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Counseling approach to the reluctant reader

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A COUNSELING APPROACH
TO THE PERJURANT READER

by

Kathleen McCarthy

A Research Paper

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
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This research paper has been
approved for the Graduate Committee
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CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Due to current interest in the high school drop-out, increased emphasis has been placed not only on the number of students affected but also on the causes of these drop-outs.

In a comprehensive study made by Plenty, it was noted that "more than three times as many poor readers dropped out of school before graduation," as did good readers.¹ Reading, of course, was not the sole reason mentioned. It was, however, related to many of the causes mentioned, such as difficulty in learning necessary material, inability to study, and feelings of inferiority.²

Although many studies have been concerned with the relationship between reading ability and personality development and/or readjustment, findings usually vary considerably. In general, however, results indicate that prolonged failure in learning to read is definitely associated with a variety of adjustment problems and absence of motivation in the child.³

¹Path C. Plenty, Reading Ability and High School Drop-Outs (New York: Bureau of Publications, Columbia University, 1956), p. 73.

²Ibid., pp. 73-74.

³Edmund H. Hordarson, Barbara H. Long, and Robert Miller, "Self-Social Constraints of Achieving and Non-Achieving Readers," The Reading Teacher, XII (November, 1965), p. 114.

Various provisions to serve the reluctant reader have been initiated by school systems. These include track programs, curriculum revisions, remedial classes, and sub-groupings within the classroom. Success or failure has been reported in varying degrees.¹

However, no matter how innovative the method, "classroom instruction varies in effectiveness according to the attitudes which children bring to school and those which instruction creates in them."²

It then becomes the duty of the classroom teacher to develop the well-adjusted student who has confidence in himself and a healthy attitude about himself in particular and the world in general. Often times distortion is so fixed by junior-high school level that before one can learn, "an area of non-academic success must be found and related to school in order to find a basis on which to re-order his self-image."³

Statement of the Problem

This research project was undertaken in order to determine some effective manner of enhancing the student's self-image while improving his reading ability.

¹L. J. Campbell, "Teaching the Slow-Learner," Journal of the Reading Specialist, V (December, 1966), p. 48.

²Robert Davis, Education Psychology (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1968), p. 109.

³T. Gilbray, "Self-Image and Reading," The Reading Teacher, XVI (December, 1967), p. 272.

The writer's purpose was twofold:

The primary purpose of this paper was the development of a workable counseling approach to reluctant readers with the procedure specifically focused on the student and the learning problem.

In carrying out the counseling approach with the selected group of students during the summer of 1968, it became apparent that the procedure employed might be aptly used as one measurement of the effectiveness of a Federally-funded Youth Opportunity Program from which the subjects of the study were obtained. This then became the second purpose of the paper.

The basis of the study was adapted from a pilot study reported by Gardner and Ranson in 1968 whose hypotheses were:

- (1) More avoidance patterns are manifested by the remedial student in the school situation than by the nonremedial student. These responses are more prolonged or intense.
- (2) Before effective remediation can begin, the pattern of these avoidance behaviors must be altered in a positive direction.¹

Definition of Terms

Reluctant Reader-The similarity between the psychological and emotional composition and the reactions exhibited in a learning situation by the disadvantaged,

¹JAMES GARDNER and GEORGE RANSON, "Academic Reorientation: A Counseling Approach to Remedial Readers," The Reading Teacher, XLI (March, 1968), p. 530.

slow, remedial, and the non-reader at the junior high school level became evident through research. The term "reluctant reader" was therefore adopted to include a child who for any single or multiple causes does not function effectively in a learning situation at the junior high level due to his lack of ability or reluctance to read.

Scope and Limitations

The study was conducted during a six-week summer session. The subjects were enrolled in the Youth Opportunity Program in South Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Subjects were tested during the first week and retested during the last week of the program. Counseling sessions, based on the answers to a questionnaire designed by the writer, took place once a week.

The standardized tests of reading were chosen and administered by the reading teachers working with the Y.O.P. Program.

Frequent absences necessitated numerous changes in the counseling sessions. This should not be a factor in the results, however, as all students were seen an equal number of times.

CHAPTER II

' SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE '

Introduction

The child who has been denied the chance to read or who has not taken advantage of the opportunity to read is caught in a vicious circle of defeat, criticism, and self-deception.

The need to, and hence, the pressure to read is increasingly greater each day. The demand placed upon educators to instill the reluctant reader with the desire to read has given rise to a multitude of studies in related areas.

Limitations

Related research studies were both limited as well as enhanced by the definition, reluctant reader.

Although studies concerning the disadvantaged, the slow-learner, and the remedial student were not directly related to the writer's topic, they were so indirectly concerned to have merited investigation. The uniqueness of the study as well as of the term, reluctant reader, caused difficulties in the selection of studies for inclusion in this review.

Importance of the Self-Concept

Ever since Jung's classic work with the development of the self-concept,¹ it has been recognized, although probably never so widely expounded, that the development of a healthy and satisfying self-concept is a prerequisite to success in the learning field. Titchin states that historically, the first studies of reading disabilities were made by physicians whose prime concern was with the physical aspect of the problem.² Emotional and sociological factors have also been considered in relation to a reading disability for at least the past thirty years.³ "Creating and extending a positive self-image is now recognized as a component of the process of teaching reading."⁴

Everyone has a concept or image of himself as a unique person or self, different from every other self. Once a child decides what kind of a person he is, he must be faithful to this picture or be threatened with the loss of selfhood. Factors contributing to a child's self-concept

¹Carl G. Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, trans. R. W. C. Hall (New York: New American Library, 1958).

²Walter H. Titchin, "Emotional Factors in Reading Disabilities in School Children," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, XLVI (September, 1955), p. 43.

³ibid.

⁴Helen F. Floyd, "Progress in Developmental Reading for Today's Preadolescent," *Views in Reading*, ed. J. Allen Riggs, 1. Instructional Reading, Association Conference Proceedings, II, Part I (International Reading Association, Inc., 1955), p. 37.

include: reaction within his environment, with parents, peers, or any meaningful person.¹

It then becomes highly important that parents or some other meaningful person express confidence in the child's abilities. If the child sees himself as a failure in general, or in reading in particular, he may become comfortable with any anticipated response of failure for it tends to reinforce his self-view.²

A reluctant reader today is characterized by the same traits Tulchin described. According to him, reluctant readers often displayed "an overreactiveness to criticism, lack of self-confidence and feelings of insecurity, short attention span, general state of tension, and resistance to remedial effort."³

By the time many of these students reach junior high school, they are openly defiant and their minds have already been closed in anticipation of an unpleasant and unrewarding situation. Many lose interest in school and the longer they stay in school, the more discouraged they become.⁴

¹Gillham, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

²*Ibid.*, p. 271.

³Tulchin, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

⁴Allen G. Weinstein, "Who are the Disadvantaged?" *Journal of Secondary Education* (April, 1966), p. 155.

Gillham states that often distortion is so fixed by junior high level that before the pupil can learn "an area of non-academic success must be found and related to school in order to find a basis upon which to render his self-image."¹

School Achievement and the Self-Concept

Various provisions to serve the reluctant reader have been initiated in numerous school systems. In deciding upon the method or system best suited for the needs of a particular student, it is imperative that all facets of the child's problem be explored.

Vehar feels that an investigation of IQ, teacher judgment of the reading problem, and environmental background is not enough. He states that the psychological and sociological phases of a child's behavior should also be explored. Perhaps investigation of individual differences in personality may be a means to this end, he further suggests.²

Although many studies have been conducted and much research is currently available on the self-concept in the child, not much information is present on the relationship between personality and reading. Vehar quotes Helen

¹Gillham, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

²V. A. Vehar, "Extroversion, Introversion, and Reading Ability," *Reading Teacher*, XII (January, 1968), p. 357.

Robinson's conclusions:

Research concerning personality and reading indicates that the two are related, but that the extent and nature of the relationship are not understood at the present time. Three general reasons for the controversy in the field were pointed out: first, different concepts of what constitutes reading may be held; second, divergent theories of learning place different emphasis on the role of personal adjustment in learning to read; and finally, divergent theories of personality stress varying parameters, appraised and interpreted different ways.¹

If progress in reading is to be assured, it seems necessary to offer the child a situation which will be self-rewarding. Although the final goal of education is to make guidance unnecessary, until that goal is reached, "counselors, classroom teachers, and the reading teachers must work cooperatively to develop the well-adjusted student who is a good reader."²

Before a plan of action or actual remedial work can begin, the defeatist attitude of the child must be replaced by a positive attitude. Using praise and encouragement in a carefully structured environment, the teacher must balance adequate challenge with success and recognition. A sense of personal worth will increase as the defeatism diminishes.³

¹Ibid.

²Edith G. Jones, "Reading Guidance in Departmentalized Programs," *Views in Reading*, ed. J. Allen Figueel, International Reading Association Conference Proceedings, II, Part I (International Reading Association, Inc., 1966), p. 200.

³Nancy O'Neill Wolk, "High School Reading for the Severely Retarded Reader," *Views in Reading*, ed. J. Allen Figueel, International Reading Association Conference Proceedings, II, Part I (International Reading Association, Inc., 1966), p. 229.

An atmosphere that is pleasant, rewarding and that will increase the child's self-esteem is necessary to insure benefit from any program.¹ Because it is inconsistent for an individual to learn when he resists the learning process or when he does not perceive himself as a potential learner, it may also be necessary to change the individual's feeling about himself in regard to the subject matter. If this can be done, it is likely that his attitude toward the learning experience will also change.²

Once the child gains confidence in his ability to learn to read through self-satisfaction and reward, given instruction suitable to his needs, the child will learn to read.³

In an effort to discover why some children do not see themselves as potential learners, Gillham discussed Sylvester and Kuot's theory of the inhibition of exploratory function. Although limited in value because of the small sampling involved, lack of specific information, and ambiguous terms, the findings are interesting to note. One of the children received tutoring, one psychotherapy, and the remaining, a

¹J.A. Hobson, "Personality Characteristics of the Disabled Reader," *Journal of Developmental Reading*, X, No. 1 (October, 1966), p. 12.

²Thora J. Johnson, "Reading and the Self-Concept," *Journal of Reading*, XI (March, 1968), p. 448.

³ibid., p. 448, p. 37.

combination of the two methods. It was found that teaching alone was not enough. Where the tutoring succeeded, it was thought to be due to the tutor intuitively having met the emotional needs of the child.¹

Reading and the Self-Concept

A study investigating the relationship between the improvement in emotional adjustment and the improvement in reading was conducted at a resident six week summer clinic for twenty-four children with reading difficulties. The students were referred to the Reading Clinic by teachers or county psychologists due to difficulties in school, specifically related to reading. They ranged in age from eight to eighteen and in grades from two to twelve. Although varying degrees of reading handicaps were presented, all students were judged by the Reading Clinic staff to be capable of benefiting from a special reading program.

A twenty-four hour-a-day schedule for six weeks was given to the children in order to provide a program of relatively informal activities. All were permitted individual freedom, in the hope of securing the subjects' cooperation in the study.

Emphasis in the program was placed upon spontaneous interest and cooperation. A minimum of regimented instruction and pressured guidance was given for.

¹Gillham, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

Two objective techniques, a psychological measure of personality, and a means of academic achievement were used in obtaining results. The Rorschach Test was administered to the entire group of children participating in the laboratory experiment during the first week and again during the last week of the program. These tests yielded the personality structure and signs of personality change from test to retest period.

The Franklin, The Gates Reading Survey, The Gates Primary, and The Gates Advanced Primary Test were used as measures of academic achievement.

The Rorschach retest did not reveal any immediate and dramatic personality changes. Varying degrees of personality improvement characterized by greater sociability and ease was shown by nine students involved in the study. Eight students failed to give evidence of any personality change. Six appeared to have been adversely affected.

Reading score changes revealed that 12 of the experimental group showed varying degrees of improvement. Three had reduced scores.

The conclusion is that personality change and learning contribute to reading improvement but that "neither, in itself, is sufficient cause to produce improvement in

reading in all children¹ grew out of the study.

A study involving 12 residents of the Children's Village, an institution for delinquent boys, ranging in age from ten to twelve years, was reported by Fischer. The subjects were all designated as having reading disability on the basis of past school history, case records, and psychological test results. All were retarded more than three grades in reading, had the same classroom teacher, and received remedial reading instruction from the same teacher, three hours each week.

The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children and the Gates Advanced Primary Reading Test were administered to all subjects. The subjects were divided into two groups by the paired comparison method. They were matched for age, IQ, and initial reading ability. Both groups received remedial reading instruction. One group was arbitrarily chosen to participate in nondirective or group-centered therapy meetings.

The therapy group met one hour each week. The students were encouraged to talk about whatever they wanted. The therapist's role was to reflect and clarify the ideas, feelings, and behavior that occurred in group meetings. In such a situation, the students were subject to a program of re-education aimed at the

¹Robert S. McLeskey, "Description and Evaluation of a Connecticut Program for Reading Disability," Journal of Educational Psychology, XLIX (October, 1958), pp. 347-50.

re-establishment of self-confidence and the removal of anxiotics.

An alternate form of the Galus Advanced Primary Reading Test was administered to the 12 subjects after six months. The final results indicated that the group involved with the psychotherapy plus the remedial reading instruction showed a greater improvement in reading than the group receiving only reading instruction. The range of improvement in the non-therapy group was -.5 to 16.5 months with a mean gain of 8.25 months. The therapy group ranged from 6.0 to 18.5 months with a mean gain of 11.5 months. The therapy group showed a 39.4% greater improvement in reading scores than the non-therapy group.¹

Fackin attempted to study objectively the personality adjustment of slow-learning ninth grade boys and girls through the use of the California Test of Personality. The subjects were selected primarily on an intelligence quotient factor. All subjects were at or above fifth grade reading placement level as indicated on the California Achievement Test. Seven or eight years' attendance in a Catholic school, a reading placement grade of 5.5 or above 60 for slow-learning boys and girls based on the California Test of Mental Maturity

¹Bernard Fischer, "Group Therapy with Retarded Readers," Journal of Educational Psychology, XLIV (1953), pp. 356-58.

were prerequisites for the subjects in the study.

The California Test of Personality was administered and analyzed according to the types of responses given. On the basis of the data obtained, the following conclusions concerning the total personality of the subjects were drawn: both sexes manifested below-average personal adjustment, boys experienced less personal maladjustment than girls, both sexes maintained satisfactory social adjustment, and the boys and girls were similar in their total personality development, not contingent upon reading scores.¹

Twenty-five girls, five each from grades seven through eleven, were subjects in a study conducted by Bieri. The personality disturbances manifested by the girls was attributed to the subjects' deficiency in reading and/or spelling. The majority of the girls were runaways or truants.

The students' mental and academic ability was ascertained through the use of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children or the Wechsler-Pollak Intelligence Scale, the Orton Reading Survey, and the Wide Range Achievement Test, Spelling and Reading.

¹Sister Kathleen Mary Mackin, O.P., "A Study of Personality Adjustment of Slow Learning Fifth Graders in Selected Catholic Schools," (unpublished Master's thesis, The Cardinal Litch College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1965), pp. 9 & 65.

The subjects were given intensive remedial instruction in spelling and reading within the regular class periods.

To ascertain whether the experiment produced any significant results outside the reading class, three questionnaires per girl, consisting of 25 items, containing information relative to the attitude of the girls before and during the experimental period, were administered.

At the close of the three month experimental period, the questionnaire was distributed to qualified persons (group-mothers) interested in the girls' progress. Eighty-four per cent of them were returned. The respondents were enthusiastic about the girls' change in attitude and scholastic work.

Alternate forms of the reading tests were also administered. The Gates Reading Survey did indicate some progress in all areas although not as significant as the progress indicated by the retesting on the Wide Range.

The study indicated "the great need for remedial reading and spelling instruction to improve the scholastic abilities as well as to reconstruct personalities."¹

An experimental BSA Title I Program conducted at Mount St. Joseph's Home for Girls, a treatment-oriented

¹Sister Mary of St. Joachim Paezi, R.G.S., "The Effect of Intensive Reading and Spelling Instruction on the Achievement and Personality Rehabilitation of Delinquent Girls," (unpublished master's thesis, The Cardinal Stritch College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1963), pp. 5, 73.

institution for dependent and neglected girls, combined the objectives of scholastic and attitude improvement on the part of the girls attending the school. Specific objectives were to improve performance in reading, as measured by achievement tests and in the classroom, to improve the child's self-image, her expectations of success in school, to improve the child's emotional and social stability, and to broaden the cultural experiences of the girl.

The entire population of the school, 113 girls, participated in the project. The girls, divided into seven groups, ranged in grades from first through twelfth.

The project was divided into three instructional areas, reading being the most pertinent to this study. The girls were given tutoring and/or help with their homework two hours daily. The tutoring was done in professionally supervised groups. The staff was composed of three teachers and twelve aides.

The Lida Range Achievement Test, the Stanford Achievement Test-Primary II, the Stanford Achievement Test-Intermediate I, the Stanford Achievement Test-Intermediate II, and the Stanford Advanced Paragraph Reading Test were used in February and again in June

after the tutoring program. Cumulative records and report cards were also examined to provide insight into the girls' school backgrounds.

At least the same mean scores and in many cases gains were reported in the mean scores of the tests with the High Range Achievement Test, just reporting gains from .6 to 2.1.

Teachers working with thirty of the students in classrooms reported a great improvement in the work and a considerable change of attitude toward learning in the pupils from Mount St. Joseph's.¹

One hundred and fifty grade school students participated in a study of the relationship existing between reading success of the adolescent and the individual's estimate of his own reading adequacy.

The reading and ability sections of the Spencer High School Placement Test were administered to the students. A questionnaire concerning self-estimates of the students' reading abilities were filled out by the student and by his teacher.

A reading achievement score of 9.1 or above was the criterion for a successful reader. A reading level score below 9.1 was the criterion for "low achiever".

¹Sister Perceval Bruce, O.C., "An Evaluation of a Tutorial Program for Emotionally Disturbed Girls," (unpublished Research Paper, The Graciel St. Joseph College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1969), pp. 20, 26, 36.

Correlations were made between the students' reading grade level achievement scores with each student's estimated reading grade level score as revealed by a questionnaire filled out by the students. Results of the correlation between the California Personality Test-Interlocks percentile scores for the low achievers in reading and the reading achievement percentile scores showed no relationship. In this study, successful readers did not have significantly higher concepts of reading adequacy than poor readers.¹

Two particularly pertinent studies were, in reality, by-products of programs set up specifically as job counseling centers.

The New York Board of Education created a Job Counseling Center as an experimental and demonstration program. Although the primary objective of the program was to enhance the employability of youths aged 16 to 21 years, remedial reading work became a major need because many of the youths were so retarded in reading that their chances of employability were greatly lessened.

According to the author, the program was structured to provide a free atmosphere. Those attending were

¹Sister Mary Agnes Cecile Fechen, B.V.M., "Relationship Between Reading Success and Estimates of Self-Reading Adequacy," (unpublished master's thesis, The Cardinal Strickland College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1966), pp. 5, 34.

goal oriented. The development of a relationship in which the client was accepted with all of his limitations was stressed even above the reading aspect of the program. College tutors, under the guidance of a reading specialist, worked to improve reading skills of youths referred by the counselors.

Out of a total of 22 original clients, ten remained long enough for formal testing. The Gray Standardized Reading Program, the Duxbury Analysis of Reading Difficulty, and the Wide-World Reading Test were used to determine pre and post test scores. The mean initial reading score was 2.8. After 30 hours of instruction, the mean score rose to 4.0. Although no evidence of this is presented, Neuman states that besides increasing their employability, the clients were aided socially. The dropouts, as a group, showed greater interest and enthusiasm in practical and recreational situations requiring reading. Improved self-confidence due to increased facility in word recognition techniques was also noted by counselors.¹

JOIN (Job Orientation in Neighborhoods) was originally designed to rehabilitate school dropouts in economically disadvantaged areas through job placement and counseling. It was found, however, that the academic disability of

¹ Harold Neuman, "Job Counseling and Reading," Journal of Reading, 10, no. 2 (November, 1965), pp. 106-110.

many of the dropouts was so great that it became vocationally disabling. Remedial education, therefore, became the first objective of the program. The program was specifically aimed at many of the approximately 77,000 school dropouts, aged 16-21, in New York City.

No youngster interested in admission to the remedial program was excluded for any reason. Therefore, no criterion for admission, except desire, had to be met by the applicants. Intelligence testing was ruled out as the causes of failure were so complex that the scores would have been quite meaningless in many cases. Testing was available only for analyzing certain puzzling cases. The child was judged on performance effort, not test scores.

Later analysis revealed these common characteristics of clients:

1. All had at least ten years of schooling.
2. Reading levels ranged from non-reader through twelfth grade.

Of five hundred students given the Wide Range Achievement Test in May, 1965, fully half were functionally illiterate, reading at the fifth grade level or below.

The report of the study failed to present statistics or concrete findings. The study did state that the greatest success was with the beginning and advanced readers. The intermediate readers presented the greatest challenge.

The School Dropout Program also found that the result of consistent failure caused almost irreparable damage to one's self-esteem. The individual may have a desire to learn but tends to become suspicious of traditional school situations and uneasy about risking failure once more. The counselors concerned with this program diagnosed the ills of the reluctant reader with the statement, "Those most in need of remedial instruction are frequently most reluctant to accept it."¹

Gardner and Ranson attempted to develop a counseling procedure specifically focused on the student and his learning problems. The purpose of the study was to affect goal attitude and behavior on the part of the student.

Sixteen male students chosen for participation on the basis of the school faculty's rating as "hard core" learning problems served as the subjects in this pilot project. The subjects appeared to benefit little from the educational program of the school and manifested a variety of avoidance patterns.

Although the report of the pilot study by Gardner and Ranson presented no testing procedures, the results still merit mention. Emphasis was upon the development of a counseling approach aimed at the remedial reading

¹Willie Pope, "A Reading Program for School Dropouts," *Journal of Reading*, 11, No. 6 (May, 1966), pp. 367-71.

student. A series of 7 round interviews was held during which the subject met either alone with the counselor or in a group. The program aimed its counseling procedures at the breakdown of the avoidance behaviors commonly exhibited by the reluctant reader in a learning situation and the positive redirection of behavior.

The results of the study were considered encouraging. According to the school staff, fourteen of the sixteen subjects showed marked attitude changes toward school. One subject dropped out of the program part way through the semester.

The study itself has been internally criticized for its "shotgun" approach to the problem. However, defense of counseling methods hinges on the fact that various aspects of the counseling itself must be emphasized or deemphasized according to the needs of the particular student, and therefore, a strict procedure to be followed can not be presented.

Two interesting implications resultant from the study were:

1. Remedial students can be significantly helped through behavior modifying procedures based specifically on the learning problem.
2. These procedures can apparently be quickly mastered and effectively used by school counselors and reading teachers and do not necessarily have to be employed only by trained psychotherapists.¹

¹Gardner and Farnell, *op. cit.*, pp. 529-36.

SUMMARY

In this chapter the writer has described some projects and approaches concerning the development of a positive self-concept and its role in the reluctant reader's problems. There is similarity along all the programs. Each stressed the need for the development of a positive self-image in the child, and the enhancement of this positive image through understanding teachers and counselors. Self-learning has proven to be secondary to the child's realization that he does have the ability to learn and succeed.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Background Information

The Youth Opportunity Program in South Milwaukee, Wisconsin completed its third year in 1968. Its objectives include: providing academic guidance and counseling services to potential dropouts, providing vocationally oriented experiences, providing cultural experiences, providing remedial instruction in the basic skills, and strengthening the ties between the school and the home.

Any student in grades four through ten enrolled in a South Milwaukee school is eligible for the program. The child's most recent teacher rates him for admission to the program on the following variables: (1) his attitude toward school and authority, (2) his motivation to succeed, (3) his degree of self-control, (4) his attendance record, and (5) his difficulty in reading.

Students participating in the program are given remedial help in the needed basic skills. Emphasis, however, is placed upon the counseling procedures employed. The counseling is intended to improve the student's confidence and opinion of himself and encourage

the transfer of a positive self-image to improve social relations with his family, peers, and in school.

Subjects

Forty students were enrolled in the 1968 Youth Opportunity Program. Since the writer would conduct all interviews listed, it was impossible for her to include all forty students in her research. In order to use a relatively wide span of age levels, it was decided to take the fourth, seventh, and tenth grade students as subjects. There were four fourth graders, six seventh graders, and eleven tenth grade students in the present counseling study.

Procedures

Standardized reading tests chosen by the reading teachers involved in the Program were administered during the first week of summer school. The tests were the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Levels I and II,¹ the McDonnell Reading Test,² the Davis Reading Test,³ and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test.⁴

¹Eric F. Gardner, John Kirdan, and Richard Maddox, Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1955).

²J. Nelson, McDonnell Reading Test-Davis Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962).

³Charlotte Green Davis and Frederick B. Davis, Davis Reading Test, (New York: Psychological Corporation, 1962).

⁴William Gates and MacGinitie, Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (New York: Teachers College Press, 1936).

The counseling procedure included the oral administration of a questionnaire and follow-up interviews based on questionnaire responses. The writer devised the questionnaire, which consisted of 33 questions related to student attitudes toward himself, his ability to succeed, his teachers, and the school. A pilot study to refine the questionnaire was conducted prior to its administration to students in the Youth Opportunity Program. Fifteen students, aged eight through fifteen, who were not enrolled in the Y.O.P. were tested in the pilot study. Modification of the questions and deletion of some questions followed the pilot study.

The students were to respond to the questionnaire by choosing a statement under the question. Various responses were provided for each question. The possible responses can be found in the questionnaire in the Appendix of the paper. The six questions were:

1. Which statement would you say is a good estimate of your reading ability?
2. Which statement concerning your desire to succeed in school would you choose?
3. Which statement would you choose as best describing how you feel toward school?
4. Which statement would you say best describes how you feel toward teachers?

5. Which of the following statements do you think best describes your behavior in class?
6. Which statement would you say about yourself?

The counseling sessions were patterned after the pilot study reported by Gardner and Ransom in 1968.¹ Three interview sessions of fifteen minutes in length were devoted to the discussion of the responses indicated by the students.

The first session dealt with the student's self-concept and opinion of his ability to succeed in school in general and in reading in particular. Emphasis was placed upon making the child realistically aware of his potential and his successes and failures in relation to this potential. An adequate rationale for the student's learning problem was sought. The student's strengths and weaknesses and misconceptions of the problem were brought out by the writer.

The second interview was devoted to the discussion of the student's feelings toward school and teachers in general. Attempts were made to lead the student to discover a positive or pleasant association with school and at least with some teachers. Reinforcement for the student's positive statements about school and teachers was provided. The student was made aware of basic discrepancies within his own behavior.

¹Gardner and Ransom, *op. cit.*, pp. 529-36.

Interview number three considered the student's behavior in class, the reasons for such behavior, and the student's ability to get along with his classmates. The student was encouraged to develop alternative methods of responding in class. He was asked to label his own feelings in particular situations. The student was hypothetically placed in a teaching situation and asked to handle a problem with a troublesome child or class.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Study

The present study is a description of a counseling procedure for reluctant readers and an evaluation of its effectiveness.

Twenty-one students enrolled in the Youth Opportunity Program served as subjects for the study. Reading tests and a questionnaire were administered during the first week of summer school. Weekly interviews during which the counselors and the writer attempted to develop a positive self-concept in the subjects constituted the counseling procedure. Post-tests were administered after the close of the six-week program. Different responses to the same question indicated changes in specific attitudes of the subject toward himself, teachers, peers, and school.

Because of the limitations caused by the small sampling and the short length of the program, it would be unwise to ascribe to the program a characteristic group of values.

The results, however, do warrant attention. It seems reasonable to assume that the entire program was

consequential in the development of the participating students. The Youth Opportunity Program and the counseling procedures employed, through a relaxed, informal atmosphere, contributed to the alleviation of the learning problems through the development of a positive self-concept. The program appeared successful according to counselor reports and judging from change manifested in the attitude questionnaire.

Standardized Test Scores

The testing and scoring of the tests took place during the first and last weeks of the summer program. The following are the tables according to the tests taken by the subjects. All fourth graders took the Stanford Achievement Test, Level I. Five seventh graders took the Stanford Achievement Test, Level II while one seventh grader took the Stanford Achievement Reading Test. The Helson Reading Intelligence Edition was taken by nine tenth graders while two tenth grade students took the Davis Reading Test. Grade scores are reported when available. Percentile is substituted for grade scores when necessary. Pre and post test scores are provided.

Table I presents the grade scores for the comprehension and the percentile scores for the vocabulary section of the Stanford Diagnostic Achievement Test, Level I.

TABLE 1

Pre-Test and Post-Experiment Scores for the
Stanford Achievement Test—Level II
(Grade 4 Pupils)

Student No.	Vocabulary		Comprehension	
	Pre-X	Post-X	Pre-X	Post-X
1	40/110	40/110	2.6	2.6
2	20/110	24/110	3.7	3.0
3	66/110	88/110	4.4	5.1
4	82/110	86/110	4.0	4.4
	3.5-4.5	100%		

The information presented in Table 2 consists of the vocabulary and comprehension scores for the five seventh graders who took the Stanford Achievement Test—Level II.

TABLE 2

Pre-Test and Post-Experiment Scores for the
Stanford Achievement Test—Level II
(Grade 7 Pupils)

Student No.	Vocabulary		Comprehension	
	Pre-X	Post-X	Pre-X	Post-X
5	16/110	32/110	4.3	5.1
6	14/110	8/110	5.2	5.5
7	34/110	30/110	6.7	7.5
8	30/110	50/110	5.7	4.3
9	44/110	58/110	6.7	6.7
	6.5-7.5	100%		

Vocabulary and comprehension scores for one seventh grade student, student number 10, who took the Gate Proficiency Reading Test, were as follows:

	Pre-III 6.2		Pre-III 7.0
Vocabulary		Comprehension	
	Post-III 7.3		Post-III 7.2

Table 3 presents grade scores for the tenth graders on the Helson Reading Test.

TABLE 3

Pre-Test and Post-Test Percent Scores for the
Helson Reading Test Revised Edition
(Grade 10 April)

Student No.	Vocabulary		Comprehension	
	Pre-A	Post-B	Pre-A	Post-B
11	7.0	6.9	5.9	5.4
12	5.8	5.9	5.0	5.3
13	8.5	9.1	6.0	5.5
14	6.3	7.8	5.2	4.9
15	7.8	7.5	6.0	4.7
16	8.8	9.9	6.0	6.9
17	8.5	7.8	8.5	8.9
18	6.8	9.4	7.5	5.3
19	10.5+	10.5+	10.5+	10.5+

Comprehension and speed percentile ranks on the Davis Reading Test are presented in Table 4 for two tenth grade students.

TABLE 4

Pre-Test and Post-Test Percentile Ranks:
Davis Reading Test
(Grade 10 Norms)

Student No.	Comprehension		Speed	
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test
20	11%ile	27%ile	36%ile	36%ile
21	70%ile 10.0	70%ile Norms	58%ile	68%ile

Questionnaire Responses

Questionnaire responses indicated on the first administration of the questionnaire are presented in Table 5. The labels, positive, negative, or indifferent were ascribed by the writer. A response was classified as "indifferent" if, in the writer's judgment, it carried neither a positive nor a negative feeling toward the topic. It showed lack of interest in the topic or lack of concern by the pupil. A response was judged "positive" if it seemed to evoke a positive reaction within the subject himself toward the questions. It may have indicated a realistic attitude toward himself

and his ability to succeed. The "negative" response indicated an unrealistic view toward himself or his ability. Both type of response may have shown a lack of desire to succeed.

TABLE 5

Student Response to First Administration of Questionnaire

Student No.	I			II			III			IV			V			VI		
	P	I	N	P	I	N	P	I	N	P	I	N	P	I	N	P	I	N
1		X					X	X							X	X		
2		X	X	X						X					X	X		
3		X		X						X					X	X		
4	X						X			X					X		X	
5	X			X			X			X					X	X		
6	X			X						X					X	X		
7	X			X						X					X	X		
8	X					X							X	X		X		
9		X		X						X			X		X	X		
10			X	X			X			X					X	X		
11	X			X						X					X	X		
12		X					X			X					X	X		X
13	X						X			X					X	X		
14	X			X			X			X			X		X	X		
15	X						X			X					X	X		
16		X		X						X			X		X	X		
17		X				X				X			X		X	X		
18	X			X			X			X					X	X		X
19		X		X						X			X		X	X		
20		X		X						X			X		X	X		
21	X			X			X			X			X		X	X		

The numbers, I through VI, pertain to the question to which the students were to respond by the choice of a statement and a that question. Various responses

The value of the responses indicated by the students on the questionnaires and reported in Tables 5 and 6 is limited for several reasons.

The nature of the questions themselves and the subjective assigning of positive, indifferent, and negative values caused some problems. After working with the subjects throughout the course program, it became clear to the writer that the subjects' choice of a response was not always for the same reason ascribed to it by the writer. The categorization of the responses based on the labels given to them by the writer became almost valueless due to the different interpretation and reasons for the choices by the subjects.

An internal criticism of the questionnaire resulted from a study of the responses to the two administrations of the questionnaire. The possibility of choosing an indifferent, positive, or negative response was unequal. For example, under Question I, a choice of two positive, two negative, and one indifferent response was provided. Under Question V, three negative, one positive, and one indifferent response were offered. The possibility of the choice of a specific type of answer was, therefore, not always the same from question to question and within a certain response group.

Thirdly, although almost all the students changed their responses on each group of questions from the first to the second administration of the questionnaire, many of the changes did not register as such on Table 6. Many students changed from one positive response to another positive response. For instance of the questionnaires would record those changes which are not evident in Table 6.

Although the results of the questionnaire as reported in Tables 5 and 6 are limited, the writer feels the administration of the questionnaire was of definite value both to himself and to the pupils. This value was not amenable to measurement within the design of the study. On the basis of the information presented in Tables 3 through 6 the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Out of the 21 students involved with this study, improvement in reading scores as presented by pre- and post-reading scores, was shown in twelve of the cases. Seven students' scores went down and two stayed the same.
2. No definite relationship was seen between subject difficulty as manifested by answers chosen on the first and second administration

of the questionnaires to the reading test score changes. Changes in responses on the questionnaire did not necessarily correspond with changes in reading test scores.

Suggestions for Further Study

Reflection on the study and the consideration of certain changes could provide for the anticipation of more successful results in the future. Suggestions for further study include:

1. Careful organization of a constructive reading-counseling program subject to whatever modifications results of protocols may indicate.
2. Further study concentrating upon greater clarity in measuring the student's own estimate of his reading ability and self-evaluation.
3. Introduction of the counseling approach into the classroom. Teachers could become the medium through which a positive self-concept could be developed.
4. Continuation of the Youth Opportunity Program, beginning with students in the primary grades if possible. Any problems may be alleviated by attempting to solve them as early as possible.

APPENDIX

Young People's Interest in Reading Attitude Scale

I. Which statement best describes you as a good estimate of your reading ability?

1. P I read fairly well, but I don't like to read unless I have to.
2. I I like to have people read to me—it's too much work.
3. P I'm not a very good reader, but I usually try very hard.
4. H It's impossible for me to read with any confidence so I've given up trying.
5. P I like to read and usually read at least one book a month.
6. I I don't mind reading.

II. Which statement best describes your desire to read at home or at school?

1. P I don't like to read at home or I don't try very hard.
2. I I like to read at school but I don't like to read at home.
3. H I don't like to read at school, but I don't like to read at home.
4. P I'd like to do both at home and at school, but I find it very difficult.
5. I I'm satisfied with my reading at school.
6. H I don't read at home, but I do in school.

III. Which statement would you choose as best describing how you feel toward school?

1. H I don't like school very much.
2. I School's all right, but I've got many other things I'd rather do.
3. P I don't usually do well in school and that's probably why I don't enjoy it.
4. P I like school.
5. H I don't like school at all-I'm too dumb in school.

IV. Which statement would you say best describes how you feel toward teachers?

1. H I don't like teachers because they always yell at me.
2. P Most teachers are all right.
3. H Teachers usually give me bad grades so I don't like them very much.
4. P Some teachers are nice.
5. H I just don't like teachers.
6. H I like most teachers, but they just don't like me.

V. Which of the following statements do you think best describes your behavior in class?

1. T F I usually get blamed for anything that goes wrong in class.
2. T F I'm not involved in much trouble in class.
3. T F I don't like school so I usually just goof off.
4. T F I get in trouble in school because of the kids who sit around me.
5. T F I don't cause much trouble in class.

VI. Which statement would you say about yourself?

1. T F I could probably get along better in class with the other students if I tried harder.
2. T F I get along all right with the other students.
3. T F I'm usually in trouble with someone, but I don't care.
4. T F I don't seem to get along with most of my classmates, but I don't know why.
5. T F I get along with a lot of my classmates.

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