peers."

Personal adjustment was measured by the California Test of Personality which included components of "self-reliance, sense of personal worth, sense of personal freedom, feeling of belonging, withdrawal tendencies, and nervous symptoms." The two experimental groups did show gains, but all of the control groups also showed improvement.

When the variable of social adjustment was considered, differing trends were noted. This measurement combined scores on the California Test of Personality involving "social standards, social skills, antisocial tendencies, school relations, family relations, and community relations." Differences among groups were not statistically significant. However, both experimental groups made gains while pupils receiving no guidance in schools with guidance workers showed losses. Students receiving no guidance in schools without guidance workers also made gains, but they were not so substantial.

A study by Ohlsen (1964) was conducted to appraise "group counseling for underachieving, bright fifth graders." This particular study was the fourth phase of a project to investigate the effect of group counseling on underachievers.

The investigators had originally decided to select as subjects only those fifth graders whose IQ scores on the California Test of Mental Maturity were 125 or higher. Due to a reduction in the number of students available, they included twenty fifth graders whose IQ scores were 116 or above, whose academic scores were one grade below the expected level, and whose grades were B or below. The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children was then given to twenty pupils selected from two schools. For twelve of the twenty the average of their full-scale scores was 112. These students could still be classified as being bright. Parents were consulted as to their willingness for their child to participate. Parents were also asked to volunteer for counseling groups.

The first year one group of eight children and three groups of parents were counseled. The three groups of parents included parents of twelve children. Two groups of seven children each were counseled the second year. All fourteen couples volunteered for counseling the second year.

Counseling sessions were conducted around a table in the school lunch room after school had been dismissed for the day. The second year, groups met in a room at the guidance laboratory which had a one-way vision mirror. Interactions were observed and classified by members of the research staff. This observation was done with the clients' knowledge.

The six methods used in this study to evaluate change were the Behavior Rating Scale, the Shannon-Shoemaker Perceptions of Self

Test, the Social Acceptance Scale, the Picture Story Test, the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, and grade-point averages in reading, spelling, language, arithmetic, and science.

All tests, except the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, were administered four times: (1) at beginning of control period (late October), (2) at end of control period (eight weeks later--also pretest for counseling), (3) post-testing (immediately after counseling was terminated), and (4) follow-up testing (one year from beginning of counseling period). The Iowa tests were administered in October each year.

Each member of the sample group was matched with another bright underachiever who was not included in the counseling project. "Mental ability, previous school performance, and father's occupation were considered in matching these pupils."

The results were generally disappointing. "In the few instances in which significant results were obtained they usually involved either increased congruence between perception of self and ideal self or increased acceptance by peers." Such results were supported by both teachers' and parents' comments during the follow-up testing. *These students apparently improved their attitudes and behavior in school.*

As part of a study by Halliwell, Musella, and Silvino (1970), all intermediate grade students in an elementary school were given the SRA Junior Inventory. This same procedure was repeated with all students entering fourth grade at the beginning of the next two years. Suggested cut-off points were used in selecting students to be used in the sample. Students who were screened as having poor

attitudes were then grouped into matched pairs according to scores on the Youth Inventory, sex, grade level, report card grades, and IQ.

The final sample included 32 pairs. Of these 32 pairs, twenty-one were selected the first year from the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. Six pairs were selected the second year and five pairs were selected the third year from only the fourth grade. One student from each matched pair was randomly assigned to counseling or to the control group. Neither teachers nor students were aware of this being an experimental study.

Each student in the experimental group participated in eight weekly sessions of individualized counseling. A session usually lasted from thirty to forty minutes. Counseling was directed mainly toward changing poor attitudes identified on the SRA Inventory. "The counselor encouraged pupil exploration and self-recognition, with special concern for recognizing and experiencing affect."

The Junior Inventory was administered again to all the students in both the experimental and control groups every year after the eight week period when the counseling was conducted. The scores of the matched pairs were compared and analyzed. The counseling coincided with a report card period. Letter grades were given a number grade and from this, a grade-point average was determined for both groups. Such averages were compared and analyzed.

To allow sufficient time for the effects of counseling, the same kind of grade card analysis was done eight weeks after the end of counseling.

Analysis of the data indicated no significant differences between the counseled boys and their matched pairs on any sections of the Junior Inventory. On the other hand, the counseled girls showed significantly fewer problems on all five sections than did their matched pairs in the control group.

The data clearly indicated that no significant differences existed between the boys and girls counseled and their matched pairs in the control groups in grade-point averages. Neither was there a significant difference after the next eight weeks.

The experimenters questioned the scores for the girls due to the counseling conditions. The girls were at the pre-adolescent and early adolescent stages and the counselor was an attractive young man. They felt that the girls could have been motivated to please the counselor.

Hansen, Niland, and Zani (1969) investigated model reinforcement and reinforcement group counseling with elementary school children. Their criterion was sociometric status.

Teachers administered Gronlund's Sociometric Test, which is designed to measure peer relationships, to all sixth grade classes in a suburban elementary school. The student's total score was an indication of his "general social acceptance in school."

The study included fifty-four students with low social acceptance and eighteen with high social acceptance. Each group consisted of six students from the same classroom. Three high and three low sociometric students from three classrooms were assigned to the *model reinforcement treatment*. Six low sociometric students from three classrooms were also assigned to the reinforcement counseling. Eighteen low sociometric students from three classrooms served as the control group.

All counseling was voluntary. The groups met twice a week for four weeks. Each session had a specific topic "focused on getting along with others and maturing socially." The counselors followed a behavioral counseling approach.

The interviews were semi-structured. Discussion was focused on relevant reading material and personal experiences. The counselor reinforced "ideas, insights, and suggestions relevant to acceptable social behavior." The only difference between the two counseling groups was the inclusion of sociometric stars in one group. The control students received no counseling.

Groups ended after the eighth counseling session. Teachers then administered the sociometric instrument to the three classes. A follow-up sociometric instrument was again administered two months later.

Low sociometric students who had participated in model reinforcement groups increased an average of two and one-half social

choices while the others made negligible gains. "Low sociometric students in the model reinforcement groups made significantly more gain in social acceptance than both those receiving counseling without models and the control group." They concluded that models in a group can influence the social learning of low sociometric students.

The low sociometric students did not gain choices just from the stars in their groups. Rather, some redistribution of choices occurred among all students in the classrooms. No significant difference in change of social acceptance occurred between students receiving behavioral group counseling and those students who received no counseling. Also, no significant changes occurred during the time between the end of counseling and the follow-up testing.

From their findings they suggested that "models in group counseling serve to strengthen learning about social behavior." Such models appeared to be more effective in reinforcement than did just a counselor and other low sociometric students.

A study by Moulin (1970) involved client-centered group counseling with play media. The study group consisted of thirty-three first graders, fifty-one second graders, and forty-two third graders. Twenty-four of the 126 children were deemed underachievers after completing the California Achievement Tests. Half of the children served as the experimental group and half served as the control group. The experimental group was divided into two groups of six children during the treatment. The sessions were one hour

sessions one day a week. They lasted for twelve weeks. The tests were then readministered.

The data revealed that the treatment was successful in significantly improving the underachievers' responses to "visual objects as the major stimuli, but unsuccessful in significantly improving their responses to items that include verbal concepts as the major stimuli." The data, however, revealed no change in level of achievement.

The purpose of a study by Munger and others (1964:44-57; 31-36) was to identify circumstances of underachievement and try to modify this behavior using guidance techniques. The subjects used in this study were all fourth graders in a public school system.

All fourth grade children were given the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children Verbal Scale. Mean grade-point averages for two six-week grading periods were also computed. The results of correlating the two identified 121 underachievers of which 86 were males and 35 were females.

All the fourth grade students were also given the California Test of Personality and Gronlund's Sociometric Test which is designed to measure peer relationships. At the end of school, testing was repeated and academic grades were also computed.

The 121 underachievers were randomly assigned to one of five experimental conditions: individual counseling, group counseling, reading instruction, "Hawthorne-Effect", and control.

The individual and group counseling sessions were based on a nondirective approach with the use of appropriate play therapy techniques. The reading instruction was based on the SRA Ila Reading Laboratory. The "Hawthorne-Effect" control group involved the use of children's fictional books and musical records. The control group consisted of those students who remained in their classes and did not participate in the treatments.

Counseling was done by six professionally trained male counselors. Counselors were randomly assigned so that at least two different counselors were involved in each group. Each counselor met with his group in fourteen sessions of approximately a half hour each. For the first eight weeks of treatment there was one session each week. For the last three weeks, there were two sessions each week.

They concluded that no significant relationship between the treatments and change in peer relationships existed. They did conclude that a significant relationship did exist between the treatment conditions and change in peer relationships when analyzed by sex. On the question of whom they would like to sit by, males showed a significant increase while females had a significant decrease. There were no significant differences as to sex on the items of whom they would like to work with or whom they would like to play with.

Data revealed no significant differences between the ability levels and change in number of peer nominations. They concluded that "there was no significant relationship between the

treatment conditions and change in peer relationships when analyzed by ability level." When analyzed by sex, data revealed that a significant difference did exist between males and females in terms of grade-point averages for the group counseling treatment group. This difference was attributable to an increase in grade-point averages for the group counseling treatment group. This difference was attributable to an increase in grade-point average for the males and a decrease in grade-point average for the females.

No significant relationship existed between the treatment conditions and change in grade-point averages when analyzed by ability level. It was found, however, that students who had received group counseling had a significantly greater positive change on the Social Standards Scale than did the other groups. It was thus concluded "that on the personality variable of Social Standards there was a relationship between change and treatment conditions." On the Total Adjustment variable, a significant difference between males and females within the group counseling treatment existed. Males appeared to be better adjusted. The study concluded that "there was no significant differences between high and low ability groups and change in measured personality variables when analyzed with each treatment condition."

## Chapter 3

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Self Concept and Underachievement

The consensus of opinion was that the self concept of the individual student is related to academic achievement at all grade levels. The value a child placed upon his own worth affected his academic achievement. However, a definite cause-effect relationship was not established.

#### Ideal Self Concept and Actual Self Concept

The investigators in this area agreed that an inverse relationship existed between academic achievement and the discrepancy between actual and ideal self concept. Additional findings suggested that the ideal self concepts of achievers and underachievers were more alike than were their actual self concepts.

#### Perceived Peer Acceptance

Investigators indicated that achievers were more accepted by their peers and saw themselves as being more accepted. Those who were highly rejected by their peers were less successful academically. This was not true for children neglected by their peers.

### Perceptions Related to School

One could conclude from the studies cited that the child's self concept was positively related to school achievement. Under-achievers appeared to be less confident, reckless, restless, and mischievous. They also tended to be less constructive in their efforts to solve their difficulties at school. They tended to consider more of a burden and tended to have more negative attitudes toward school.

### Perception of Parental Acceptance

Only one study dealt with the child's perception of his parents' attitudes toward him. One could conclude from this study that a trend exists toward the achieving child seeing himself as being more accepted and valued by his parents.

### Effects of Counseling on Academic Achievement

Due to the lack of published studies dealing with counseling at the elementary school level, one cannot state with confidence that counseling resulted in improved academic achievement. The majority of studies indicated a change in this direction, but the results were not significant.

### Recommendations

Underachievement does not develop suddenly, but rather has developed over an extensive period of time. The results

of limited counseling cannot be expected to suddenly reverse this behavior.

#### A Proposed Study

Additional studies need to be conducted with underachievers at the elementary school level. The following is an example of a proposed study to partially meet these needs.

Eighty-four underachievers and twelve achievers at the fourth grade level need to be identified by their performance as measured by achievement test scores and intelligence test scores. Prior to treatment, scores would also be calculated from a self-concept scale. Such a scale needs to be developed to measure the child's attitude toward school, his perceived peer acceptance, his perceived parental acceptance, his perceived school achievement, and his perception of possible school achievement.

Underachievers would be randomly assigned to one type of treatment. Twelve underachievers would be divided into two groups for group counseling. Twelve underachievers would participate in individual counseling. Twelve underachievers would be involved in group counseling with parents of such children being consulted and informed of the counseling. Twelve underachievers would participate in individual counseling. Parents would also be consulted and informed as to the counseling. Twenty-four underachievers and twelve achievers would be divided into six groups for group counseling. Each group would consist of four underachievers and two achievers.

The control group would consist of twelve underachievers. These students would receive no counseling.

Testing would be repeated at the end of the first semester and the results for the different groups compared. Such testing would also be repeated at the end of the school year to allow for the effects of counseling to take place. Such results would give a clearer indication as to the effects of counseling on under-achievers.

#### Implications for Teachers

The investigators stressed the importance of perceived *interactions with significant others in the development of the individual child's self concept*. This presented implications for teachers in their relationships with students.

Teachers need to be aware of their role in influencing the way an individual child sees himself. If teachers are generally more critical than positive in their interactions with children, this can be a negative influence upon the child's self concept. On the other hand, if teachers find ways of meeting individual needs, this will be a positive influence. Teachers need to seek ways of helping the child realize that he is successful in activities, that he can achieve, and that he can succeed in the classroom. This will have a positive effect upon the individual child's self concept.

Too often in school, children get the idea that they can't succeed in certain activities and possibly they are warranted in these beliefs. On the other hand, if activities are geared to the individual child's present abilities, he will tend to see himself as being able to accomplish tasks and this feeling of capability on his part will allow him to approach other levels of tasks with a better attitude toward himself. The child will develop a positive attitude that he can try to perform new tasks rather than an attitude that his efforts will be to no avail. It is up to the individual teacher to find tasks that a child can perform and that will build upon his abilities rather than to constantly encourage him to attempt tasks that perhaps he isn't presently able to accomplish.

Individual teachers need to be aware of the present capabilities of their students and build upon present skills. As such, a teacher allows her students to progress in their abilities.

Too often at the beginning of a task a child feels he cannot do it and the teacher encourages him to try. The child may find by trying that he is able to succeed in his endeavors. All too often, however, when a child does succeed, the teacher cannot resist the statement on her part that she knew he could do it all along. This tends to take away from the individual child's feeling of satisfaction with his accomplishments. Rather, the child should be praised and encouraged in his efforts and accomplishments. The teacher needs to be positive in her approach to the child and sincere in her expression of praise.

## REFERENCES

## REFERENCES

- Alexander, Eugene Donald. "The Relationships Between Self-Concept, Self-Acceptance and School Marks," Dissertation Abstracts, 23: 3229, March, 1963.
- Armstrong, Marion E. "A Comparison of the Interests and Social Adjustments of Under Achievers and Normal Achievers at the Secondary School Level," Dissertation Abstracts, 15:1349-1350, August, 1955.
- Barrett, Harry O. "An Intensive Study of 32 Gifted Children," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 36:192-194, November, 1957.
- Binder, Dorothy M. "Relationships among Self-Expectations, Self-Concept, and Academic Achievement," Dissertation Abstracts, 26:5220, March, 1966.
- Blackham, Garth J. "A Clinical Study of the Personality Structures and Adjustment of Pupils' Underachievement and Overachievement in Reading," Dissertation Abstracts, 15:1199-1200, July, 1955.
- Bodwin, Raymond F. "The Relationship between Immature Self-Concept and Certain Educational Disabilities," Dissertation Abstracts, 19:1645-1646, January, 1959.
- Borislow, Bernard. "Self-Evaluation and Academic Achievement," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 9:246-254, Fall, 1962.
- Brookover, W. B. "A Social Psychological Conception of Classroom Learning," School and Society, 87:84-87, February, 1959.
- Bruck, Max. "A Study of Age Differences and Sex Differences in the Relationship between Self-Concept and Grade-Point Averages," Dissertation Abstracts, 19:1646, January, 1959.
- Caplin, Morris. "The Relationship Between Self Concept and Academic Achievement," Journal of Experimental Education, 37:13-16, Spring, 1969.
- Chickering, Arthur W. "Self Concept, Ideal Self Concept, and Achievement," Dissertation Abstracts, 19:164, July, 1958.
- Combs, Charles F. "Perception of Self and Scholastic Underachievement in the Academically Capable," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 43:47-51, September, 1964.

- Dale, R. R., and S. Griffith. Down Stream. New York: The Humanities Press, 1965.
- Davidson, Helen H., and Gerhard Lang. "Children's Perceptions of their Teachers' Feelings Toward Them Related to Self-Perception, School Achievement and Behavior," Journal of Experimental Education, 29:107-118, December, 1960.
- d'Heurle, Adma, Jeanne C. Mellinger, and Ernest A. Haggard. "Personality, Intellectual, and Achievement Patterns in Gifted Children," Psychological Monographs, 73:1-28, 1959.
- Downs, Vivian Kauffman. "Elementary Guidance," School and Community, 53:20-21, May, 1967.
- Drews, Elizabeth Monroe, and John E. Teahan, "Parental Attitudes and Academic Achievement," Journal of Clinical Psychology, 13:328-333, October, 1957.
- English, Horace Bidwell, and Ava Chapney English. A Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological and Psychoanalytical Terms. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., Inc., 1958.
- Fine, Benjamin. Underachievers. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1967.
- Fink, Martin B. "Self-Concept as it Relates to Academic Underachievement," California Journal of Educational Research, 13:57-62, March, 1962.
- Frankel, Edward. "A Comparative Study of Achieving and Underachieving High School Boys of High Intellectual Ability," Journal of Educational Research, 53:172-180, January, 1960.
- Gowan, John C. "The Underachieving Gifted Child - A Problem for Everyone," Exceptional Children, 21:247-249, 270-271, April, 1955.
- Gowan, John C., and George D. Demos (eds.). The Guidance of Exceptional Children. New York: David McKay Company Inc., 1965.
- Grossman, Jack H. "A Diagnostic Aid to Facilitate Counseling with Academic Underachievers." DePaul University, Chicago, 1969.

- Hall, Mildred E. "The Effects of Individual Counseling on Selected Groups of Underachieving Students with High Ability," Dissertation Abstracts, 24:623-624, August, 1963.
- Halliwell, Joseph W., and others. "Effects of Counseling on Attitudes and Grades with Intermediate Grade Pupils Designated as Having Poor Attitudes," Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 5:113-123, December, 1970.
- Hansen, James C., Thomas M. Niland, and Leonard P. Zani. "Model Reinforcement in Group Counseling with Elementary School Children," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 47:741-744, April, 1969.
- Holland, John L. "The Prediction of College Grades from the California Psychological Inventory and the Scholastic Aptitude Test," 50:135-142, August, 1959.
- Hughes, Thomas M. "The Relationship of Coping Strength to Self-Concept, School Achievement, and General Anxiety Level in Sixth Grade Pupils," Journal of Experimental Education, 37:59-64, Winter, 1968.
- Hummel, Raymond and Norman Sprinthall. "Underachievement Related to Interests, Attitudes, and Values," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 44:388-395, December, 1965.
- Karnes, Merle B., and others. "Underachievement and Overachievement of Intellectually Gifted Children," Exceptional Children, 28:167-175, December, 1961.
- Kimball, Barbara. "Case Studies in Educational Failure during Adolescence," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 23:406-415, April, 1963.
- Kirk, Barbara A. "Test Versus Academic Performance in Malfunctioning Students," Journal of Consulting Psychology, 16:213-216, June, 1952.
- Koppitz, Elizabeth Munsterberg. "Relationships between Some Background Factors and Children's Interpersonal Attitude," Journal of Genetic Psychology, 91:119-129, September, 1957.
- Kowitz, Gerald T. and Charles M. Armstrong. "Under-Achievement: Concept or Antifact?" School and Society, 89:347-349, October, 1961.

- Kurtz, John J. and Esther Swenson. "Factors Related to Overachievement and Underachievement in School," School Review, 59:472-480, November, 1951.
- Lewis, Michael D. "The Effects of Counseling and Consultation upon the Sociometric Status and Personal and Social Adjustment of Third Grade Pupils," Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 5:44-52, October, 1970.
- Lum, Mabel K. M. "A Comparison of Under- and Overachieving Female College Students," Journal of Educational Psychology, 51:109-114, June, 1960.
- Lumpkin, Donovan D. "The Relationship of Self Concept to Achievement in Reading," Dissertation Abstracts, 20:204-205, July, 1959.
- McDonald, Angus, Jr. "Differences between High Ability Underachieving Students and High Ability Achieving Students in Relation to Self-Concept, Anxiety, and Lateral Dominance," Dissertation Abstracts, 26:200-201, July, 1965.
- Maehrer, Martin L., Josef Mensing, and Samuel Nafziger. "Concept of Self and the Reaction of Others," Sociometry, 25:353-357, December, 1962.
- Maher, Sister Clare. "Achieving with the Underachiever," Catholic School Journal, 69:28-30, April, 1969.
- Miyamoto, S. Frank, and Sanford M. Dornbusch. "A Test of Interactionist Hypotheses of Self-Conception," American Journal of Sociology, 61:399-403, March, 1956.
- Morgan, Henry H. "A Psychometric Comparison of Achieving and Non-achieving College Students of High Ability," Journal of Consulting Psychology, 16:292-298, August, 1952.
- Morrow, William R., and Robert C. Wilson. "Family Relations of Bright High-Achieving and Under-Achieving High School Boys," Child Development, 32:501-510, September, 1961.
- Moulin, Eugene K. "The Effects of Client-Centered Group Counseling Using Play Media on Intelligence, Achievement, and Psycholinguistic Abilities of Underachieving Primary School Children," Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 5:85-97, December, 1970.
- Muma, John R. "Peer Evaluation and Academic Performance," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 44:405-409, December, 1965.

- Munger, Paul F., and others. Counseling and Guidance for Underachieving Fourth Grade Students. Grand Forks: University of North Dakota, 1964.
- Ohlsen, Merle M. Appraisal of Group Counseling for Under-achieving Bright Fifth Graders and Their Parents. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1964.
- Passow, Harry A., and Miriam L. Goldberg. "Study of Underachieving Gifted," Educational Leadership, 16:121-125, November, 1958.
- Peters, Dorothy Marie. "The Self-Concept as a Factor in Over- and Under-Achievement," Dissertation Abstracts, 29:1792A-1793A, December, 1968.
- Rosen, Bernard C., and Roy D'Antrade. "The Psychological Origins of Achievement Motivation," Sociometry, 22:185-218, September, 1959.
- Roth, Robert M., and H. Arnold Meyersburg. "The Non-Achievement Syndrome," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 41:535-540, February, 1963.
- Shaw, Merville C., and Gerald J. Alves. "The Self-Concept of Bright Underachievers: Continued," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 42:401-403, December, 1963.
- Shaw, Merville C., and Donald J. Brown. "Scholastic Underachievement of Bright College Students," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 36:195-199, November, 1957.
- Shaw, Merville C., Kenneth Edson, and Hugh M. Bell. "The Self-Concept of Bright Underachieving High School Students as Revealed by an Adjective Check List," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 39:193-196, November, 1960.
- Shaw, Merville C., and James Grubb. "Hostility and Able High School Underachievers," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 5:263-266, Winter, 1958.
- Shaw, Merville C., and John T. McCuen. "The Onset of Academic Underachievement in Bright Children," Journal of Educational Psychology, 51:103-108, June, 1960.
- Shouksmith, George, and J. W. Taylor. "The Effect of Counseling on the Achievement of High-Ability Pupils," British Journal of Educational Psychology, 34:51-57, February, 1964.
- Taylor, Ronald G. "Personality Traits and Discrepant Achievement: A Review," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 11:76-82, Spring, 1964.

- Teigland, John J., and others. "Some Concomitants of Underachievement at the Elementary School Level," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 44:950-955, May, 1966.
- Trotta, Frank, Lynne Rouff, and Neal Daniels. "Group Counseling with Underachievers," Education, 87:333-337, February, 1967.
- Videbeck, Richard. "Self-Conception and the Reactions of Others," Sociometry, 23:351-359, December, 1960.
- Wattenberg, William W., and Clare Clifford. "Relations of Self-Concepts to Beginning Achievement in Reading," Child Development, 35:461-467, June, 1964.
- Williams, Robert L., and Spurgeon Cole. "Self-Concept and School Adjustment," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 46:478-481, January, 1968.
- Wilson, Frank T. "Working with the Motives of Gifted Children," Elementary School Journal, 57:247-252, February, 1957.
- Woodward, James R. "A Psychologist Views Underachievement," Texas Outlook, 52:30-31, December, 1968.

COUNSELING TOWARD THE IMPROVED SELF CONCEPTS  
OF UNDERACHIEVERS

by

MARY ELIZABETH BLAKESLEE

B. S., Kansas State University, 1967

---

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1971

The purpose of this report was to ascertain whether or not the self concept of the individual child is a definite factor in underachievement and if counseling toward the improvement of the self concept results in improved academic achievement.

A review of literature dealing with scholastic underachievement and the self concept was presented. The consensus of opinion was that the self concept of the individual child is related to academic achievement. The value a child places upon his own worth affects his academic achievement. A definite cause-effect relationship was not established.

Investigators indicated that an inverse relationship existed between academic achievement and the discrepancy between actual and ideal self concept. The ideal self concepts of underachievers and overachievers tended to be more alike than did their actual self concepts.

The perceived acceptance of others was found to be related to the self concept of the underachiever. Investigators found that achievers were more accepted by their peers than were underachievers. They also tended to see themselves as being more accepted by others.

Another area investigated was the child's perception of acceptance by his parents. Only one study was found which dealt specifically with this facet. The result was a trend toward the overachieving child seeing himself as being more accepted and valued by his parents.

Underachievers tended to regard school as being more threatening and expressed more negative attitudes toward school. While both achievers and underachievers expressed feelings of inadequacy at school, the underachievers were generally less constructive in their efforts to solve their difficulties at school.

Due to the lack of published studies dealing with counseling at the elementary school level, it was not possible to state that counseling resulted in improved academic achievement. The majority of investigators indicated a change in this direction, but the results were not significant.