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An Investigation to Determine the Relationships among Self-Concept, Locus of Control, and Writing Achievement

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AN INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SELF-CONCEPT, LOCUS OF CONTROL, AND WRITING ACHIEVEMENT

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by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships among self-concept, locus of control and writing achievement. The sample included sixty-seven students enrolled in eleventh-grade vocational English classes in a rural high school. The Self-Concept of Ability Scale was used to determine self-concept, the Intelligence Responsibility Questionnaire, to determine locus of control and the New York State Regents Competency Test in Writing to determine writing achievement. Data collected from these measures were statistically analyzed to determine correlation coefficients. No significant relationships were found between self-concept and locus of control, between locus of control and writing achievement or between self-concept and writing achievement. Further research was suggested using a more heterogeneous sample or different instruments to assess the variables. Differences between male and female students relative to the variables might also be determined.

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Chapter I

Statement of the Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships among self-concept, locus of control and writing achievement of eleventh grade high school students. Scores on intruments measuring self-concept and locus of control in the academic domain were independently compared with a writing achievement score. The study attempted to answer the following questions.

1. Is there a significant relationship between self-concept and locus of control?

2. Is there a significant relationship between locus of control and writing achievement?

3. Is there a significant relationship between self-concept and writing achievement?

Need for the Study

Many social and psychological factors as well as a student's interactions with others influence his or her ability to learn (Brookover, Patterson and Thomas, 1962). It seems that academic achievement is possible only to the extent that the student believes it is

possible, i.e. has a positive self-concept of ability (Adrian, 1978) and that the student believes he or she has control over the events in his or her life, i.e., internal locus of control (Phares, 1976).

Consequently, it is not surprising that a large quantity of research has been devoted to investigating the relationships between self-concept and academic achievement and locus of control and academic achievement. Many of these studies have indicated that a positive association exists between self-concept and academic achievement. Coopersmith (1959) discovered that students who were more successful in school had more positive self-concepts. Others (Bruck, 1957; Eshel and Klein, 1981) have determined self-concept to be a predictor for grade point averages, teacher grades and objective scores.

Other research in this area has shown opposite results. Blesdoes (1967) found the relationship between self-concept and intelligence and academic achievement to be low to moderately positive. Beaird (1965), Nash (1964) and Nicholls (1978) indicate that no positive association exists between self-concept and academic achievement, and self-concept can not be considered a predictor of academic achievement.

In all of the previously mentioned research, only

general self-concept was considered. Factors such as behavior; intellectual and school status; physical appearance and attributes; anxiety; popularity; happiness and satisfaction, found in the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, are included in these general scales.

Many researchers such as Brookover, Erickson and Joiner (1967), Marx and Winnie (1975) and Jordan (1981) state that only self-concept of academic ability is relevant for predicting academic success. Brookover, Erickson and Joiner (1967) suggests that if general self-concept could be measured without including the ability factor, its correlation with achievement would be zero.

Studies investigating the relationships between self-concept and reading achievement (Black, 1974; Bodwin, 1959; Clark, 1977; Mangieri, 1974) have reported findings similar to the results of the previously mentioned studies of self-concept and academic achievement.

Locus of control also seems to be a major element in academic achievement. It may even be the attitude factor with a stronger relationship to achievement than any other factor (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld and York, 1966).

Locus of control is based on the concept that human "Behavior is determined by the degree to which people

expect that their behavior will lead to goals" (Phares, 1976, p. 13). Internal locus of control is the belief that one is generally responsible for the events in one's own life. If one believes that fate, luck and other individuals have primary control over life events, the locus of control is external (Rotter, 1971).

If students feel responsible and in control of their own successes and failures, they should achieve greater success in academic situations (Crandall, Katkovsky and Crandall, 1965). As Lefcourt (1976) explains:

> Individuals who develop with little expectation that life's satisfactions and misfortunes can be determined by personal efforts have been less apt to exert themselves or to persist over lengthy time intervals in the pursuit of distant goals: and, as it often times has been contended, such exertion and persistence are the sine qua non of achievement activity.....Research findings indicate that the engagement in achievement activity or long range skill-demanding tasks is unlikely if one views himself as being at the mercy of capricious external forces. However, the empirical data are not often without paradoxical inconsistencies and failures in replication. (p. 77)

As with self-concept, part of this inconsistency in the research may be due to the fact that a person may have an external locus of control in relation to some aspects of one's life and an internal locus of control in others (Lefcourt, 1976).

Self-concept and locus of control have also been found to be related to one another. Persons with negative

Self-concepts tend to external loci of control while those with positive self-concepts tend to have internal loci of control (Rotter, 1966; Fitch, 1970; Joe, 1971).

Positive self-concept and internal locus of control were also found to be significantly related to greater academic achievement (Gordon, 1977) and reading achievement (Eldredge, 1979).

While reading has always been considered a fundamental and vital process in education, writing has not always been thought of this way. Recently, however, educators have stressed the importance of writing in the educational process as well as the importance of the relationship between the reading and writing processes. As writing has taken on this more significant role, it is increasingly important that the process be investigated and researched as thoroughly as reading has been.

Much of the reading research has been dedicated to determining the effect of many social and psychological factors that influence a student's reading ability. Therefore, if personality factors such as self-concept and locus of control affect reading achievement and reading and writing are related processes, it would seem logical that a student's self-concept and locus of control would affect writing achievement. No research has been discovered by this researcher investigating the relationships among

these personality factors and writing. Consequently, there is a clear need for such a study to determine the relationships among self-concept, locus of control and writing achievement.

Definition of Terms

The key terms used in this study are defined as follows.

Locus of control orientation - the degree to which individuals perceive that their positive and negative reinforcements are contingent upon their own behavior (Lefcourt, 1966).

Internal locus of control - the perception of positive and/or negative events as being a consequence of one's own actions and thereby under personal control (Lefcourt, 1966).

External locus of control - the perception of positive and/or negative events as being unrelated to one's own behavior in certain situations and therefore beyond personal control (Lefcourt, 1966).

Self-concept - symbolic behavior in which the individual articulates a program of action for himself as an object in relation to others (Brookover, Erikson, Joiner, 1967).

Self-concept of academic ability - behavior in which

one indicates to himself (publicly or privately) his ability to achieve in academic tasks as compared with others engaged in the same task (Brookover, Erikson, Joiner, 1967).

Writing achievement - For the purpose of this study, this researcher defines writing achievement as the level of attainment in all areas of writing (form, content, organization, spelling, grammar, et cetera) usually estimated by performance on a test.

Limitations of the Study

The results of the study may have been limited by two variables. First, the subjects were all students currently enrolled in eleventh-grade vocational English classes in a rural high school. Vocational classes are intended for students who are not capable of college-preparatory (New York State Regents) level work. Second, the test used to measure writing achievement was not specifically designed for that purpose.

Summary

In the last decade, interest in writing has increased. Educators have placed more importance on this area of academic study and the increase in research in this area reflects this emphasis. Previously, it has generally been concluded that personality factors like self-concept and locus of control have an effect on general academic

achievement and, more specifically, reading achievement. However, research is needed to investigate the relationships among these affective factors and writing achievement.

This study proposed to investigate the relationships among self-concept of ability, locus of control in the academic domain and writing achievement. The sample consisted of 67 vocational English students from a rural high school.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Purpose

The purpose of this phase of the study was to explore the literature related to self-concept, locus of control, and writing achievement. The specific relationships investigated were between self-concept and locus of control, locus of control and writing achievement, and self-concept and writing achievement.

Self-Concept

In the past twenty-five years, hundreds of studies have been conducted involving self-concept. It seems apparent that from the very beginning of humankind, people have been concerned with self and self-concept. Throughout history, the most famous philosophers, educators and psychiatrists, id est Socrates, Decartes, Freud, et cetera, have dedicated time, thought and volumes of literature to this subject.

Contemporary sociological and psychological thought is primarily influenced by two very different theories about the origins and development of self as well as the individual's awareness and concept of self (Webster and

Sobieszek, 1974; Wylie, 1961). The first of these is the developmental self or the self as agent or process. The second is the social self or self as object of the person's own knowledge and evaluation. There is also a division among those accepting this later view of self. Within this group the behaviorist and social interactionist theories have developed.

The first of these, the concept of self as agent, was primarily developed by Freud. This theory defines the self as the individual's set of personal characteristics. This self is dependent upon the physical development of the body, instincts and predispositions one has at birth (Webster and Sobieszek, 1974) and, to a much lesser degree, the self is dependent upon social and environmental influences.

The behaviorists, who believe in the social self or self as object, hold the opposite view, This viewpoint asserts that the individual is no more or less than what s/he has been taught by others and what s/he has learned through social experiences. According to Webster and Sobiezski,(1974) this approach assumes that one must consider behavior to be determined only by specifiable external influences not by predispositions or instincts.

There is also another approach to the social self called symbolic interactionism. Like behaviorism, this theory suggests that the self is developed through social interaction and is a learned structure. However, the individual possesses self-awareness and self-consciousness and can exercise some degree of control over his or her actions. This theory of self is relevent to this study.

In the professional literature, the term self-concept has been used in many different ways. It has been determined, after a review of previous studies in this area, that there are seventeen conceptually different definitions of the term (Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton, 1976). Adrian (1978) warns that,

> For an investigation of the literature to have any significant value, the student must be aware of the many definitions of the term which have been employed and seek to discover in each study the meaning which the researcher has employed (p. 20).

Typically, self-concept simply means "an overall or general view of the self" (Jordan, 1981 p. 509) or "a person's perception of himself" (Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton, 1976 p. 411). More formally, Brookover et al. defines self-concept as "symbolic behavior in which the individual articulates a program of action for himself as an object in relation to others: (1967, p. 8).

A distinction must also be made between self-concept and inferred self-concept. Self-concept is, as it has been defined here, an individual's perception of the

self. Inferred self-concept is another's attribution of a person's self-concept (Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton, 1976 p. 411).

Global self-concept can then be sub-divided into specific areas such as behavior; intellectual and school status; physical appearance and attributes; anxiety; popularity; happiness and satisfaction (Piers and Harris, 1964).

The symbolic interactionist theory of self-status states that self-concept is developed through interaction with others, and this self-concept then influences the individual's behavior. When this is considered in terms of an academic situation, Brookover, Erickson and Joiner (1967) theorize that the most important facet of self-concept is the individual's perception of his or her academic ability. Brookover et al. defines self-concept of ability to be "behavior in which one indicates to himself (publicly or privately) his ability to achieve in academic tasks as compared with others engaged in the same task" (p. 8).

Development of Self-Concept

From birth, a child begins to discover what he or she is and how she or he feels about that discovery. Most of these concepts the child develops through inter-

actions with the environment and, more specifically, with the persons closest to the individual. The views that the persons closest to a child hold of him or her are the most important single factor in the acquisition and development of self-concept. According to Combs and Snygg (1959), "We learn who we are and what we are from the way we are treated by those around us, in our earliest years by our families and in later years by those people with whom we come in contact" (p. 134). One's self-concept is constantly developing and changing as one's interactions with others change.

As children mature, their self-concept scores tend to decline. However, less exaggerated perception of self tends to be a more accurate predictor of academic achievement (Kifer, 1975; Morse, 1964; Parsons and Ruble, 1977; Stipek, 1981).

The effects of expectations and pressures of significant others, especially parents, cannot be overstressed (Powers, 1971; Soares and Soares, 1969). Research indicates that culturally disadvantaged children may tend to have more positive self-concepts. Since teachers and parents expect less of these children than of advantaged children, the child is able to fulfill the

expectations of his or her significant others and therefore feel more positive about him or herself than the advantaged child who, although may be performing at a higher level, is not achieving as expected.

Likewise, black children in a segregated school were found to have higher self-concepts than those in an integrated school (Coleman et al., 1966; Levine, 1968). It was suggested that since the segregated schools demand less from students, the students are able to achieve on the level expected and consequently have higher self-concepts that than the students attending integrated schools where more is demanded of them and they are not able to achieve on the expected level.

Academic Achievement

Self-concept is an important factor in any human endeavor. Fitts (1972) hypothesizes that "In general, and other things being equal, the more optimal the individual's self-concept, the more effectively he will function" (p. 4), or, in more specific terms, "Between persons of equal ability, the one with the more optimal, or healthier, self-concept will generally function better" (p. 4).

In the past decade, educators have become more aware of this principle in relation to students' successes

or failures in school. Thousands of studies have been conducted in the attempt to determine the relationship between self-concepts and academic achievement. There is great disparity in the results of the research in this area.

The majority of these studies was similar in design. A group of students was given a self-concept measure and this was correlated with either the score from a standardized measure of achievement or grade-point average.

According to Purkey (1970), the majority of the research in this area indicates that a persistent and significant relationship exists between self-concept and academic performance. Strong positive correlations have been found between self-concept and academic achievement (Bodwin, 1959; Bruck, 1959; Smith and Pervanger, 1974), and between self-concept and grade point average (Bruck and Bodwin, 1962) on all grade levels.

Research by Coopersmith (1959) using fifth and sixth graders indicated a weak, although positive relationship between achievement and self-concept. Blesdoe (1967) also found a weak, positive relationship between self-concept and intelligence for fourth graders. Between self-

concept and academic achievement, this study found significant, positive relationships for boys, but the correlation between the variables was not significant for girls. It was also indicated that girls generally have a more positive self-concept than boys.

Research conducted by Shaw, Edson and Bell (1960) and Shaw and Alves (1963) determined that there was no significant difference between the self-concepts of female achievers and underachievers. The second of these studies indicated that female student generally have lower self-concepts than male students.

Other research has found self-concept to be unrelated to academic achievement. Beaird (1965) determined that there is no significant difference between the self-concept of school drop-outs and non-drop-outs although there was a difference between the achievement levels for the two groups. Clark (1977), Nash (1964) and Nichols (1978) also found that self-concept was not a successful predictor of academic achievement.

There is great disparity in the results of self-concept research. Many researchers have determined self-concept to be a vital factor in academic achievement while others have found it to be irrelevant.

Such conflicting results have led research away from

the measures of self-concept used in the aforementioned studies which are multi-faceted, determining global self-concept. A possible explanation, according to Spears and Deese (1973), for the inconclusive nature of the research in this area is that researchers tend to assume that academic achievement constitutes a socially desirable, equally relevant and integral aspect of all students' lives. It is incorrectly assumed that global self-concept is dependent upon academic performance and that all students desire to excel academically.

Brookover and Thomas (1964) suggest that the only dimension of self-concept pertinent to academic achievement is self-concept. Particularly as students mature and are able to determine their own strengths and weaknesses, it is entirely possible that a student could have a very positive self-concept, considering him or herself to be attractive, popular and athletically gifted but, at the same time, considering him or herself to be incompetent in an academic situation. It is only this last perception of self that is relevant to a student's performance in school.

In an extensive series of research projects involving junior high and high school students, Brookover and his associates summarized that:

> 1) There is a significant and positive correlation between self-concept and performance in the academic role; this relationship is substantial even when measured I.Q. is controlled. 2) There are specific areas of academic role performance, which differ from the general self-concept of ability. These are, in some subjects, significantly better predictors of specific subject achievement than is the general self-concept of ability. 3) Self-concept is significantly and positively correlated with the perceived evaluations that significant others hold of the student; however, it is the composite image rather than the images of specific others that appear to be more closely correlated with the student's self-concept in specific subjects (1964, p. 278).

To investigate the difference between global self-concept and academic self-concept in relation to academic achievement, Jordan (1981) conducted a study involving Black adolescents. It was determined that, for this group, there was no significant relationship between global self-concept and grade point average in English, social studies, mathematics and science. However, there was a significant positive relationship between academic self-concept and grade point average.

Self-concept of academic ability can be a crucial factor in academic performance. According to Bailey (1971) a positive self-concept of ability "might be the most decisive factor" (p. 190) in the academic success of an achieving student. Likewise, the negative self-concept of ability of an underachieving student is

continually reinforced by poor grades. Brookover, Erickson and Joiner (1967) considered a high self-concept of ability to be a "necessary but not sufficient condition for the occurrence of academic achievement" (p. 95).

Like global self-concept, academic self-concept decreases and becomes more strongly related to academic achievement as students progress through school (Eshel and Klein, 1981).

Reading Achievement

It is difficult to deny the importance of reading ability in our society (Quandt, 1973). Learning to read may be a child's most important educational task. On a purely logical basis, it would seem that self-concept would play a major role in the reading success or failure.

As children begin to read, they quickly develop concepts of themselves as "good readers" or "poor readers" (Quandt, 1977). This begins a spiraling process that will have lasting effects.

Homze (1962) describes this process as follows:

> If the child is highly proficient in extracting ideas from the printed page, and he recognizes this, he will have a positive approach to reading. He is able to read; therefore his concept of himself is as a "reader". Since his self-concept is that of a reader, so he reads more widely, and he does become more of a reader; the cycle is complete. However, if the child has great reading problems, and he experiences little success in reading, his con-

> cept of himself will be that of a "non-reader." Since the conception he has of himself in reading is a negative one, he fails to make the progress necessary for him to experience success and improvement (p. 214).

The relationship between global self-concept and reading seems to be particularly strong for disabled readers. Bodwin (1959) concluded that there is a positive and very significant relationship between immature self-concept and reading disability. He found this relationship to be stronger than the relationship between immature self-concept and general academic achievement. Another study involving learning disabled students indicated that reading disability more directly and negatively affected self-concept than did the identification of a learning disability by the school.

In an attempt to determine whether reading ability affects self-concept or self-concept affects reading ability, Wattenburg and Clifford (1964) conducted a study involving kindergarten students who had not yet begun formal reading instruction. From this study, it was concluded that self-concept is more accurate than mental ability for predicting reading achievement two and one half years later.

Other research suggests that reading ability, and perhaps school in general, does not greatly affect self-concept. The results of a study of first graders (Wil-

liams, 1973) indicates that there is no relationship at all between self-concept and reading while other research involving a similar sample found a very low, non-significant relationship.

After discovering no significant relationship between self-concept and reading achievement for fourth and sixth graders, Hatcher, Felker and Treffinger (1974) suggest that the relationship between self-concept and reading achievement is neither simple or constant.

Busby, Fillmer and Smittle (1974) also found no significant relationship between self-concept and reading disabilities for ninth grade students. These researchers suggest that a measure of general self-concept may not be appropriate for this type of research and a measure of reading self-concept should be substituted.

The research of Spicola (1961) seems to support this hypothesis, for he determined that one term of self-concept, "self-perception of intelligience", was more highly correlated with reading achievement than general self-concept.

Other research, limited to self-concept of academic ability has found significant relationships between self-concept of ability and reading achievement (Adrian, 1978;

Hamachek, 1961; Mangieri, 1974).

While there has been little research into the specific relationships between self-concept and writing achievement, on a strictly logical basis, it seems that a positive self-concept would be significantly related to writing achievement.

In one study involving 920 students from grades four, five, nine and twelve, Steidle (1977) did determine that a significant relationship exists between a positive attitude toward school, self-concept and writing achievement.

Locus of Control

Locus of control has also emerged from social learning theory. According to Rotter (1966), locus of control is defined as follows:

> When a reinforcement is perceived by the subject as following some action of his own but not being entirely contingent upon his action, then, in our culture, it is typically perceived as the result of luck, chance, fate, as under the control of powerful others, or as unpredictable because of the great complexity of the forces surrounding him. When the event is interpreted in this way by an individual, we have labeled this a belief in external control. If the person perceives that the event is contingent upon his own behavior or his own relatively permanent characteristics, we have termed this a belief in internal control (p. 1).

In social learning theory, Rotter also states that:

> In its most basic form, the general formula for behavior is that the potential for a behavior to occur in any specific psychological situation is a function of the expectancy that the behavior will lead to a particular reinforcement in that situation and the value of that reinforcement (1975, p. 57).

Therefore, an occurence will not increase an expectancy as much for an external subject as for an internal subject because a person with an external locus of control does not see the reinforcement as being contingent upon his or her own behavior (Lefcourt, 1976).

Vast amounts of research have been conducted involving locus of control. From this research, Crandall and Crandall (in press) summarize that perceptions of internal control generally facilitate more active search of the environment for information, more spontaneous engagement in achievement activities, higher levels of academic and vocational performance, more attempts to prevent and remediate health problems, better interpersonal relationships, and better emotional adjustment and higher self esteem.

As with many personality traits, a child begins almost from birth to develop a locus of control orientation, and parental behavior greatly influences this development. In an unpublished manuscript, Crandall and Greenway state that parents who are warm, praising,

protective and supportive tend to foster children with internal loci of control than parents described as dominant, rejecting, and critical. Katkovsky, Crandall and Good (1967) and Levenson (1973) found similar results. Children also tend to become more internally oriented as they mature (Crandall, Katkovsky and Crandall, 1965; Lifshitz, 1973).

There seems to be evidence indicating a recent increase in externality of both children and young adults (Crandall and Greenway; Boor, 1976). Scores from recent loci of control measures were compared with scores from similar samples in the past. It was determined that young people today feel less able to control the events in their own lives than did their counterparts a decade ago.

The first instrument for measuring locus of control was developed by Phares (1957) and then improved upon by James (1957). Rotter, Seeman and Liverant (1962) then published another measure of locus of control which eventually developed into the Rotter Internal-External Control Scale (1966) that is widely used with young adults and high school age students today.

Academic Achievement

The Bialer Children's Locus of Control Scale (Bialer,

1961) was one of the first locus of control measures specifically designed for use with children. Using this scale, Bartel (1971) determined that locus of control is related to academic achievement for first through sixth grade students. In this study, Bartel also examined the differences in locus of control orientation between lower and middle class children. She found no difference at the first and second grade levels, but, by fourth grade, lower class children were significantly more external than middle class children.

Using the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale, it was determined that there was a significant relationship between locus of control and academic achievement for boys in grades three through twelve but not for girls (Nowicki and Strickland, 1973). Nowicki and Walker (1974) found similar results for boys and girls in relation to academic achievement. This latter study also determined that there was a significant relationship for female students between locus of control and involvement in extracurricular activities. Nowicki and Walker (1974) found a significant relationship between internal locus of control for girls low in social desirability, but not for girls high in social desirability. These researchers suggest that the girls who were especially concerned with social acceptability may not have answered truthfully.

Contrary to these studies using the Nowicki-Strickland Scale, Gordon administered this instrument to fourth grade students and found no significant relationship for boys and a low, although significant, relationship for girls. Other research (Edwards and Waters, 1981; Hjelle, 1970; Reimanis, 1973) indicates that there is no significant relationship between general locus of control and academic achievement.

A survey of the available research concerning locus of control and academic achievement yields inconsistent results. Reimanis (1973) suggests that this inconsistency is due, at least in part, to the variety of methods used to measure locus of control. This study, designed to examine the relationships among different measures of internal-external orientation and academic achievement, determined that the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Scale (Crandall, Katkovshy and Crandall, 1965) was the best predictor of academic achievement. However, in a similar study, Powers (1971) found no significant difference between locus of control scales.

The Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Scale (IAR) is specifically designed to measure locus of control in the academic domain. It also provides scores for

acceptance of responsibility for academic success and for academic failure.

IAR scores were found to be positively and significantly related to academic achievement for both males and females in grades three through twelve (Crandall, Katkovsky and Crandall, 1965; McGhee and Crandall, 1968). McGhee and Crandall (1968) also determined that academic achievement for males is more directly related to the acceptance of responsibility for failures (I -) than the total score.

A significant relationship for girls was found by Crandall and Lacey (1972) between locus of control and performance on The Witkin's Embedded Figures Test (Witkin, 1950). Crandall and Lacey (1972) suggest that this might infer that some of the skills which internals develop may account for their academic competence.

This study, and others, suggests that an internal locus of control positively affects school achievement. The reverse may be true, however. According to Stipek and Weisz (1981), "The relationship between locus of control and achievement might merely demonstrate that students who do well in school take responsibility for their performance and students who do poorly attribute responsibility to external causes" (p. 116).

The results of some research however, seems to indicate the opposite. Massari and Rosenblum (1972) determined that there was no relationship between locus of control, as measured by The Rotter I-E Scale, and academic achievement for college males. The same study also indicates that for females, externality was related to better performance. Nowicki (1973) found similar results with college females. Reimanis (1973) found intelligence to be significantly related to external control for sixth grade boys.

The results of the research investigating the relationships between locus of control and reading achievement is also inconsistent. For example, Bartel (1971), Pressman (1978) and Karmos (1978) found significant relationships between internal locus of control orientation and reading achievement. Crandall, Katkovsky and Preston (1962) and Kennelly and Kinley (1975) found this only for boys. No significant relationship between locus of control and reading was reported by Blake (1977), Brandt (1975), and May (1978).

There is little research available which investigates the relationships between locus of control and writing achievement. One study by Nowicki and Segal (1974) determined that there is a significant relationship

between internal locus of control orientation and the composition subtest of The Iowa Test of Basic Skills for twelfth grade males. There was no significant relationship for females.

Self-Concept and Locus of Control

Previous studies have shown that there is a significant relationship between self-concept and locus of control (Eldredge, 1979; Nicholls, 1979; Rotter, 1966). A positive self-concept of ability is associated with an internality and a negative self-concept of ability is associated with externality.

Successful students are self-confident, feel "good" about themselves and tend to attribute this success to their own effort. However, students who consistently meet with school failure develop low self-concepts, an external locus of control orientation for success and internal orientation for failure (Johnson, 1981; Nicholls, 1979).

Gordon (1977) found that high self-esteem was associated with internality for boys only. He suggests that "it is possible that the higher grades boys receive adds to their positive self-concept. Internal girls on the other hand, probably receive little recognition for

having higher achievement test scores, hence do not have higher self-esteem" (p. 386).

For samples including both males and females, however, a positive self-concept has been found to be related to internality and academic achievement as measured by both achievement test and grade point average (Gordon, 1977; Kifer, 1975; Nicholls, 1979). Eldredge (1979) determined that high self-concept is related to internality and high reading achievement and low self-concept is related to externality and poor reading achievement.

Conclusion

Since "school is the business of childhood" (Phares, 1976, p. 107), it is of the greatest importance that children achieve at the highest level possible. Students' affective characteristics play an important role in this achievement. According to Roth (1959), "in terms of their conception of self, individuals have a definite investment to perform as they do. With all things being equal, those who do not achieve <u>choose</u> not to do so, while those who do achieve choose to do so" (p. 279).

Consequently, self-concept and locus of control are integral parts of the learning process, particularly in regard to writing which is often an expression of self.

Since teachers are not able to change students' natural abilities, "achievement might be enhanced indirectly through educational practices that positively affect personality and motivational development" (Stipek and Weisz, 1981, p. 101).

Chapter III

The Research Design

Purpose

This study examined the relationships among self-concept, locus of control and writing achievement. These three null hypotheses were formulated.

1. There is no significant relationship between self-concept and locus of control.

2. There is no significant relationship between locus of control and writing achievement.

3. There is no significant relationship between self-concept and writing achievement.

Methodology

Subjects

The sample for this study consisted of sixty-seven high school students from a predominantly low to middle-income rural school district in Western New York State. Each of the students participating in the study was enrolled in an eleventh grade vocational English class. Vocational classes are designed for those students not capable of completing college-entrance level courses.

The sample included forty-one males and twenty-six females. This number constituted 37 percent of all students enrolled in eleventh grade English classes and

76 percent of all eleventh grade vocational English students. Those students who were absent for either of the two testing periods were eliminated from the study.

Instruments

The Self-Concept of Ability Scale (SCAS), sometimes referred to as the Michigan State Self-Concept of Ability Scale, was developed by Brookover, Patterson and Thomas (1962), for use in a number of extensive research projects involving self-concept of ability and academic achievement (Brookover, Erickson and Joiner, 1967; Brookover, Patterson and Thomas, 1962). This scale is intended to measure self-concept only in reference to academic achievement, grade point average, intelligence and school status. It is a paper and pencil measure consisting of eight statements which require a student to rate himself or herself by choosing one of five available responses to a statement. The measure is scored on a scale of one (low) to forty (high). The Self-Concept of Ability Scale is administered in group form and is intended for use in making group, not individual, comparisions. The scale is appropriate for use with students in grades seven through twelve. Total administration time is five to ten minutes.

The Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Questionnaire (IAR), developed by Crandall, Katkovsky, and

Crandall (1965), is specifically designed to measure locus of control in the academic domain. The questionnaire is a paper and pencil measure consisting of thirty-four incomplete statements which the student is asked to complete by selecting one of the two available responses. The Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Questionnaire is a group test recommended for use in grades three through twelve. It is scored on a scale of one (external locus of control) to thirty-four (internal locus of control). Approximately ten to fifteen minutes are required to complete the questionnaire.

The New York State Regents Competency Test in Writing was used to measure writing achievement. This test was developed by the New York State Board of Regents to determine competency in writing which is now a requirement for high school graduation in that state.

The test consists of three writing tasks. The first task asks the student to compose a business letter which responds in an appropriate manner to a given problem. For the next task, the student must write an organized report using information presented in a list. Finally, a persuasive composition must be written in response to a given situation.

The test is scored on a scale of zero (low) to one

hundred (high) by the holistic method. Raters are asked to consider content and organization to be more important factors than mechanics when determining a score. Each test was rated by three English teachers within the school system and then rescored by three raters at the State Department of Education in Albany, New York.

The test is administered to all eleventh and twelfth grade students who are not expected to receive a score of sixty-five percent or better on the New York State Comprehensive Regents Examination in English. The Competency Test in Writing is a group test which requires approximately two to three hours to complete.

Procedure and Statistical Analysis

On January 24, 1983, the New York State Regents Competency Test in Writing was administered by the school. On March 10, 1983, the Self-Concept of Ability Scale and the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Questionnaire were administered by the researcher during the subjects' regular English class period.

The students were told that the researcher wanted to find out how they felt about school, their classes and themselves so that the English program might be improved. Consequently, it was very important that the

questions be answered as honestly as possible. The students were also told that there were no right or wrong answers, their answers would in no way affect their grades and no one except the researcher would know the individual scores.

Correlation coefficients among the variables were determined using the scores obtained from these three instruments.

Summary

The Self-Concept of Ability Scale, the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Questionnaire and the New York State Regents Competency Test in Writing were administered to sixty-seven eleventh grade vocational English students in a rural high school. The scores from these three measures were statistically analyzed to determine the correlation coefficients.

Chapter IV

Analysis of the Data

Purpose

The relationships among self-concept, locus of control and writing achievement were investigated in this study. The null hypotheses tested were as follows.

1. There is no significant relationship between self-concept and locus of control.

2. There is no significant relationship between locus of control and writing achievement.

3. There is no significant relationship between self-concept and writing achievement.

Findings and Interpretations

Pearson product-moment coefficients of correlation were computed between self-concept and locus of control, locus of control and writing achievement, and self-concept and writing achievement. Refer to Table 1 for the results of the analysis.

Table 1
Correlation Coefficients Determined Among Self-Concept Locus of Control and Writing Achievement

	Locus of Control	Self-Concept
Self-Concept	0.19	----
Writing Achievement	0.0004	0.15

crit r = $\pm$ .25, p.<.05

1. The correlation coefficient between self-concept and locus of control was 0.19.

2. The correlation coefficient between locus of control and writing achievement was 0.0004.

3. The correlation coefficient between self-concept and writing achievement was 0.15.

According to this study, there was not a significant relationship between self-concept and locus of control. High self-concept scores were not significantly related to high locus of control scores, nor were low self-concept scores related to low locus of control scores. Therefore, the data failed to reject the first null hypothesis.

No significant relationship was found between locus of control and writing achievement. Internal or external locus of control scores were not significantly related to high or low writing achievement scores. Thus, the data failed to reject the second null hypothesis.

There was no significant relationship determined to exist between self-concept and writing achievement. Higher or lower self-concept scores were not significantly related to higher or lower writing achievement scores. Consequently, the data failed to reject the three null hypothesis.

Summary

According to the data collected in this study, no statistically significant relationships were found between self-concept and locus of control, locus of control and writing achievement, or self-concept and writing achievement. The data failed to reject three null hypotheses.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between locus of control and self-concept, locus of control and writing achievement, and self-concept and writing achievement.

Conclusions

No significant correlations were found and the data failed to reject the null hypotheses. Therefore, it is concluded that for this group of eleventh-grade vocational students, when using the Self-Concept of Ability Scale to measure self-concept, the Intelligence Responsibility Questionnaire to measure locus of control and the New York State Regents Competency Test in Writing to measure writing achievement, there are no significant relationships among the variables. Any relationship that does exist among any of the scores for any individual student is coincidental.

Implications for Further Research

The implications for further research suggested by

this study are numerous. The study could be replicated using other instruments to measure self-concept and locus of control in the academic domain. Other instruments could be used to measure global self-concept and locus of control as related to writing achievement.

Steidle (1977) suggests that much of the research involving writing has been of little value because the instruments used to measure writing are inadequate. The New York State Regents Competency Test in Writing is specifically designed to measure competence, rather than achievement. Consequently, replication using another available instrument or a researcher developed instrument to measure writing achievement is warranted.

The sample for this study might also be expanded to include all eleventh grade English students or even all high school students rather than a small group of non-academically oriented students that are not representative of the over-all population. Differences between male and female students relative to the variables might also be determined.

This study also suggests a need for research into the students' perceptions of their own abilities. The subjects used in this study are placed by guidance

counselors into vocational classes because their achievement test scores, past performances in school, et cetera, seem to indicate that these students are not capable of college-entrance level work. However, these same students frequently indicated that they were ranked among the top of their graduating class, which they are not, and could complete undergraduate, graduate and/or postgraduate degrees if they so desired, which would appear to be an unrealistic expectation. Research to determine the accuracy and cause of the self-concepts of these students might be of great use to educators.

A treatment study to help students develop more realistic self-concepts could also be conducted.

Longitudinal studies could be undertaken to determine changes in self-concepts and/or loci of control for student before and after high school graduation.

Classroom Implications

It has generally been accepted that good teachers work to build students' self-concepts in order to improve their academic achievement (Purkey, 1970). However, this study seems to indicate that for at least some students, teachers would use the time more effec-

tively if they were to focus on helping students understand the need for academic competence rather than improving self-concept.

This study may also imply that many students have an unrealistic concept of their own abilities. Teachers should be aware of this and guide students in developing positive yet realistic perceptions of their own academic abilities.

After determining that a low correlation existed between locus of control and grade-point average for college students, Rotter (1975) hypothesized that these students were "defensive externals", id est reporting externality rather than admitting that they did, in fact, hold themselves responsible for their own poor grades. The students in this study may have, for a number of reasons, felt that they should not report what they truly felt about themselves. Teachers should be aware that a classroom atmosphere or education system that encourages "defensive" responses may not be particularly conducive to learning and should strive to provide a more positive atmosphere.

Summary

This study found no significant relationship between self-concept and locus of control, between locus of control and writing achievement or between self-concept and writing achievement. Suggestions for further research were discussed.

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