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# Effects of Intervention Programs on the Self Concept of Rural Preschool Children

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Miller,

Virginia R.

1975

EFFECTS OF INTERVENTION  
PROGRAMS ON THE SELF CONCEPT OF RURAL PRESCHOOL  
CHILDREN

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of Psychology  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, Kentucky

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

by  
Virginia R. Miller  
July, 1975

EFFECTS OF INTERVENTION  
PROGRAMS ON THE SELF CONCEPT OF RURAL PRESCHOOL  
CHILDREN

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Effects of Intervention  
Programs on the Self Concept of Rural  
Preschool Children

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July, 1975

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The effects of intervention programs on the self concept of rural preschool children were examined using 86 children, ages 5 to 6 1/2 years, who had and had not had preschool experience. The relationships between the Total Self Concept and the subscales of Body Image, Competence, and Social Interactions to the variables of socio-economic level, sex, and preschool experience were determined. Significant differences ( $p < .001$ ) were found between the different population variables and the Total Self Concept score, and the subscale scores of Body Image, Competence, and Social Interactions. The locations of these differences were determined by a Newman Kuel analysis. Significant effects ( $p < .05$ ) on sex differences were found on Total Self Concept scale and on the Competence subscale. There were no significant ( $p < .05$ ) interaction effects. Implications of these findings were discussed.

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Self theory was introduced to the American psychological scene by William James in 1890 when he suggested self concept was an important topic for psychologists to study (Coller, 1971; Hawk, 1967; La Benne & Greene, 1969). Nevertheless, from the start of the century till the late forties, little investigation was initiated because the American psychologist was more interested in behaviorism and functionalism than in self theory. Presently, with the leadership of such men as Arthur Combs, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Donald Snygg, and others, interest in the theory of self concept is reawakening and is beginning to culminate into a theory of personality development (Hawk, 1967). In the past 20 years (Wylie, 1961) a large amount of research and data has been gathered regarding self theory.

With the renewal of interest in self concept, a vast amount of attention was focused upon the development and measurement of self concepts in children and how self concept related to adjustment in school. Despite this increasing attention and the importance placed upon preschool experience for children, little study was focused upon the development of self concept in the preschool child (Cicirelli, 1971; Fiore, 1969). Of the available literature in this area, no theorist has contributed research data to verify his speculation,

theorizing, or hypothesizing regarding the development of self concept in the formative years. Little is known, as well, about the changes in self concept with age increments. Wylie (1961) explained this situation by stating that there have been no longitudinal data on which to base a description of the development of the self. Thus, few researchers have ventured to explain what happens to the self during the early stages of development. Ames (1952) investigated the child's development of sense of self from birth to 4 years of age by collecting observations of children and summarizing these findings. However, no attempt was made to interpret these data into a theory of self development.

At the same time that interest in self concept was being renewed, an awareness of a need for change was being formed by another discipline: education. With the changes in the social milieu of our society after World War II, the effects of socio-economic factors upon the achievement of the child were investigated since it became apparent that a disproportionate number of disadvantaged children would ultimately fail or drop out of the educational system (Coleman, 1966). Also, at this time educational researchers began to identify other variables that affect the school achievement of children, i.e., socio-economic level, race, intelligence, family constellation, motivation, self concept, etc. (Cicirelli, Granger, Schemmel, Cooper, Helms, Holthouse, & Nehls, 1971; McCandless, 1961). One of these identified variables, self concept, how the individual feels about self, was investigated in the present study.



In the 1960's the federal government started to develop compensatory and interventional educational programs for disadvantaged children. These programs were started because it became apparent from research findings that the present educational system was failing to help the disadvantaged child (Westinghouse, 1969). The premise of these projects was that intervention programs would compensate for depressing environmental limitations (Westinghouse, 1969). Under Title II A of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1965, many experimental and demonstration programs were funded with the primary purpose of overcoming the effects of being disadvantaged.

One of the proposed programs, the Head Start Child Development Program, was designed to offer a comprehensive child development program to preschool disadvantaged children ranging from 3 to 6 years of age. The project offered complete health, social, nutritional, and educational services to the preschool child involving the total family. The Head Start Child Development Project, recognizing the correlation between self concept and future achievement (Purkey, 1970; Super, Starishevsky, Matlen, & Jordan, 1963), made one of the overall goals of the program the development of "self-identity and a view of themselves as having competence and worth" (Project Head Start, 1969, p.8).

In 1967 a request was made to Congress to develop an earlier interventional program for the disadvantaged child because of the emerging fact that many of the children at age 3, enrolling in the Head Start program, already had predisposing

educational and emotional problems (Head Start Newsletter, 1973). The Parent Child Centers were then developed in 1968 to meet this request of preventing problems, rather than remedying them for the preschool child.

Like the Head Start Child Development Centers, the general focus of the Parent Child Centers was to provide comprehensive services for disadvantaged families, with the primary goal to "improve the overall developmental progress of the child, with special emphasis on the prevention of deficits in the child's health, intellectual, social and emotional development" (Head Start Newsletter, 1973, p. 3). Again recognizing the need for children to feel good about themselves, one of the primary goals of the program was "to assist the individual child to develop a feeling of self-esteem which permits a considerable degree of openness in relationships with both peer group members and adults" (Parent Child Center - Breckinridge-Grayson, 1969, p. 1).

The Parent Child Center developed educational activities that would assist in accomplishing the goal of enhancement of self-esteem (Parent Child Center - Breckinridge-Grayson, 1969, pp. 1-2). The Parent Child Center would: 1) plan activities for children based on individual needs so that each child would have an opportunity for success and thus feel competent about his abilities, 2) plan activities to enhance a child's body image, such as making silhouettes and hand prints, and 3) plan activities to enhance a child's social interaction skills in both large and small groups.

As early as 1969, the effects of the Child Development Programs began to receive close scrutiny. Critics claimed that the child intervention programs were not successful in their attempts to change the social and intellectual development of disadvantaged children (Westinghouse, 1969). The Westinghouse study (1969) reviewed some fifty studies designed to assess the changes in children due to attendance in the Head Start programs. They concluded that, in those studies in which positive differences were reported, the studies suffered from either poor designs or lacked sufficient experimental controls. "Clearly no great impact by Head Start has been demonstrated; measured differences are quite modest, and Head Start graduates have generally been found to be educationally retarded as compared to their middle class classmates" (Westinghouse, 1969, p. 13). The Westinghouse study then proposed a major national research design that would attempt to correct many of the problems with the past studies. One of the factors to be assessed in their study was self concept. Using the Children's Self-Concept Index (CSCI), a projective test that measures the degree to which a child has a positive self concept, the Westinghouse study found that "Head Start children did not score significantly higher than the controls at any of the three grade levels in the national sample" (p.3). They concluded that the Head Start programs appeared to be ineffective in changes of affective development in the child.

However, other reviews of the same studies reached

different conclusions than did the Westinghouse report. They concluded that the Child Development Programs were successful in changing the social and intellectual functioning of a child (Datta, 1969; Grotbert, 1969; Kirschner, 1970).

Since there were conflicting data with regards to the effectiveness of intervention programs on the development of positive self concepts in preschool children, the need for further investigation was apparent. Also, the lack of research on the development of self concept and the factors effecting the development of self concept in the preschool child demanded further attention. The purpose of the present study was two-fold: 1) to investigate the effectiveness of specific intervention programs in forming a more positive self concept in preschool disadvantaged children, and 2) to explore the factors of sex, preschool educational experience, and socio-economic level, on the development of positive self concepts.

#### Definition of Self Concept

The definition of self has been problematic to psychologists in the past century. There have been as many different definitions of self as there have been viewpoints on human behavior. Some factions of thought, notably Watson's behaviorism and Thorndike's connectionism (Epstein, 1973; Hawk, 1967), even doubted the existence of a self since self yields no observable behavior that leads to valid data. While Lowe (1961) does not doubt the existence of self, he is only able to state that self is an artifact which is invented to explain experience. Epstein (1973) believed that self is a

very necessary explanatory concept which further defines human experience. Sullivan considered self as being central to human personality (Sullivan, 1971). Reinforcing Sullivan's view, phenomenologists stated firmly that self is the most central concept in studying humans since it provides the only perspective from which an individual's behavior can be understood (Epstein, 1973). Thus self is considered by many the central variable in behavior (Rogers, 1951, 1961).

Self is defined as a subjective phenomena (Jersild, 1965) made up of abstractions that an individual develops regarding his capacities, attributes, and activities (Coopersmith, 1926). The self is delineated as either a "group of psychological processes which serve as a determinant of behavior or . . . as a cluster of attitudes and feelings the individual has about himself" (Hall & Lindsey, 1964, p. 6). Many psychologists such as James, Dewey, and Freud defined self in the first light as the "self-as-subject" (Coller, 1971). Others, such as Cooley, McDougall, Adler, Koffka, Sullivan, and McClelland interpreted self as the "self-as-object" (Coller, 1971). Still others interpreted self as a combination of the two definitions. Combs and Snygg (1959) asserted that "self concept is the self 'no matter what'" (p. 127) interpretation one accepts.

It has been postulated that the organization of images that each person has about himself in the world is his self concept (Beatty, 1969). Snygg and Combs (1959) stated that self concept is the organization of, "those very important

or central perception of self involved in a great deal of the individual's behavior . . . The self concept as the symbol or generalization of self which aids in perceiving and dealing with self" (p. 127). The term self concept generally refers to a unitary concept consisting of a system or combination of factors or concepts that a person has about self. James (1910) stated that self concept has both unity and differentiation. Self concept then is considered to be a hypothetical construct made up of multi-dimensional factors that are not readily observable or measurable. It is highly complex (McCandless, 1961) and is composed of many parts with each part having structure and function (Anderson, 1965). To further complicate the definition of self concept, Coller (1971) stated that many theorists do not differentiate between the terms self appraisal, self regard, self image, and self awareness, all of which he felt constituted the term self concept.

Purkey (1970) described the self concept as always striving for consistency and stability and having a generally stable quality. Thus, the self is mainly characterized as being organized, complex and dynamic (Purkey, 1970).

Self concept is acquired through the interactions of the individual with his environment (Rogers, 1961). Cooley (1902), Mead (1934), and Sullivan (1953) agreed with this statement and further asserted that self arises only out of social interactions. This is accomplished in the early years as a

child develops a concept that 1) parts of his body, 2) responses of others to him, and 3) objects he receives have a common point of reference. This is his self concept (Coopersmith, 1926).

#### Self Concept Development

The question of how self concept develops in a young child is presently strictly conjecture. The present study utilized, as a model, the theory of self concept development articulated by Combs and Snygg (1959).

According to Combs' and Snygg's phenomenological point of view, the first major development of the self begins with the birth of the child, when the child encounters, due to the sudden burst of stimuli, the need to differentiate self from the environment (Ames, 1952). Agreeing with Adler (1969), they felt that the child gradually, through these early differentiations of "me" and "not-me," initiates the organization of self concept. The true consciousness of self begins developing when the child contrasts "self" and "not self." These earliest differentiations of self from the rest of the world are of a tactual, kinesthetic sort, made as the child explores his physical being and his contact with his surroundings (Combs & Snygg, 1959). Watergor (1971) stated that there are four aspects of body feelings that contribute to self awareness: 1) nervous system feedback, 2) emotions, 3) controlled body movement, and 4) mental image of the body. Watergor further hypothesized that the four body awareness aspects are present at birth and contribute to the self

concept of the child. The beginning of self concept thus involves the identification and differentiation of body image and body perception from the environment.

The second major step in the development of self concept, according to Combs and Snygg, begins when the child is required to interact with significant others. Significant others, for a child, are those individuals who are important and who either provide feelings of security or insecurity. As the child begins to perceive others and their value systems, he begins to perceive himself as either good or bad. Sullivan (1971) did not agree with Combs and Snygg when he stated that in infancy the child begins to formulate personifications of "good-me," "not-me," and "bad-me." In his view, the child engages in a constant search of mutually agreeable relationships. A child learns gradually that good means that which the significant other approves and that bad means that which significant other disapproves (Epstein, 1973). Anderson (1971) asserted that whatever gives a child a sense of security in his environment was right and whatever produces insecurity was wrong.

The emerging organization of feelings the child has about himself in relationship to his feelings about how others feel about him is called the self (Combs & Snygg, 1959). Schwartz (1966) suggests that the key to the development of a child's feeling about the self is the nature of the parent-child relationship. If the child feels good about himself, it is generally found that the parent also feels good about the child.



Marks (1972) found that both a child's mother and his teacher are important factors in developing a child's self concept in how others feel about him (her).

The organization of the child's feelings involves all the social situations in which one finds himself. Basically for children there are three types of social experiences which yield feelings that contribute to self concept. They are: 1) child-family interactions, 2) peer interactions, and 3) remote adult interactions.

According to Combs and Snygg (1959), as the interactions occur between the child and his family and significant others, he begins to establish feelings of being wanted or unwanted, of being accepted or rejected, and of being liked or not liked. Based on his perceptions of them, these early experiences determine the child's later styles of interacting; whether he will accept others, as well as self; whether he will seek out social interactions or isolation; whether he will feel friendly or hostile toward others. Thus, the social interaction, a self concept factor, is initiated in the early experiences of a child.

The third major step in the development of self concept begins when the child interacts with significant others. Combs and Snygg (1959) stated that the individual "learns about himself not just from his own explorations, but through the mirror of himself represented by the actions of those about him" (p. 134). As a child seeks approval from significant others, he finds it necessary to engage in new activities. His

ability to accomplish these tasks influence his development of self concept. During his day-to-day activities, a child formulates conclusions about his adequacy or inadequacy, acceptance or rejection, identifications and expectancies (Stagner, 1961). These perceptions mainly involve whether the child feels he is capable of performing tasks, or controlling his behavior, and not whether he actually can.

White (1959, 1960) describes competence as a child's attempts at interacting with his environment, in such a way that the child maintains himself, grows, and flourishes. The achievement of competence for a child is more than a learned social interaction; it is a motivating force for the child. Coopersmith (1969) agreed with White and stated that self-motivation derives from seeing oneself develop competence. Combs and Snygg (1959) can be construed to be in agreement with White and Coopersmith when they stated that competence is acquired from learned social interactions between the child and the environment and is the result of early experiences of differentiating self from the environment and placing values upon these experiences. These values, according to Rogers (1961), determine the child's goals, and the child's goals in turn determine the child's identity of self concept. Rogers further asserted that each individual maintains an innate organismic valuing process (Waterbor, 1972). He stated that this process is a continual process of interpreting past experiences along with present perceptions and this process results in an evaluation of the present situation.

Early experiences determine whether the child feels he is adequate or inadequate to meet his needs. If he encounters expectations from others that are too high or that are too difficult, he will develop feelings of being inadequate to deal with life. Being able to learn appropriate tasks and knowing that he will be able to accomplish these tasks gives the child a feeling of being competent. As a child grows and develops feelings of worth, he also develops more ability to cope, and finds more alternatives in life which yield more satisfaction with life (Beatty, 1969). Thus, the child's feelings of competence is a factor in the development of self concept.

#### Variables Affecting Self Concept

Since self concept has been postulated to be affected by the interaction of the organism with his environment, variables such as socio-economic level, sex, race, peers, siblings, health history and religion have been mentioned to effect the development of self concept. Family composition, father's and/or mother's work history, father's and mother's interaction, ordinal position in family, mother's and father's self esteem and stability, parental roles, and marital history also affect the development of self concept in the child (Coopersmith, 1926). The majority of research on self concept is concerned with one of these variables.

The present study focused upon the variables of socio-economic level, sex, and preschool experience.

Socio-economic level. According to much of the research (Samuels, 1969; Tuta & Baker, 1973; Witty, 1967), children

from lower income families have less adequate images of themselves and others, when compared to children from middle income families. Three reasons have been given for this occurrence: 1) disadvantaged children have negative self images because of imitative learning from the adult models, who have negative concepts of self (Soares & Soares, 1969), 2) in lower income families there are fewer interactions between mothers and children than in middle income families (Hawk, 1967), and 3) there are harsher child rearing attitudes in lower income families than middle income families which may lower feelings of adequacy in young children (Samuels, 1969).

However, not all research findings agree that children from lower income families have less adequate images of themselves. Soares and Soares (1969) found that children from lower income families attending lower economic schools had more positive self concepts than the advantaged groups. They attributed this fact to the uniform expectations held by teachers and parents for children from lower income families. However, these findings could possibly be compounded by racial differences between the two economic groups not being controlled in their study, i.e., the majority of their lower income group was made up of two racial minorities; whereas, their advantaged group did not contain any minorities. Using elementary students as subjects, Trowbridge's (1970) research findings can be construed to be in agreement with Soares and Soares' findings. However, Lord (1970) in his study of Appalachian children, found that the more economically disadvantaged children had a more

positive self concept than the economically poor, and that the economically poor children attending school composed of economically poor children did not differ significantly when compared to economically poor children attending a more advantaged school. Owen (1972) found, using a self concept as learner instrument, that Southern, urban, disadvantaged children scored lower than did advantaged children. Somewhat in contrast, McDaniel (1970) found, for culturally deprived 5 year olds from a Southern urban environment, that the disadvantaged child did not display an inadequate self concept. Coopersmith (1926) also found a non-significant relationship between self concept and social class in 8 to 10 year old children in Connecticut. Unfortunately, definite conclusions regarding the effects of socio-economic level cannot be made since most "studies used different means of assessing self concept, varying age groups, and different definitions of disadvantaged" (Tuta & Baker, 1973, p. 2).

Since the results of the above studies were mixed, further examination of the effects of socio-economic level on the development of self concept in children was warranted. The present study postulated that there would be significant differences between the self concept scores of middle and lower economic level children.

Sex. The issue of differences in self concept scores due to sex also appears to be unresolved. Hargrove (1972) found that either sex, race, or preschool experience was related to self concept. In the Carpenter and Busse study (1969), which

used first grade students, differences in self concept were found between the two genders, the self concepts of girls were more negative than the self concept of boys. McAdoo (1970) also found that black preschool boys were significantly higher on self concept measures than black preschool girls. However, Schwartz (1966) found the opposite to be true, that in preschool children, the higher self concept group contained more girls than boys. Tuta and Baker (1973) found with 434 kindergarten children that girls had more positive self concept scores than boys. Williams (1968), using preschool children, found no differences to occur on self concept between boys and girls. Results from other studies (Samuels, 1969; Soares & Soares, 1969) also indicated no significant differences in self concept with regard to sex. In the Lord study (1970), no general sex difference, except on the self attitudes of behavior, physical appearance, and anxiety, were found. Healey (1969) found significant differences only on one measure of self concept, the physical self score.

Because the results of the above studies are contradictory, further examination of the effects of gender on self concept development is merited. The present study hypothesized that there would be significant differences in self concept scores between the two sexes.

Preschool experience. Few studies have focused upon differences in the development of self concept between children who have and who have not attended a preschool. The Westinghouse study (1969) indicated that first grade children

who had attended a preschool had higher self concept scores than children who had not attended a preschool. However, when the same children were assessed in the third grade, the differences between those children who had attended preschool and those children who had not attended were not significant. Cicirelli (1969) also reported that compensatory programs for preschool children did not aid self concept development. However, Tuta and Baker (1973) found that significant differences existed between kindergarten and non-kindergarten children on a self concept score, in favor of the kindergarten children. Also other researchers, (Bolea, 1968; Kerensky, 1967; Lamb, Ziller, & Maloney, 1965; Trowbridge, 1970) reported a positive relationship between preschool experience and self concept development.

Landry and Pardew (1973) using the Thomas Self Concept Values Tests (TSCUT) and the Developmental Profile found with 4 year old middle class children who attended a preschool that self concept could be increased significantly when a preschool program focused upon enhancement of self concept. The enhancement group increased significantly over the control group in the variables of sociability, material, self-as-subject, and the total self concept of TSCUT, while the control group increased significantly over the enhancement group only in cleanliness. Landry and Pardew's findings suggest that self concept scores can be increased by a program's educational focus.

The present study, in order to further examine the

relationship between preschool experience and self concept development, hypothesized that there would be significant differences between preschool children who had attended a preschool setting and preschool children who had not. It also stated that children who attended a preschool classroom for over three years would have higher self concept scores than children who had attended for only a year.

#### Problems in Measurements

The inconsistencies between the results of the above studies can be attributed to: 1) a variety of self concept measures, 2) the variety of different aspects of self concept, 3) inconsistencies in the definition of the construct, and 4) different assessment techniques used for arriving at the measure of self concept (Beatty, 1969; Crowne and Stephens, 1961; Purkey, 1968). Collier (1971) stated that there were at least eight variables that must be considered when measuring self concept. Self concept can be determined by a self-evaluation system that involves: 1) self appraisal of the phenomenal and 2) non-phenomenal self and 3) self regard of the phenomenal and 4) non-phenomenal self and by a self-descriptive system that involves 5) self-image of the phenomenal and 6) non-phenomenal self and 7) self awareness of the phenomenal and 8) non-phenomenal self.

In comparing studies of self concept, it was extremely difficult to make definitive statements about the different variables, since each study used a different instrument to measure self concept. The use of different instruments does



not allow one to assume equivalence between the constructs measured or comparability in qualification. La Benne and Greene (1969) stated that different measures of self concept cannot be taken as being equivalent measures unless they can be shown to be correlated to each other to a high degree. They advised that generalizations should be limited until this problem has been corrected.

Crowne and Stephens (1961) reviewed the literature on measuring instruments and found that more self concept instruments are of a verbal self-report type, such as self-rating inventories, adjective check lists, and Q sorts. Collier (1971) found most self report procedures to be of three types: 1) manifest and/or cloaked self reports, 2) reports on symbolically contrived situations, and 3) episodic recall. Self concept measures that depend on the verbal self report are subject to effects of defensiveness of subjects, social desirability to item, and limitations of verbal comprehension (Perkins & Shannon, 1965). La Benne and Greene (1969) also stated that self report scales depend upon 1) clarity of the individual's awareness, 2) availability of adequate symbols for expression, 3) willingness of the individual to cooperate, 4) social expectancy, 5) individual's feeling of personal adequacy, and 6) feelings of freedom from threat.

Other research workers have used projective techniques, such as asking the individual simply "Who are you?." Collier (1971) found projective techniques to include cued associations, cued constructions, minimally-induced constructions,

completions, view of the stimulus through choice and/or ordering, and self expression.

Still other studies have used ratings of self concept made by observers in an unstructured environment, observations in selected environment, and observations in contrived environment. Direct observation procedures according to Collier (1971) are very useful for those young children who are unable to introspect, to abstract verbally, to perform complex tasks, or to remain attentive.

Other researchers have used behavioral trace reports. These procedures are mainly concerned with an examination of the trace, residue or after effect produced by a child's past responses. Collier (1971) stated that behavioral trace reports involve physical tracings and manifest and/or cloaked retrospective reports. Behavioral trace reports according to Sechrest (1968) are not as reliable as others because: 1) it is not always certain what behavior is reflected by the trace and 2) memories are notoriously faulty due to the numerous opportunities for distortion.

In some studies, researchers have used a combination of the four above techniques to measure self concept.

In reviewing all of the different types of instrument, Ozehosky and Clark (1971) concluded that most instruments so far used have not proven entirely satisfactory in working with young children. They suggested using a dichotomized or multiple-choice pictorial self description instrument when working with young children. This allows a non-verbal technique to be

used with children who have not mastered the art of language. Cicirelli et al. (1971) agreed with Ozehosky and Clark and stated that many children often cannot or will not verbalize sufficiently to a test administrator. Therefore, a non-verbal instrument is recommended to be used with young children.

Others have hypothesized (La Benne & Greene, 1969; Lowe, 1961) that the primary reason for difficulties in the assessment of self concept is the extreme difficulties in defining self concept. The problem of measuring a hypothetical construct is compounded by the use of operational definitions of the construct. Lowe (1961) stated that if one is to measure self concept it must be demonstrated that the operational definition and philosophical meaning are equivalent. He further asserted that currently this is an impossibility; nevertheless, "one must measure, and then compare and carefully validate all measurements" (Lowe, 1961, p. 3). Collier (1971) stated that "self concept must, in general, be defined operationally as that construct or set thereof assessed by the set of so-called self concept instruments" (p. 59). He then stated that instead of defining the global term self concept that a better approach might be to define the subconstructs of self concept.

#### Statement of Problem

A review of the research on the self concept of preschool children indicated that many issues need to be further investigated. The present study addressed itself to two major issues: 1) the effectiveness of specific intervention programs in forming a more positive self concept in preschool children,

and 2) some factors that effect the development of self concepts in preschool children.

If one accepts the premise that the child's self concept is a child's view of himself and that this view is formed through the interaction of the child with others and his environment (Ames, 1952; Combs & Snygg, 1959; Rogers, 1961; Yamamoto, 1972), then early child intervention programs, designed to enhance a child's self concept of body image, competence, and social interaction should result in a higher self concept for the child that has had a preschool experience.

Disadvantaged children who attended either a Head Start program, a Parent Child Center program, or a combination of the two, should have developed a more positive self concept than children who have not had this opportunity, since one of the basic educational focuses of these programs is to enhance self concept in preschool children.

In order to investigate the above premise, the following hypotheses were tested:

- 1) Preschool children who have attended a Parent Child Center and Head Start program have higher self concept scores than either Head Start children, children with no preschool experience from low income families, nursery school children from middle income families, and children with no preschool experience from middle income families.
- 2) Head Start children have higher self concept scores than either children with no preschool experience from

low income families, nursery school children from middle income families, and children with no preschool experience from middle income families.

To investigate the factors affecting the development of self concepts in preschool children three hypotheses were tested. The premise that self concept is affected by the social interaction of a child with others and his environment is assumed. Thus, a child that participates in a preschool group educational experience placing value on the individual child and maximizing the positive social interaction of the child should develop a higher self concept than a child that does not participate in a preschool educational experience. The following hypotheses were tested:

- 3) Children from middle income homes attending a preschool group educational program have higher self concept score than children not attending a preschool program from middle income homes
- 4) Children attending a preschool group educational program from lower income homes have a higher self concept score than children not attending a preschool group from lower income homes.

Previous studies investigating the effects of socio-economic level on the development of self concept have reported conflicting findings. To investigate this factor further the following hypothesis was tested:

- 5) Children not attending a preschool program from middle income families have higher self concept scores than

children not attending a preschool program from lower income families.

To investigate the conflicting findings with regard to differences of self concept due to sex, the following hypothesis was tested.

6) Boys have higher self concepts than girls.

Consideration was also given to examining the interactional effects of sex, socio-economic level and preschool experience on self concept.

## CHAPTER II

### Method

#### Subjects

All subjects were between the ages of 5 to 6 1/2 years old and lived in Grayson and Breckinridge Counties in central rural Kentucky. Following the data gathering all students enrolled in the first grade.

There were basically five different populations from which subjects were secured: Parent Child Center- Head Start (PCC-HS) enrollees, Head Start (HS) enrollees, children with nursery school experience from middle income families (MCNS), children with no preschool experience from low income families (LNP), and children with no preschool experience from middle income families (MNP). Students from the PCC-HS were enrolled in the early intervention program sponsored by the Greater Grayson-Breckinridge Programs Incorporated, which used the Office of Economic Opportunity - Health, Education and Welfare (OEO-HEW) Income Guidelines (1971) as criteria for selection into the program. Students from the Head Start group were either enrolled in the Head Start program sponsored by the Greater Grayson-Breckinridge Programs Inc. or the Cloverport Head Start Center. The same OEO-HEW Income Guidelines (1971) were used as a criteria to determine the enrollment of the Head Start children in the two programs and by me in determining the placement of the remaining children in either the MCNS group,

LNP group, and MNP group.

Students attending the PCC-HS programs had been enrolled in the Parent Child Center intervention program for at least one year and the Head Start program at least two years. There were 17 (9 males and 8 females) children in the PCC-HS group. Students attending the Head Start program had been enrolled in the Head Start intervention programs for at least one year and no more than two years. There were 18 (10 males and 8 females) children in the Head Start group.

Students attending the middle class nursery school program were children who had been enrolled in this preschool experience for at least one year and no more than two years. The Leitchfield Baptist Church Kindergarten was used as the middle class nursery school experience group. There were 20 subjects (10 males and 10 females) selected from Leitchfield Baptist Church Kindergarten enrollment on the basis of economic level, taking the highest economic level child first.

Children who had no preschool experience and were from either low or middle income families were classified as either middle income or low income according to the OEO-HEW Income Guidelines (1971). A census, developed by the Child Advocacy Program operated by the Greater Grayson-Breckinridge Programs Inc., was used to identify children to be used in the remaining two groups. There were 19 (10 males and 9 females) children with no preschool experience from families with middle incomes and 19 (11 males and 8 females) children with no preschool experience from families with low incomes.



### Instrument

The U-Scale developed by Clark and Ozehosky (1966), an unpublished nonverbal, pictorial self concept instrument, was selected to be administered individually to every subject. The U-Scale is an instrument designed to measure the self concept of preschool children by having them make a dichotomized choice. The scale has two sets of fifty pictorial plates. There is an individual set for males and females. The content is the same for each set of plates but differ in the sex of the subject in the design.

The U-Scale was developed using one central figure, the "You" to which boys and girls could identify. The "Yous" are shown in fifty different scenes in which most western culture children have had experience and in which mastery of the tasks is considered to be necessary for adjustment in our society. The fifty scenes depict a situation that can be classified as contributing to the development of self concept as it relates to either: 1) Body Image, Appearance, and Sex Role Preference (13 plates); 2) Competence (19 plates); and 3) Social Relationships (19 plates).

A game situation was set up with the child in which the child was told to select the real "You" in each picture (see Appendix B). Each drawing depicted the child of the appropriate sex, in a positive or negative situation. For example, in assessing the degree of Social Relationship the "You" was

either fighting or sharing with another child. A positive response which is defined as an appropriate body identification, competence or social interaction was scored one point. The maximum score for any one child was 50 (numerical) points. A data sheet recording appropriate bibliographic information, as well as, the responses to the U-Scale, was completed for each subject (See Appendix A).

Reliability measures, based upon a total sample of 306 children, have been reported by Clark and Ozechosky (1966) yielding the following coefficients for the U-Scale: Kuder-Richardson Interitem Consistency: boys .6716, girls .6718; and Guttman split-half: boys .7144, girls .7166. Ozechosky and Clark (1970, 1971) also reported a definite congruence between teacher ratings of kindergarten boys' and girls' self concept with the U-Scale when comparing the extreme scores of self concept.

The U-Scale was selected for this study because the test met the necessary criteria; i.e., non-verbal pictorial choice, individually administered, applicable with preschool children and acceptable construct validation.

A pilot study was conducted using 10 children five years of age enrolled in the Head Start program in Bowling Green, Kentucky. This study was conducted in order to ascertain if differences in instructions would yield differences in self concept scores when using the U-Scale. Five children were given the instructions supplied by Clark and Ozechosky (1966). The remaining five children were given the same instructions

but were also asked to respond after each plate presentation to the question, "What is the difference between the two 'Yous' in the picture?" The mean score for each group was compared using a t-test analysis. No significant difference was found between the two groups.

#### Procedures

The U-Scale was administered to each subject utilizing the standardized instructions. The same examiner administered all tests. All examinations were given within a one month period at the end of the school year. Each individual administration took approximately 15 minutes to administer. The tests were given in a quiet location in one of the Administrative offices at either the Grayson-Breckinridge Programs Inc. offices or the Cloverport Head Start offices.

#### Statistical Analysis

A 5 x 2 (groups x sex) analysis of variance was conducted for the total self concept score to evaluate Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Additional 5 x 2 analyses of variance were conducted on the scores of each subscale in order to determine the effects of grouping and sex on the subscale factors of Body Image, Competence, and Social Interaction. It was recognized that this particular analyses procedure could produce a pyramiding effect. Consideration was given to this adherent problem in interpreting the final significant results. The Newman Kuel's procedure was conducted on significant  $F$  ratios. An alpha level of .05 was chosen for this study.

## CHAPTER III

### Results

A 5 x 2 (groups x sex) analysis of variance was performed on the Total Self Concept scores, as well as the three separate subscale scores of Body Image, Competence, and Social Interactions. The resultant summaries of the analysis of variance are given in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3. The population variable was significant on Total Self Concept score  $F(4,83) = 12.83, p < .001.$ , Body Image  $F(4,83) = 5.605, p < .001.$ , Competence  $F(4,83) = 10.595, p < .001.$ , and Social Interactions  $F(4,83) = 5.317, p < .001.$

A Newman Kuel analysis was conducted on the significant F-ratios. Table 4 indicates the locations of significant differences between the populations and the Total Self Concept scores and the subscale scores. Significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) were found on the Total Self Concept scores with: 1) children attending nursery school from middle income families (MCNS) scoring higher than Parent Child Center-Head Start children (PCC-HS), Head Start children (HS), and children with no preschool experience from low income families (LNP), and 2) children with no preschool experience from middle income families (MNP) scoring higher than children with no preschool experience from low income families (LNP) and Parent Child Center-Head Start children (PCC-HS).

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE - GROUPS

FACTOR	SUM OF SQUARES	<u>df</u>	MEAN SQUARE	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
Total Score	1097.88	4	274.471	12.843	.001
Body Image	65.9572	4	16.4893	5.605	.001
Competence	223.195	4	55.7988	10.595	.001
Social Interaction	150.358	4	37.5895	5.317	.001

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE - SEX

FACTOR	SUM OF SQUARES	df	MEAN SQUARE	F	p
Total Score	84.6155	1	84.6155	3.959	.047
Body Image	8.07758	1	8.07758	2.746	.097
Competence	25.7463	1	25.7463	4.889	.028
Social Interaction	1.64502	1	1.64502	.233	*

\* Non-significant

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE - GROUPS x SEX

FACTOR	SUM OF SQUARES	df	MEAN SQUARE	F	P
Total Score	138.876	4	34.7190	1.625	.175
Body Image	26.5202	4	6.63005	2.254	.069
Competence	35.8438	4	8.96094	1.701	.156
Social Interaction	35.4197	4	8.85492	1.252	.295

TABLE 4: NEWMAN KUEL'S RESULTS

	Significant Differences	Non-Significant Differences
Total Score	<p>MCNS &gt; PCC/HS            MCNS &gt; HS            MCNS &gt; LNP            MNP &gt; LNP            MNP &gt; PCC/HS</p>	<p>HS &gt; PCC/HS            PCC/HS &gt; LNP            MNP &gt; HS            HS &gt; LNP            MCNS &gt; MNP</p>
Body Image	<p>MCNS &gt; LNP</p>	<p>PCC/HS &gt; HS            MCNS &gt; PCC/HS            MNP &gt; PCC/HS            PCC/HS &gt; LNP            MCNS &gt; HS            MNP &gt; HS            HS &gt; LNP            MCNS &gt; MNP            MNP &gt; LNP</p>
Competence	<p>MCNS &gt; PCC/HS            MCNS &gt; HS            MCNS &gt; LNP</p>	<p>MNP &gt; PCC/HS            HS &gt; PCC/HS            PCC/HS &gt; LNP            MNP &gt; HS            HS &gt; LNP            MCNS &gt; MNP            MNP &gt; LNP</p>
Social Interaction		<p>MNP &gt; LNP            HS &gt; PCC/HS            MCNS &gt; HS            MNP &gt; PCC/HS            LNP &gt; PCC/HS            MCNS &gt; HS            MNP &gt; HS            HS &gt; LNP            MCNS &gt; MNP            MCNS &gt; LNP</p>



A significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) was found on the Body Image subscale, with children having nursery school experience from middle income families (MCNS) scoring higher than children with no preschool experience from low income families (LNP). Significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) were found on the Competence subscale, with children having nursery school experience from middle income families (MCNS) scoring higher than Parent Child Center-Head Start Children (PCC-HS), Head Start children (HS), and children with no preschool experience from low income families (LNP). No significant differences were found on the Social Interactions subscale. Significant effects on sex difference were found on Total Self Concept scale  $F(4,83) = 3.959, p < .05.$ , and on the Competence subscale  $F(4,83) = 4.889, p < .05.$ , with boys scoring higher in each case (See Table 2). There were no significant interaction (group x sex) effects (See Table 3).

## CHAPTER IV

### Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the effectiveness of specific intervention programs in forming a more positive self concept in preschool children is not affirmed. The type of intervention (compensatory or private) and the length of the intervention did not contribute significantly to a change of self concept. There are no significant differences in the self concepts of children with a preschool experience and children without a preschool experience when the socio-economic level was held constant. Also preschool children who had one year of preschool experience do not differ significantly from preschool children who had three years of preschool experience, when compared within the same socio-economic level. When factors of socio-economic level are combined with preschool experience, significant differences are found with children attending nursery school from middle income families scoring higher on self concept than children with no preschool experience from low income families. However, these differences may be contributed solely to the socio-economic factor since significant differences are found on self concept scores between children with preschool experience from middle income families and children with preschool experience from low income families.

In light of these findings, it is suggested that inter-

vention programs do not contribute to the enhancement of self concept in preschool children. The belief that compensatory preschool programs enhance self concepts of children is not substantiated.

Significant differences are found on the factor Body Image with children attending a nursery school from middle income families scoring higher than children not attending nursery school from low income families. Significant differences are found on the factor Competence with children attending a nursery school from middle income families scoring higher than children attending nursery school three or more years, one year, or no preschool experience from low income families. Since there are no other significant differences found between the different groups, these results indicate that Body Image and Competence are not directly influenced in a constant relationship by preschool experience and socio-economic level.

However, a firm conclusion regarding the effectiveness of intervention programs on the enhancement of self concept can not be drawn due to certain limitations of this study. Even though all three intervention programs (Head Start, Parent Child Centers, and Baptist Church Nursery School) have as one of their primary educational goals, "the enhancement of self concept," it is possible that the curricula of these programs did not provide the proper experiences conducive to self concept enhancement. Future studies should be conducted testing for the effectiveness of differing curricula designed specifically to provide experiences that would

enhance the self concept.

The results of this study do indicate that the factor of socio-economic level does influence the development of self concept. However, when looking at the factors of Social Interaction, Body Image, and Competence, differences, between the two socio-economic groups, are not found. The findings in this study may possibly explain why there are differences in results from past studies regarding the relationship between socio-economic level and self concept scores. It would appear that the particular aspects of self concept which are included in the total self concept score will influence whether significant differences are found in self concept scores of certain groups. Since test instruments differ in what factors are included in the total self concept score, then results would differ. Nevertheless, the results of this study lend credence to the belief that middle socio-economic children have higher self concept than lower socio-economic level children.

The lack of significant differences between the combination of socio-economic level and intervention programs suggest that the factor Social Interaction may not be affected by socio-economic level or intervention. It also raises the question of whether this variable has developed sufficiently in the 5 years old to be a significant factor in his (her) self concept.

The results indicate that boys score higher on self concept than girls. This suggests that boys see themselves

more positively than girls. However, as discussed previously, factors included in the total self concept score may have influenced these results. Therefore the results of this study should not be viewed as a complete confirmation of sex differences in terms of self concept. However, it is possible that these results indicate that the male child in this particular rural setting possesses a more positive self concept than the female. Ninety percent of the children participating in this study came from two parent families with the father being the head of household. This home situation may suggest that the male member of the family is more valued individual. Thus, children view males as being more competent. Further research should be conducted regarding this finding.

The future research implications from these findings are more significant than the actual research results. It appears that more research, focusing upon more specific factors, is warranted.

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Appendixes

## Appendix A

## DIRECTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING THE U-SCALE

After the child has been comfortably seated at a right angle to the Examiner, show the child Plate B-A or G-A and say

"This is a game about a boy (girl) whose name is U."

Point first to the U-Figure at the top of the plate and say:

"See, this is U and here (left) and here (right) is another U."

Turn to Plate B-B or G-B. Again point to U-Figure at the top of the plate and say:

"Now show me which of these (point to left and right opposite sex U-Figures) is the real U?"

If the child points to the correct U-Figure, turn to plate B-C or G-C and repeat the procedure.

If the child points to the U-Figure, go on to Plate 1 and repeat the procedure with each plate. However, if the child does not point to the U-Figure, go back to Plate B-B or G-B and repeat the procedure until the child understand what is required.

Appendix B  
PERSONAL DATA SHEET

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Birthday \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Race \_\_\_\_\_

Health Record \_\_\_\_\_

Child Will Be Attending 1st Grade Fall 73 \_\_\_\_\_ 74 \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Siblings \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Occupation (Father) \_\_\_\_\_

(Mother) \_\_\_\_\_

Both parent Live At Home Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate Annual Income \_\_\_\_\_

U-SCALE RESPONSES

L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R
(1)		(8)		(15)		(22)		(29)		(36)		(43)	
(2)		(9)		(16)		(23)		(30)		(37)		(44)	
(3)		(10)		(17)		(24)		(31)		(38)		(45)	
(4)		(11)		(18)		(25)		(32)		(39)		(46)	
(5)		(12)		(19)		(26)		(33)		(40)		(47)	
(6)		(13)		(20)		(27)		(34)		(41)		(48)	
(7)		(14)		(21)		(28)		(35)		(42)		(49)	
												(50)	