THE EFFECTS OF A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHING UNIT ON ADOLESCENT SELF-ESTEEM

THESIS

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By

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The purpose of this study was to test the effectiveness of a teaching unit for improving self-esteem in high school students. To measure the level of self-esteem, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was chosen. The data were compiled from twenty-one high school students in a rural Texas high school.

The female level of self-esteem was significantly lower than the male self-esteem level prior to studying the class unit. There were no significant differences in levels of self-esteem on the pretest and post test, although there was a slight improvement in the female level.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Significance

The areas of self-concept and self-esteem have been examined extensively in research literature; the two are commonly equated. Most of the studies conducted have been concerned with measurement of levels of self-esteem among children, adolescents, and adults. Little information has been published in relation to teaching specifically about self-esteem, although characteristics of teachers and teacher techniques which seem to help increase students' self-esteem have been described by several authors (3, 4, 6).

According to Rosenberg (7), self-esteem is probably the single most important aspect of self-concept. Hammer (4) reported that a positive self-concept is related to better personal and social adjustments, higher school achievement, and more success in all areas of life. Low self-esteem results in academic and learning difficulties (5). Mussen, Conger, and Kagan (5) pointed out that children high in their self-estimations approached tasks and other people with the expectation of being well received and successful. Persons with low self-esteem lack trust in themselves and are apprehensive about expressing unpopular or unusual ideas (5, p. 492).
Self-concept is a real concern of those interested in humanistic education, not only because attitudes and values an individual has about himself are learned, but because one cannot learn to understand and accept other people until he or she understands and accepts himself or herself. Apparently an understanding of perception and self-esteem are basic ingredients in setting realistic goals. Youth today need guidance in making sound decisions and setting realistic goals to insure them more successful and creative lives (1).

The teenage years are critical in preparing for adulthood. The adolescent's self-concept affects his or her capacity to cope with the environment. A positive self-concept during adolescence guides the individual's future in a favorable direction. In the past, little information about self-concept and self-esteem was given in high school textbooks. Foster (2), Ryder (8), and Westlake (10) are a few of the authors of the most recent high school home economics textbooks who deal more with self-concept and ways the individual can build a more positive self-concept. Thus, more people are becoming aware of the importance of self-concept.

Teachers need to be aware of the importance of self-esteem and that their expectations of students can have an influence on a student's self-concept and self-esteem (3). Hamachek (3) reports that teachers who show an active personal interest in their students' progress are more likely to be successful in enhancing students' confidence in themselves.
than teachers who are more distant and impersonal.

Self-esteem, an important aspect of self-concept, appears to be related to many areas of human development. Teaching adolescents about the factors contributing to positive self-esteem may assist them in raising their self-esteem which could possibly help them to cope with life situations more successfully.

Statement of the Problem

Different groups have been compared on levels of self-esteem. However, no major study has been reported on how teachers can positively influence their students' self-esteem through the use of a teaching unit.

The purpose of this study is to measure high school students' self-esteem before and after studying a class unit on self-esteem.

Research Questions

1. Is there a difference between students' pre- and post-self-esteem scores?
2. Is there a difference between male and female levels of self-esteem prior to studying a unit on self-esteem?
3. Is there a difference between the self-esteem scores of males and females after participating in a unit on self-esteem?
4. Does the class unit affect the self-esteem of lower-achieving students differently than higher-achieving students?
Methodology

Twenty-one high school students enrolled in a consumer education class at a small rural Texas high school participated in a three-week unit on self-esteem taught by the researcher. There were six males and fifteen females in the class. A majority of the students were juniors and caucasian.

Instruments

One program *Achievement Skills: Guidelines for Personal Success* is designed to enhance the self-esteem of high school students (1). This program was developed by the Thomas Jefferson Research Center in California. Extensive research was done involving executives, psychologists, psychiatrists, management consultants, scientists, and educators in order to develop this program. There is no statistical information on the program.

To measure the level of self-esteem of high school students before and after participating in the program, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, a ten-item Guttman Scale, was chosen (7). Silbur and Tippett (9) describe the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale as measuring global self-esteem, that is, measuring the overall feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of self.

Definition of Terms

1. Self-esteem is a feeling that one is a valuable person and takes pride in oneself.
2. Self-concept is a mental picture of oneself.

3. Perception is the process by which the mind interprets and gives meaning to those things taken in through the senses (1).

4. Self-perception is the way in which a person recognizes and understands himself (1).

5. Personal potential is doing the best a person is capable of doing.

6. Objective is a specific statement in measurable terms regarding what is to be accomplished and when it is to be completed (1).

7. Goal is the end toward which effort is directed.

8. Goal-setting is the process of establishing goals and objectives, planning to achieve them, and evaluating results.

9. Respect for others is to show consideration or esteem for other people.

10. Self-understanding is being able to interpret one's emotional, social, intellectual, and physical assets and limitations (1).
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Self-Esteem/Self-Concept

Hammer (13) reports a variety of terms such as self-image, self-esteem, self-regard, self-perception, and self-appraisal are used synonymously with self-concept. Self-concept appears to be related to every area of human behavior. The author (13) also indicates that if a child believes he or she is a successful person, he or she most likely will be. Evidence indicates that children and adults with poor self-concepts, when compared to those with positive self-concepts, are more anxious and less well adjusted, less popular, less effective in groups, less honest about themselves, less curious, and more defensive (13).

Self, self-concept, and self-esteem are overlapping terms and each refers to a particular component of a person's total personality (12). Hamachek (12, p. 4) indicates that feelings of self-worth and self-esteem grow in part from our perceptions of where we see ourselves standing in relation to persons whose skills, abilities, and talents, and aptitudes are similar to our own. How one feels about himself or herself directly affects how he or she lives and how he or she relates to others (3). Christian (6) suggests that it is how individuals
experience negative rather than positive characteristics that plays the determining role in self-esteem.

The self-esteem motive influences what one says, how one acts, what one attends to, how one directs his or her efforts, how one responds to stimuli (33). The individual is constantly on the alert to cope with potential threats to his self-esteem. Rosenberg (33) points out that the "looking-glass" principle is the view that one comes to see himself or herself as one believes others see them. There is a strong and definite relationship between the "perceived self" and the individual's own picture of what he or she is actually like (19, 33).

Kitchens and Estrada (19) report that the way people picture themselves will determine to a great extent the kind of behavior which is characteristic of them. A person who visualizes himself or herself as capable and friendly will act confident and be friendly. A person who imagines himself or herself to be inferior may act timid or retiring or may attempt to act superior to compensate for self-doubt. The self-image of a person is composed of how he or she thinks others view him or her and his or her behavior. This self-image is created by interaction in which the individual engages throughout life (19).

According to Rice (27), the subject of self-concept and self-esteem continues to receive more attention than probably any other topic in adolescent psychology. The goal in personality development is for individuals to discover what they are and want to be; thus they are able to accept themselves
and live as themselves without conflict (27, p. 219). Their self-perception and relationships with others bring self-acceptance and self-esteem.

The process of altering the self-image goes this way: a new reflection, a new experience, or a new bit of growth leads to a new success or failure, which in turn leads to a new or revised statement about the self (4, p. 37). High self-esteem is the mainspring for motivation and strongly affects whether a person uses the abilities he or she has. Building self-esteem in children actively nurtures intellectual development, motivation, and creative expression (4). Rosenberg (33, p. 54) points out that self-esteem is a "dominant motive in the individual's motivational system." The key to inner peace and happy living is high self-esteem, for it lies behind successful involvement with others (4, p. 26).

According to Horrocks and Jackson (14), adolescents are more insecure than children. Adults' problems of self-esteem are simpler than those of adolescents. Adolescents' concepts of self are being modified, and they are more analytic not only about themselves but about the world in general. Some of the best ways to change an individual's self-esteem, in a positive direction, are successes, inculcation of ideals, encouragement of the individual's aspirations, and help in building defenses against onslaughts on self-perception (14, p. 131).

Kinch (18, p. 481) points out that the individual's con-
ception of himself or herself emerges from social interaction and, in turn, guides or influences the behavior of that individual. Wren (41) found that the decisions one makes may bear little relation to the actual experiences he or she has had. These experiences are interpreted through one's image of himself or herself. If you have many negative self-attitudes, then each experience is interpreted in a negative light (41).

Rogers (30) reports that throughout adolescence each individual is preoccupied with attempting to close the gap between the self as he or she perceives it and his or her ideal self. According to Ringness (28), one's self-concept is the result of the feedback he or she gets from his or her experiences, especially the ways he or she feel others evaluate him or her. The adolescent is especially concerned about how others regard him or her in his or her various roles; that is, he or she depends on others for feedback concerning his or her success in these roles (30). He or she continuously reshapes his or her efforts and self-image as he or she receives compliments or negative feedback. Such feedback comes from a variety of sources: parents, siblings, peers, teachers, and others (28).

Significance of Self-Esteem to Behavior

Rice (27) states that self-concept and self-esteem are important and have a direct relationship to mental health, interpersonal relationships, school progress, vocational aspi-
rations, delinquency, alcoholism, drug addiction, depression, and anxiety.

**Mental Health**

Self-esteem has been called "the survival of the soul"; certainly, it is the ingredient that gives dignity to human existence (27, p. 220). Self-esteem develops from human interaction in which the self is considered important to someone. Rice (27) indicates that there is a definite relationship between mental health and identity achievement.

According to Maslow (22), satisfaction of the self-esteem need (high self-esteem) leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability, and adequacy, of being useful and necessary in the world. But thwarting of these needs produces feelings of inferiority, of weakness, and of helplessness. These feelings, in turn, give rise to either basic discouragement or compensatory or neurotic trends. Maslow (22) further states that the most stable and healthy self-esteem is based on deserved respect from others rather than on external fame or unwarranted adulation.

Wells and Marwell (40) report that healthy or normal self-esteem is assumed to be related to behaviors and traits which are similarly healthy and normal. A favorable self-concept is essential to personal happiness and effective functioning (24, 25). Persons who seek psychological and psychiatric help frequently acknowledge that they suffer from feel-
ings of inadequacy and unworthiness. They tend to perceive themselves as helpless and inferior, have difficulty in either giving or receiving love, and tend to feel isolated and alone. They are likely to feel guilty, ashamed, or depressed, and to derogate their own potential and accomplishments (24).

Interpersonal Relationships

Rogers (31) points out that the adolescent's self-concept importantly affects his or her capacity to cope with his or her personal and nonpersonal environment. Adolescents' self-concepts, built upon their limited childhood experiences, hinder them in relating to new and varied situations (31). In an empirical study of nearly 2,000 children and adolescents, it was found that striking sex differences in self-concepts emerge during the adolescent period (32). Rosenberg and Simmons (32) conclude that girls are considerably more self-conscious than boys, more vulnerable to criticism, and more concerned with promoting interpersonal harmony. Overall, adolescent girls are increasingly "people-oriented" while boys stress achievement and competence. It is suggested that these differences reflect the social definitions of sex roles. The authors indicate that women are socialized to feel inferior and thus have lower self-esteem (32).

A study conducted over a three-year period with boys as subjects indicates that low self-esteem leads to multiple interpersonal problems (17). Kahle, Kulka, and Klingel (17)
report that the results have much to do with social-adaptation rather than the individual's self-perception. This study does not imply that low self-esteem cannot be reversed. Further, the authors support the importance ascribed to self-esteem (17). Rice (27) reports that the acceptance of self is positively and significantly correlated with acceptance of, and by, others. Therefore, there is a close relationship between self-acceptance and social adjustment (27, p. 221).

School Progress

Teachers can have an enormous influence on a student's self-attitudes, particularly as these attitudes are related to his or her feelings about being able to think, answer questions, and solve problems (12). Teachers are quickly established as "significant" persons in the lives of most students. Hamachek (12) states that a teacher becomes significant to a student because he or she may be the only person who makes that student feel like an individual of worth and value. Other teachers are significant because they have the ultimate responsibility of evaluating and recording a student's ability to do schoolwork and to compete with other students (12).

Teachers can either help students recognize their strengths and possibilities, or they can remind them of their weaknesses and shortcomings. The idea of the self-fulfilling prophecies works in the classroom, in the sense that one person's expectations of another person's behavior somehow comes
to be realized (12, 25). Briggs (4) states that one cause of misbehavior is a negative self-concept. The student who believes he or she is bad or dislikes himself or herself lives up to the role assigned to him or her. Usually the more a student misbehaves, the more people scold, punish, or reject him or her. The worse the person's behavior, the greater his or her cry for approval (4). Briggs (4) reports that the person with high self-esteem is rarely the problem child.

According the Hamachek (11), how a student performs depends not only on how intelligent he or she actually is, but also on how intelligent he or she thinks he or she is. Each student brings to school with him or her a certain attitude about his or her ability to compete and succeed. His or her self-attitudes either motivate him or her to participate with his or her classmates or to sit quietly in hopes of not being called on. What happens to a person as he or she goes through school must certainly rank as one of the most important experiences in his or her life (11).

The personal, social, and academic difficulties commonly associated with a low self-concept begin early in elementary school and affect a person's performance in the academic as well as social world (11). Too much failure in school leads to low self-esteem and possible dropping out of school (10, 12). Hamachek (11) reports that anxiety, self-concept, and the ability to engage in deliberate thinking are closely interrelated. Low self-esteem persons, when faced with anxiety-
provoking situations, are inclined to make hasty, impulsive judgments on exam questions. On the other hand, the high self-esteem person, when faced with anxiety-provoking situations, is more deliberate and careful in making judgments (11, p. 180). Hamachek (11) further reports that there is a strong significant relationship between self-concept and academic under-achievement and that this relationship is stronger for boys than for girls.

Significant learning may take place if the teacher can accept the student as he or she is and understand the feelings he or she possesses (28, 29, p. 287). Successful students feel more sense of personal worth and somewhat better about themselves (27). Rice (27) cites one reason is that students who have confidence in themselves have the courage to try and are motivated to live up to what they believe about themselves. According to the Coleman Report, as Kagan and Havemann (16) point out, the psychological atmosphere of a school is much more important than its physical facilities. Most important, a pupil is likely to do well in school if he or she has a good self-concept and a sense of control over his or her environment (16).

According to Kizziar and Hagedorn (20), statistics indicate the severity of the problem of the school dropout in our society. It is difficult to identify a potential dropout. However, one causative factor stands out in almost every study: dropouts are loners who are much more dissatisfied
with their peer relationships in school than are the high school graduates. The dropout frequently rejects self and school and usually feels unsure about his or her school status. Also, the dropout is less respected than his or her classmates by his or her teachers, often expresses hostility toward authority figures, and does not appear to have well-defined goals. Further, research suggests that at high school age, thirty percent of the suicides occur among dropouts (20).

Vocational Aspirations

Rice (27) reports that the desire and expectation to get ahead vocationally depend greatly upon a person's self-esteem. The author continues with the report that women who combine a career and marriage tend to have higher self-esteem than those who become exclusively homemakers (27). Boys who aspire to upward mobility also show a strong sense of self-esteem whereas downwardly mobile boys more often wish for changes in self that are so extensive that they indicate self-rejection (27, p. 222-223).

Low and high self-esteem adolescents report different desires in career positions (27). In general, those with low self-esteem want to avoid positions where they will be forced to exercise leadership, and they want to avoid jobs where others dominate them. Avoiding leadership or supervision by others is a way of avoiding criticism or judgment. The occupational predicament of the low self-esteem person may be summarized as follows: the very thing that makes him or her so
strongly desire success also makes him or her anticipate failure and very likely helps to produce failure (27, p. 223).

**Delinquency**

There is a close relationship between delinquency and self-concept (10, 23, 27). Delinquent youths tend to show lower self-esteem than do non-delinquent youths. Rice (27) indicates that their delinquency may be over-compensation for their inadequate self-concepts.

**Alcoholism/Drug Addiction**

Although many aspects of alcoholism and drug addiction are not yet fully understood, these reactions represent two ways in which an individual who feels threatened and inadequate may respond (7, 10). Alcohol, the "socially approved" drug, is becoming increasingly popular with young people. Many adults are too busy attacking adolescent's preferred drugs and too hypocritical to mention alcohol. Adolescents are quick to point out that alcohol is America's number one health problem (20).

As a group, alcoholics tend to have the following similar characteristics: low frustration tolerance, inability to endure tension, a tendency to "act out" conflicts, and feelings of inadequacy and self-devaluation. Many alcoholics appear to be immature, dependent individuals who have an unrealistically high level of aspiration and an inability to tolerate failure. Many people who use alcohol and drugs today
apparently do so less because they are seeking ways to reduce stress than because it is regarded in their social group as the "in" thing to do (7, 20). According to Mitic (23), educators should consider self-esteem building activities when devising and incorporating alcohol education programs directed at the teenage population.

Kizziar and Hagedorn (20) report that many young people who are extremely knowledgeable about the dangers of drug abuse will still use drugs because the risks are less threatening to them than are rejection and isolation. Some even pretend they use drugs to impress their peers (20). Rice (27) cites that a study concerning the raising of self-esteem scores of troubled youths, eighty-one percent of whom were using some form of drugs, showed a decrease or elimination of drug-taking after the youths attended a community counseling center where psychotherapy, group activity, and other therapeutic techniques were used. The importance of the study is that the self-images and lives of many of the adolescents were changed, although with difficulty (27, p. 230).

Depression and Anxiety

Battle (2) conducted a study among students referred to the school psychologist for various reasons. His findings indicate the correlations between self-esteem and depression were significant. Depressed individuals almost always possess low self-esteem (2). Rosenberg (34) also reports that clinical observations show that depression often accompanies low
self-esteem.

Anxiety tends to generate low self-esteem and that low self-esteem may generate anxiety (11, 27, 34). Factors contributing to anxiety are (1) instability of self-image, (2) the "presenting self," (3) vulnerability, and (4) feelings of isolation (34, p. 151). People with low self-esteem are much more likely than those with high self-esteem to have unstable self-concepts. Rosenberg (34) reports that the "frame of reference theory" is assimilating new experiences or stimuli into already existing frames of reference (34, p. 153). The individual's self-attitude is probably the major single anchorage point to which new stimuli are related. If a person has unclear, unstable attitudes and perceptions of himself or herself, then he or she is deprived of this frame of reference. This deprivation is almost certainly anxiety-provoking (34, p. 153).

The "presenting self" causes people with low self-esteem to present a false front or face to the world. This false front, according to Rosenberg (34), is essentially a coping mechanism to convince others of one's worth. The person with low self-esteem would seem to be sensitive to any evidence in the experience of his or her life which might prove his or her worthlessness or incompetence, which in other words means the person is highly vulnerable (34, p. 157-158). Another way a person who thinks himself or herself unworthy may retreat from the real world into the world of imagination, which would be
isolation from the people around him or her (34).

**Stability in Self-Concept**

There is some disagreement concerning stability of self-concept during the adolescent years. Carlson (5) points out that little is known about stability and change in the self-concept during adolescence. The basic problem would seem to require longitudinal study of the structure of the self-concept over a period of adolescent development. Such studies, according to Carlson (5), are rare. Carlson (5) and Engel (9) both report that self-esteem is a relatively stable dimension of the self and one which is independent of sex role.

Rice (27) suggests that self-concept stabilizes gradually and is relatively steady during adolescence. In spite of the relative stability of the self during adolescence, youths are extremely sensitive to the evaluation and opinions of others. Rice (27) reports that self-image can be affected, at least temporarily, by important events and changes in life. By age fifteen, self-image tends to become much more stable. According to Rice (27), there is a decline in positive self-esteem after age fifteen. In addition, the concept of self is not completely solidified by adolescence although recognizable trends and traits persist. Assisting the adolescent who has a negative identity to find a more positive image is a major undertaking, but it can be done. Change is easier during adolescence than in later adulthood (27).

Rogers (31) reports that during the adolescent period,
the self-image is being crystallized at the same time that it is being revised. Expanding experiences characteristic of adolescence constantly force re-evaluation of the self and color feelings of adequacy or failure (31, p. 50, 38).

According to Rosenberg (33), self-concept changes occur in early adolescence and these changes persist into later adolescence. At the same time that respect for parental knowledge declines in early adolescence, the adolescent's confidence in his own expertise increases, causing a sharp shift in the locus of self-knowledge from without to within (33, p. 255).

Ludwig and Maehr (21) state that development and change in the concept of self are direct functions of the response of significant others and that the concept of self has a predictable effect on behavior in general. According to Ludwig and Maehr (21), the reaction of significant others did result in changed self-ratings.

Protinsky and Farrier (26) report that the pre-adolescent experiences the most instability while the early, middle, and late adolescents become relatively more stable as age increases. The authors further report that middle adolescents experienced the highest degree of self-consciousness whereas the pre-adolescents and late adolescents exhibited less (26). Simmons, Rosenberg, and Rosenberg (37) report that early adolescents experience the most self-consciousness and the pre-adolescents the least.
Simmons and Rosenberg (36) report that there is more disturbance among white adolescent females than among white males or black females in grades three through twelve. The authors (36, p. 229) conclude that white girls become much more self-conscious and show greater self-image instability and somewhat lower self-esteem.

Hurlock (15) states that by adolescence the self-concept is firmly established though often it is revised later as the individual undergoes new personal and social experiences. Self-acceptance is the only dimension of self-concept studied by Ellis, Gehman, and Katzenmeyer (8) that was found to be unstable through ages thirteen to eighteen. They conclude that there is a "reorganization of boundaries of self-concept" which occurs near age sixteen (8, p. 9).

**Enhancing Self-Esteem**

The role of the school in the development and change of self-esteem plays an integral part in the basis of the educational system (10, 23, p. 205). Within this environment the student is subjected to the critical evaluations of both peers and teachers and is reminded constantly of either his or her failings or shortcomings or strengths and possibilities. The school program which emphasizes the value of the individual and helps him or her to make effective adjustments to other people is truly preparing students for the future (23). In effect, by helping the adolescent gain self-esteem, a likely
outcome will be the development of a self that will be less threatened in the future and more adequate in exploring the environment (23, p. 206).

Hurlock (15) reports that the school influences the student's personality in the areas of both traits and information of the self-concept. The teacher's influence is second only to that of the parents, just as the influence of the classroom is second to that of the home (15, p. 477).

Street (39) reports that tenth grade students need a concentrated personal growth and development program. Teachers and counselors should first have an understanding of what to expect in the development of self-concept and social relationships among high school students (39). Hamachek (11) points out that a person's feelings about himself or herself are learned responses. Sometimes bad feelings have to be unlearned and new feelings acquired. This process is not always easy but it is possible, according to Hamachek (11, p. 251).

Among the important ways of maintaining and enhancing the self-concept is self-actualization, or the process of becoming one's best and truest self (30, p. 50). The term self-actualization implies progression through sequential and increasingly higher levels of motives and organization (30, p. 50-51). Youth often need guidance to make satisfactory progress toward self-actualization in today's complex world (1, 10, 22, 30).

Through a review of the literature, one program was found
to be used by classroom teachers in relation to enhancing self-esteem in high school youth (1). The program is based primarily on the motivational theories of Abraham Maslow (1, 22). The success of the program does not depend upon a specific level of education or intelligence. Teaching techniques suggested are lectures, large group discussions, small group discussions, and personal involvement activities (1).

The purpose of the unit on perception is to help students define perception and identify the role perception plays in their lives. The unit concerning self-esteem is to help the students become more aware of those factors which contribute to their high self-esteem and lend direction for improving self-esteem. The unit on developing potential is to motivate students to use more of their potential (1).

During the program, the terms goals and objectives are defined, and the students made short-range and long-range objectives for themselves. A person’s perception of others is important to one’s self-perception; this area is included in one unit of the program. The last unit to be used from the program deals with self-understanding (1).

Summary

Self-esteem seems to play an important role in the way in which people cope with their environment. Levels of self-esteem vary with experiences during adolescence. Although authors do not agree on when self-esteem stabilizes, adolescence
is a time of much change. High self-esteem leads to self-confidence and feelings of worth. These qualities are some that can contribute to personal happiness.

The school and teachers have much effect on the students' level of self-esteem. Educators need to be aware of the importance of self-esteem and how it effects the achievement of the students. Enhancing students' self-esteem can be achieved through programs of group instruction.


CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE/METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample consisted of twenty-one high school students enrolled in a consumer education class at a small rural high school in Texas. There were six males and fifteen females in the class. The class consisted of one sophomore, eighteen juniors, and two seniors. A majority of the students were caucasian, with only two black females in the class.

Instrument

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale developed by Morris Rosenberg was chosen to measure the level of self-esteem of high school students (2). This instrument was administered prior to beginning instruction from the program Achievement Skills: Guidelines for Personal Success (1) and at the end of the program.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is a ten-item Guttman scale. Research literature suggests that the items have satisfactory internal reliability and validity (2, 3). Silbur and Tippett (3) report that the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale appears to measure the subject's over-all feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with self or global self-esteem.
The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is based on "contrived items" and yields a seven-point scale, a range of zero to six (2, 3). A score of zero means the person has high self-esteem, that is, the individual respects himself or herself and considers himself or herself worthy. A score of six means the person lacks respect for himself or herself and considers himself or herself unworthy or inadequate, that is, that the individual has low self-esteem. A score for Scale I is contrived from the combined responses to items three, seven, and nine (2). If the subject answers two out of three positively, he or she receives a positive (that is, low self-esteem) score for Scale Item I (2). Scale Item II score is contrived from the combined responses to items four and five (2). One out of two or two out of two positive responses are considered to be positive for Scale Item II (2). Scale Items III, IV, and V are scored as positive or negative based on responses to items one, eight, and ten (2). Scale Item VI score is contrived from the combined responses to items two and six (2). One out of two or two out of two positive responses are considered positive (2). The score sheet used by the researcher is included in Appendix II (asterisks indicate positive responses as determined by Morris Rosenberg).

Methodology

A control group was chosen to take the pretest to see if the sample was typical of the students in the high school. An English class in the high school was chosen as the control
group because of the similarities to the sample. The control group consisted of eight males and eleven females. There were eighteen juniors and one senior in the class. The instrument was administered on the same day to the sample and the control group.

**Achievement Skills: Guidelines for Personal Success** (1) was the instructional program chosen for the purpose of enhancing self-esteem in high school students. Six of the ten units of study were used. The units chosen were Perception, Self-Esteem, Developing Your Potential, Goals and Objectives, Respect for Others, and Self-Understanding. The units chosen by the researcher seemed most relevant for the group of students involved. The unit on decision-making was excluded because similar material had previously been presented. The unit introduction and the instrument were completed during one class period. The teaching units were covered in the next fourteen class periods. Worksheets contained in the program, to coincide with each unit of study, were developed at the Thomas Jefferson Research Center.

The purpose of the unit on perception was to provide the students with ways to perceive themselves more accurately and objectively (1). The students defined perception after a group discussion. Next, students became aware of how people perceive—through taste, sight, touch, hearing, and memory. Through group discussion the students identified those beliefs, habits, teachings, experiences, attitudes affected by their
perceptions and the goals, values, objectives, and ideals that were affected by a person's perceptions (1).

In the next section of the perception unit, the students related their perception of themselves to goals for school--educational, recreational, and peer relations. Three work-sheets in the program were developed for this purpose--"Self-Perception," "How Do You Perceive Yourself?" and "How I Perceive My Best Friend." There was a discussion concerning perception of oneself to life goals (goals after high school). The worksheet "Decision for Life" was completed by the students concerning their life goals.

Students became aware of factors contributing to their high self-esteem and the importance of high self-esteem in regard to success in the unit on self-esteem (1). There were lecture and discussion on the importance of self-esteem and factors contributing to high self-esteem. The students chose a person of fact or fiction who seemed to have high self-esteem and related those factors that contributed to that person's high self-esteem during class discussion.

Next, the students completed a worksheet on which they rated themselves on factors contributing to high self-esteem. On the last worksheet in this unit, "My Plan to Build High Self-Esteem," students chose the items which they believed would improve their self-esteem and listed the factors necessary to satisfy their goals and objectives in a career, personal relations, recreation, and social life.
The purpose of the next unit of study was to motivate the students to use more of their potential. The assumption involved is that most people do not realize their own potential (1). The first section dealt with a discussion of potential and success. The story of "Butterflies are Free" was related, that is, when one emerges from his or her cocoon one is free to be what he or she wants to be (1). The story of Jonathan Livingston Seagull was discussed—the seagull never gave up trying. The students completed an "Inventory of Potential" to learn their strengths and weaknesses.

The students imagined themselves as reaching their full potential. The story of Don Quixote was told. The worksheet "Horizons Unlimited" was used for the fantasy situation of reaching their full potential. In the last section of this unit, the students completed the worksheet "Operation: Potential." They developed a plan of action in developing their potential in one area of ability.

The unit on goals and objectives helped students become aware of the importance of planning and goal-setting techniques (1). The first worksheet, "Where Am I Right Now? ... and Where Do I Want To Go?" dealt with discovering where an individual is and where he or she wants to be in areas such as potential, leadership ability, work ability, memory, ambition, and self-confidence.

The students completed a worksheet, "What's My Goal?" after a discussion on goal setting. Students became aware of
goal-setting terms—goal, objective, plan, evaluation. In
the worksheet "Writing Goals and Objectives," students de-
defined these terms in their own words and answered questions
concerning the discussion.

In the next section, the students learned to write an
affirmation (a statement of belief) as a basis for the goal-
setting process in a worksheet (1). The purpose was to help
create a clear mental picture of themselves when a goal is
accomplished (1). The students were asked to check their
daily progress toward their statement of affirmation.

The feelings of others are important to a person's self-
perception, and how an individual perceives others is also im-
portant (1). One way a person increases his or her perception
of others is through respect of another person (1). The pur-
pose of the unit Respect for Others was to assist students in
recognizing indicators of respect and the meaning of respect
for others. Following a discussion about respect, the stu-
dents completed the worksheet "Respect for Others," in which
they defined respect, explained the reason(s) respect was
important to them, explained how they showed respect for oth-
ers, and identified how they know others have respect for them.

Next, the students were divided into small groups in or-
der to participate in discussions about factors indicating
respect as suggested by the activity given to the group. One
activity given to one group was to make a chart showing ways
a person might earn respect in the classroom. The last work-
sheet in this unit, "Respecting Others," was completed after a discussion concerning analyzing a person's feelings toward others without making quick judgments.

The last unit of study concerned self-understanding. There was a lecture concerning self-actualization and the ideas of Abraham Maslow. The areas discussed included emotional maturity, social competence, intellectual capacity, and physical ability, and how a person's self-image relates to a person's plans for the future (1). The worksheet "This Is Me" brought together the items discussed in this unit. This enabled each student to plan the major goal in his life and describe their emotional attributes, social attributes, intellectual ability, physical capacity, weaknesses, and plans to eliminate weaknesses (1).

Procedure

The units of study chosen from Achievement Skills: Guidelines for Personal Success were presented by the researcher on consecutive school days during the second period. Attendance was carefully monitored. The data collected from the one student who missed twenty percent or more of instructional time was dropped from the analysis of data.


CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The data were compiled from twenty-one high school students, six males and fifteen females, enrolled in a consumer education class. The findings were analyzed and interpreted using t tests for related samples and t tests for independent samples. Significance was tested at the .05 level for each research question. The instrument was scored on a seven-point scale with a range of scores from zero to six. A score of zero denotes high self-esteem, and a score of six denotes low self-esteem. The control group was compared to the sample using t test. At the .05 level of significance, no significant differences were found. The mean score of the males in the control group was 2.25 and the males in the experimental group was 1.00 as shown in Table I.

TABLE I

SELF-ESTEEM MEAN SCORES OF CONTROL GROUP AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The mean score of the females in the control group was 2.00 and 2.20 for the females in the experimental group. The figures show a wider variation in the mean scores of the males than in those of the females.

Research question number one was "Is there a difference between students' pre- and post- self-esteem scores?" At the .05 level of significance, no differences were found. The mean score on the pretest for the group was 1.86, as shown in Table II.

TABLE II

SELF-ESTEEM MEAN SCORES OF EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Post test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean score on the post test for the group was 1.52. The figures indicate that the group's self-esteem scores increased slightly from the pretest to the post test.

Research question number two was "Is there a difference between male and female levels of self-esteem prior to studying a unit on self-esteem?" At the .05 level of significance, significant differences were found. The mean score of the males on the pretest was 1.00 and of the females was 2.20, as
shown in Table II. The figures show the males had a higher level of self-esteem than the females prior to studying the class unit on self-esteem.

Research question number three was "Is there a difference between the self-esteem scores of males and females after participating in a unit on self-esteem?" At the .05 level of significance, no differences were found. The mean score of the males on the post test was 1.33 and 1.60 for the females, as shown in Table II. The findings indicate that the males' level of self-esteem was slightly lower on the post test than on the pretest. The females' level of self-esteem was higher on the post test, indicating a slight increase in their level of self-esteem.

Research question number four was "Does the class unit affect the self-esteem of lower-achieving students differently than higher-achieving students?" As shown in Table III, the three students whose grade point average was 89.5 and above were defined by the researcher as higher-achieving. Four students whose grade average was 79 or below were defined as lower-achieving. At the .05 level of significance, no differences were found between scores of higher-achieving and lower-achieving students after studying the class unit. This finding indicates that the class unit did not affect the higher-achieving students any differently than the lower-achieving students.
TABLE III
GRADE POINT AVERAGES AND SELF-ESTEEM MEAN SCORES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean Scores on Pretest</th>
<th>Mean Scores on Post Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>89.5 or</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89-86</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
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<td>85-80</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79-70</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

The teaching units were divided into lessons although the number of lessons were not equal to the number of class periods allotted for each unit. As a result, the researcher had to divide the lessons appropriately among the designated class periods. The students actively participated in discussions and in completion of the worksheets with a few exceptions.

The Self-Esteem unit had to be expanded by the researcher for use of the two allotted class periods. The background information needed as a basis for discussion was adapted from the Creative Living textbook (2, p. 6-9). In the unit Developing Your Potential, the worksheet "Horizons Unlimited" concerning a fantasy situation was difficult for the students to
The terminology in the worksheet "Where Am I Right Now... and Where Do I Want To Go?" was too juvenile for these high school students. Overall the students responded well to the teaching unit.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to measure high school students' self-esteem before and after studying a class unit on self-esteem. The sample consisted of twenty-one students, six males and fifteen females, enrolled in a consumer education class at a small rural high school in Texas. Data obtained from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, used as the pre-test and post test, were compiled and analyzed using t tests.

Conclusions

The female level of self-esteem was significantly lower than the male self-esteem level prior to studying the class unit. This finding indicates that the sample is typical, that is, females having lower self-esteem than males, as stated in the review of literature. There were no significant differences in male and female levels of self-esteem on the post test. The impact of the class unit on the level of self-esteem might have been more apparent with a larger sample.

The class unit did not affect the higher-achieving students differently than the lower-achieving ones. A larger sample and/or longer class unit might have more impact on the students' level of self-esteem.
Recommendations

The study was limited to a class of twenty-one students, a majority of whom were juniors in high school and caucasians. There were very few higher-achieving and lower-achieving students in the sample. There was no prior statistical information on the program used for the class unit on self-esteem (1). Further use of the program with a wider range of students should be done before determining whether or not the program can enhance the self-esteem of high school students.

Teachers should be aware of the other factors involved in students' self-esteem, such as the influence of peers, parents, and other teachers, that could have an effect on students at the same time the teaching unit is being presented. The attitude of the teacher presenting the units of study could have an influence on the effectiveness of the class unit. Also, the teaching unit could be lengthened.

Some of the worksheets and ideas in this program could be incorporated into units of study throughout the year, instead of the three-week time period used. The control group in the study could be given the post test to see if any difference in self-esteem is apparent without participating in a teaching unit to enhance self-esteem. The students' self-esteem might change just as a consequence of maturation over a longer period of time, such as one school term. Also, instead of one teacher presenting a teaching unit to enhance self-esteem, a school-wide effort could be made using tech-
niques within the daily teaching to enhance self-esteem.

In the research literature disagreement among authors concerning the stability of self-esteem during adolescence is apparent (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). Further study needs to include a larger sample, pre-adolescents and adolescents, more varied ethnic groups, and students from urban and suburban as well as rural environments.

Some studies concerning the correlation between level of self-esteem and vocational aspirations have been reported (4). Generally, adolescents with low self-esteem want to avoid leadership positions, and also want to avoid being dominated by others (4). Further study could be done during the early high school years to discover the higher and lower self-esteem individuals and their career aspirations. Then, as these individuals go into their senior year, a study could be done to find any differences in their self-esteem and vocational aspirations.


APPENDIX I
ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

(1) On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
   ____ Strongly Agree
   ____ Agree
   ____ Disagree
   ____ Strongly Disagree

(2) At times I think I am no good at all.
   ____ Strongly Agree
   ____ Agree
   ____ Disagree
   ____ Strongly Disagree

(3) I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
   ____ Strongly Agree
   ____ Agree
   ____ Disagree
   ____ Strongly Disagree

(4) I am able to do things as well as most other people.
   ____ Strongly Agree
   ____ Agree
   ____ Disagree
   ____ Strongly Disagree

(5) I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
   ____ Strongly Agree
   ____ Agree
   ____ Disagree
   ____ Strongly Disagree

(6) I certainly feel useless at times.
   ____ Strongly Agree
   ____ Agree
   ____ Disagree
   ____ Strongly Disagree
(7) I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
   _____ Strongly Agree
   _____ Agree
   _____ Disagree
   _____ Strongly Disagree

(8) I wish I could have more respect for myself.
   _____ Strongly Agree
   _____ Agree
   _____ Disagree
   _____ Strongly Disagree

(9) All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
   _____ Strongly Agree
   _____ Agree
   _____ Disagree
   _____ Strongly Disagree

(10) I take a positive attitude toward myself.
    _____ Strongly Agree
    _____ Agree
    _____ Disagree
    _____ Strongly Disagree

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CLASSIFICATION:
   _____ Senior
   _____ Junior
   _____ Sophomore

SEX:
   _____ Male
   _____ Female
APPENDIX II
SCORE SHEET FOR ROSENBERG'S SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Item I</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D*</th>
<th>SD*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D*</td>
<td>SD*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>SA*</td>
<td>A*</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Scale Item II | 4  | SA  | A   | D* | SD* |
|               | 5  | SA* | A*  | D  | SD  |

| Scale Item III | 1  | SA  | A   | D* | SD* |

| Scale Item IV  | 8  | SA* | A*  | D  | SD  |

| Scale Item V   | 10 | SA  | A   | D* | SD* |

| Scale Item VI  | 2  | SA* | A*  | D  | SD  |
|                | 6  | SA* | A*  | D  | SD  |

**TOTAL**

**CLASSIFICATION**

**SEX**
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Articles


