

## ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างการรับรู้กลุ่มเชิงประเมินของเด็ก และระดับการรายงานอัตมโนทัศน์ของเด็ก

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### บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อตรวจสอบความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างระดับของอัตมโนทัศน์และบริบททางสังคม (การรับรู้ของผู้ปกครอง ครู และเพื่อน) กลุ่มตัวอย่างมีจำนวน 157 คน ได้แก่ นักเรียน 76 คน ผู้ปกครอง 76 คน และครู 5 คน เครื่องมือวิจัยคือมาตรวัดอัตมโนทัศน์แบบพหุมติ (MSCS) และมาตรประมาณค่าที่คัดเลือกข้อคำถามจากมาตรวัดอัตมโนทัศน์แบบพหุมติ

ผลการวิจัยพบว่าการประเมินโดยเพื่อนสามารถทำนายระดับการรับรู้อัตมโนทัศน์ได้สูงที่สุด รองลงมาคือการประเมินโดยครูและผู้ปกครอง นอกจากนี้ บทความนี้ยังนำเสนอการประยุกต์ใช้ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างเพื่อนนักเรียนในการพัฒนาอัตมโนทัศน์ของเด็ก

## The Relationship between Evaluative Groups' Perceptions of Children and Children's Self-Reported Level of Self-Concept

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between children's reported level of self-concept and their social context (parent, teacher, and peer perceptions of them). One hundred fifty seven people, 76 students, 76 parents, and five teachers, participated in this study. The Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (MSCS) was administered to the children, while parent, peer, and teacher ratings of the children were determined by the use of rating scales designed using selected MSCS items.*

*Results indicated that peer ratings were the most predictive of self-reported level of self-concept, followed by teacher and parent ratings. The implications of peer relationships in the development of children's self-concept were discussed.*

This study assessed the relationship between children's reported level of self-concept and their social context. Current researchers recognize that self-concept develops within a social context (e.g., Burnett & McCrindle, 1999; Epkins, 1995). The developmental path of self-concept is assumed to grow increasingly more stable as a child progresses through development, middle childhood, early adolescence, and late adolescence due to cognitive, social, and physical changes, respectively (Cole et al., 2001; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976). This stability is largely attributed to the fact that children's personal self-beliefs become more realistic and tightly linked to appraisals from significant others, which inevitably leads to a higher stability of their self-concept (Wigfield, Eccles, MacIver, Reuman, & Midgley, 1991). For the purpose of this study, Bracken's (1992) definition of self-concept is adopted and defined as "a multidimensional and context dependent learned behavioral pattern that reflects an individual's evaluation and description of past behaviors and experiences, influences an individual's current behaviors, and predicts an individual's future behaviors" (p.10).

The debate over what self-concept is or is not continues. Briefly, self-concept was understood as a unitary or global construct followed by a unidimensional model (James as cited in Bracken, 1992). Both of these constructs failed to address variations that may exist in a person's abilities and behaviors across different domains. Thus, a multidimensional construct, a definition that examined variations within an individual across different domains in life (Shavelson et al., 1976) was adopted. Next, the debate focused whether a hierarchy exists in the multidimensional structure. According to Shavelson et al. (1976), a hierarchy indeed existed, and that general self-concept constituted the apex of the hierarchy and that the various interdependent domains of self-concept comprised the second tier of the hierarchy. A hierarchical and multi-dimensional view of self-concept emerged, which viewed self-concept as organized, multifaceted, hierarchical, stable, developmental, evaluative, and differentiable.

One of the most influential voices in the self-concept theory was Carl Rogers (Rogers, 1947). In Rogers' view, the self is the central ingredient in human personality and personal adjustment, and it is a social product that develops out of interpersonal

relationships. According to Rogers, there is a basic human need for positive regard both from others and from oneself, which is dependent on the availability of positive environment (Purkey & Schmidt, 1987). Such a belief, thus, presumes that an individual's self-concept is dependent on and correlated with the environmental domains that surround the person. Contrary to Rogers, other theorists, such as cognitive theorists have long held the view that self-concept was nothing more than a cognitive structure of sensing, feeling, monitoring, and regulating part of an individual (Harter, 1978). Conversely, behaviorists asserted that self-concept was instead a behavioral construct because one cannot observe "self"; thus, self-concept could be inferred by the unique patterns of behavior manifested by an individual (Skinner, 1990).

The assumption that environmental domains contribute to the shaping of an individual's level of self-concept has led to the conclusion that self-concept is socially constructed, with people's perceptions and assessments of themselves being greatly influenced by others' evaluations (Cole et al., 2001; Uszynska-Jarmoc, 2001). A few studies have investigated the relationship between statements made by significant others and one's self-perception or concept. For example, Burnett and McCrindle (1999) found that positive interactions and statements made by significant others were related to high levels of self-concept and that negative interactions were associated with low levels of self-concept. For instance, research has illustrated the importance of peer evaluations, indicating that children who are rejected or neglected by peers are more socially anxious (La Greca, 1998), and rejected peers show increased behavioral, cognitive, affective, and academic problems (Waas & Graczyk, 1999). Furthermore, parent and teacher evaluations and perceptions are believed to contribute to children's self-concept. Teacher evaluations may create expectancies, relationships, and positive or negative experiences, which can affect children's self-concept (Burnett & McCrindle, 1999). Regarding parents, Uszynska-Jarmoc (2001) suggested that the quality, character, and results of self-concept in children are dependent on the attitude of children's parents. Positive evaluations from parents are associated with higher levels of self-concept while negative statements from parents typically adversely affect self-esteem (Burnett & McCrindle, 1999). It appears that the perceptions and reactions of these

three evaluative groups or significant others (parents, peers, and teachers) are vital to the development of the child, because children spend the majority of their time socializing with classmates, parents, and teachers (Bracken, 1992).

Although each evaluative group's relationship to children's self-concept has been studied, limited research to date has examined all three evaluative groups simultaneously to identify which evaluative group and evaluation of the child best predicts the child's self-reported level of self-concept. Thus, the purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between evaluative groups' (parents, teachers, and peers) perceptions of a child and the child's self-reported level of self-concept.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

One hundred fifty seven people including 76 students, 76 parents, and five teachers participated in this study. The 76 children were between the ages of 10 and 16. Thirty three percent of the participants were boys ( $n=25$ ) and 67% were girls ( $n=51$ ). Student participants represented three grade levels: 5<sup>th</sup> grade elementary school students (36%,  $n = 27$ ), 7<sup>th</sup> grade middle school students (26%,  $n = 20$ ), and 10<sup>th</sup> grade high school students (38%,  $n = 29$ ). No child under the age of 8 participated in the study, because research indicates that children start to differentiate between their own personal competencies and those of others by the age of eight (Heyman and Gelman, 1999). In addition to student participants, five of their teachers participated in this study. Teacher participants evaluated the students in their respective classrooms by completing the Teacher Rating Scale for each student participant.

### **Instruments**

The Multidimensional Self-Concept Scale (MSCS) by Bracken (1992) and its adapted version for peer, parent, and teacher rating scales were used. The MSCS is a self-report measure designed to assess self-concept in children and youth. This scale reports strong psychometric properties. Total scale score reliabilities range from .97 to .99 and total scale internal consistency and stability after two weeks are .98 and .90,

respectively (Bracken, 1992; Bracken & Mills, 1994). The Total Composite standard scores were used for data comparisons.

*Peer Rating Scale.* To examine how student participants would evaluate or perceive their fellow classmates, the Peer Rating Scale (PRS) was adapted and modified from the Bracken MSCS. All items were taken from the Social Domain of the MSCS and selected items from the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale (Piers & Herzberg, 2003) that Bracken, Bunch, and Keith (2000) documented as having loaded on the Social Factor of the MSCS. Each item was reworded so that it was pertinent to peer raters. The PRS yielded the percentage of positive and negative ratings.

*Caregiver Rating Scale.* The Caregiver Rating Scale (CRS) was constructed using the MSCS and Piers-Harris (Bracken et al., 2000) items, and was used to examine how parents or caregivers evaluate their children's level of self-concept. Items tapped the competence, academic, and affect domains, also found in the MSCS. The CRS provided the percentage of positive and negative responses.

*Teacher Rating Scale.* To examine how teachers would evaluate their students' self-concept, the Teacher Rating Scale (TRS) was constructed from the MSCS and Piers Harris items. Items tapped the competence, academic, and affect domains, also found in the MSCS. The TRS yielded the percentage of positive answers.

For this study, the child's self-reported level of self-concept was the predicted variable while the predictor variables were teachers', parents', and peers' evaluations or ratings. The following hypotheses were made:

1. Peer evaluations would be the most predictive factor that correlate with a child's reported level of self-concept (La Greca, 1998; Thomas, 1997).
2. The child's reported level of self-concept would be directly correlated with the evaluations of the particular group—parent, teacher, or peer.

Thus, negative evaluations made by significant others would predict a more negative level of self-concept, and positive evaluations would predict a more positive level of self-concept (Burnett & McCrindle, 1999).

## Procedure

First, permission for participation was obtained from the school districts, parents, and teachers. To minimize the chance of obtaining false reports, participants were not informed of the purpose of the study. Self-concept research in the past has alluded to the problem of raters being unduly influenced by social desirability factors (Ledingham, Younger, Schwartzman, Bergeron, 1982). Once data collection was completed, participants received a debriefing statement explaining the purpose of the study.

Students were administered the MSCS during a class-wide group administration. On a separate occasion, each student participant was issued his or her respective PRS packet (rating scales for all classmates) to complete. The order of these scales was counterbalanced to offset the chance of any ordering effect. To conduct parent evaluations, parent participants were mailed a copy of the Caregiver Rating Scale with instructions and directions as well as a self-addressed stamped envelope for returning the rating scale to the researcher. Teacher participants' rating scales were completed before and after school over a two-day time period.

## Results

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients, ANOVAs, and stepwise regression were conducted to assess the relationship between children's self-concept and evaluative groups. The relationship between children's self-concept and grade level, and which evaluative group (parent, teacher, or peer) predicted children's self-reported level of self-concept, respectively.

The mean score for the MSCS, self-reported self-concept, was highest for elementary school age participants ( $M = 107.41$ ,  $SD = 13.19$ ,  $n = 27$ ), lowest for middle school age participants ( $M = 95.90$ ,  $SD = 10.65$ ,  $n = 20$ ), and high school participants' mean score fell between the two age groups ( $M = 102.28$ ,  $SD = 12.50$ ,  $n = 29$ ). According to the authors of the MSCS, scores that fall at these levels suggest average levels of self-concept. Student participants' scores fell within the range of 76 and 131 ( $SD = 12.95$ ).

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Teacher reports across the three age groups or grade levels were also consistent with the pattern exhibited by the student participants' self-ratings, as a serial curve pattern existed with the teacher reported data. Teacher ratings were highest for elementary school children ( $M = 86.67$ ,  $SD = 20.22$ ,  $n = 27$ ), lowest for middle school children ( $M = 65.65$ ,  $SD = 22.46$ ,  $n = 20$ ), and more stabilized for high school children ( $M = 81.69$ ,  $SD = 22.38$ ,  $n = 29$ ). The range for teacher report scores was between 19 and 100 ( $SD = 22.98$ ). Peer ratings across the three age groups or grade levels were likewise consistent with the pattern exhibited by the students' self-ratings and teacher ratings, as a serial curve pattern was also apparent with this group of data. Peer ratings were highest for elementary school students ( $M = 78.15$ ,  $SD = 15.97$ ,  $n = 27$ ), lowest for middle school students ( $M = 67.20$ ,  $SD = 16.53$ ,  $n = 20$ ), and more stabilized for high school students ( $M = 73.34$ ,  $SD = 11.72$ ,  $n = 29$ ). The range for peer rating scores fell between 23 and 96 ( $SD = 15.08$ ). Parent report data demonstrated a different pattern of scores. Parent ratings for middle school children were the highest ( $M = 87.40$ ,  $SD = 10.83$ ,  $n = 20$ ), while they rated high school students the lowest ( $M = 78.17$ ,  $SD = 22.11$ ,  $n = 29$ ) and elementary students between the two groups ( $M = 85.78$ ,  $SD = 17.02$ ,  $n = 27$ ). Parent rating scores ranged from 28 to 100 ( $SD = 18.15$ ). Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics for self-reported self-concept and evaluative groups' ratings by grade level.

**Table 1** Means for Self-reported Self-concept, and Parent, Peer, and Teacher Ratings by Grade Level.

Grade Level	Elementary School			Middle School			High School		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Self	107.41	13.19	27	95.90	10.65	20	102.28	12.50	29
Teacher	86.67	20.22	27	65.65	22.46	20	81.69	22.38	29
Peer	78.15	15.97	27	67.20	16.53	20	73.34	11.72	29
Parent	85.78	17.02	27	87.40	10.83	20	78.17	22.11	29



A series of One-Way ANOVA were conducted to examine if self-reported self-concept, parent ratings, teacher ratings, and peer ratings of students differ across grade levels. A significant difference in self-reported self-concept was found among the three grade-level groups,  $F(2, 73) = 5.03, p < .01$ . A Scheffe's test further reveals that self-reported levels of self-concept in elementary school ( $M = 107.41$ ) were significantly higher than those in middle school ( $M = 95.90$ ),  $p < .01$ . There was also a significant difference among the three grade-level groups in peer ratings,  $F(2,73) = 3.21, p < .05$ . Results of a follow-up Scheffe's test shows that elementary students were rated significantly higher ( $M = 78.15$ ) than middle school students ( $M = 67.20$ ) by their peers,  $p < .05$ . The difference among the three grade-level groups in teacher ratings was also significant,  $F(2,73) = 5.71, p < .01$ . A Scheffe's test reveals that teachers rated elementary students significantly higher ( $M = 86.67$ ) than middle school students ( $M = 65.65$ ),  $p < .01$ . Likewise, they rated the high school students significantly higher ( $M = 81.69$ ) than the middle school students,  $p < .05$ . However, the difference among the three grade-level groups in parent ratings was nonsignificant,  $F(2,75) = 1.97, p < .01$ .

Pearson's correlation results indicated significant correlations between self-reported self-concept and parent, peer, and teacher ratings. Data analysis indicates a significant positive linear relationship between self-reported self-concept and peer ratings, ( $r = .71$ ). This linear relationship between the peers' ratings and self-reported self-concept levels was found to account for approximately 50% of the total variance,  $r^2 = .50, p < .05$ .

Self-reported self-concept also correlated significantly with teachers' ratings ( $r = .54$ ). However, the correlation between self-reported self-concept and parents' ratings was moderate ( $r = .34$ ). Table 2 presents Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients between self-reported self-concept and parent, peer and teacher ratings.

**Table 2** Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients between Self-reported Self-concept and Parent, Peer and Teacher Ratings.

Evaluation Group	Self	Parent	Peer	Teacher
Self-Report	-	.340*	.706*	.538*
Parent Report		-	.583*	.132
Peer Report			-	.569*

\*  $p < .01$

A stepwise regression was conducted to examine how parents, peers, and teachers predicted a student's self-reported level of self-concept. Neither parent rating nor teacher rating was a significant predictor at the .05 level once the peer rating predictor was entered.

Results indicated that peer ratings accounted for most of the variance (49%),  $p < .001$ . The linear relationship between self reported levels of self-concept and peer ratings was highly significant,  $F(1, 75) = 73.56, p < .001$ .

## Discussion

The results of the present study are congruent with previous literature on self-concept research, which found that self-concept levels are intertwined with appraisals or evaluations made by significant others (Blake, 1993; Burnett & McCrindle, 1999). As was hypothesized in this study, self-reported levels of self-concept were positively linked to appraisals made by significant others (i.e., parents, peers, and teachers). Higher levels of self-concept were found to be more indicative of higher appraisals from others, while lower levels of self-concept were more congruent with lower appraisals from others. In this study, students' self-reported self-concept levels were significantly positively correlated with ratings made by all three significant groups, with peer ratings being highly correlated. These findings are indicative of the influence appraisals made by significant others have on the formation of a child's self-concept level.

Findings indicated that peers' ratings are the most predictive factors in a student's self-concept level, followed by teachers' ratings. One conclusion may be that these two groups spent the most time with students on a day-to-day basis and participated in more activities, in comparison to parents who spend a relatively limited time with their children daily. For example, 11-year-olds spend 50 percent of their time with peers, and the percentage increases for adolescents who spend more time with peers than with adults (Brownell, 1990). In addition, Sandberg and Hofferth (2001) found that in a two parent household, children on the average spent 31 hours a week with their parents in. This difference in time spent with children inevitably may contribute to the lower correlation between parents' evaluation of their child and the child's self-reported level of self-concept, while peers and teachers have a higher predictive relationship.

Developmental trends in self-concept were also observed in the data. There was a significant relationship between grade level of student participants and the ratings made by teachers, peers, and individual students' self-concept ratings. Higher levels of self-reported self-concept were found in elementary age participants, a decrease in self-concept was observed in middle school students, while high school self-concept ratings stabilized and were almost identical to the mean of all participant self-concepts ( $M = 102.42$ ,  $SD = 12.95$ ). This U-shape pattern is similar to developmental research that states that elementary school children hold a high, idealized view of self. The stability of self-concept increases with age except for a period of destabilization during the transition from sixth to seventh grade; and high school age children exhibit a more realistic and stabilized self-concept level (Cole et al., 2001; Wigfield et al., 1991).

Taken together, the results of this study and previous self-concept research begin to point to an increasingly consistent pattern of findings on the importance of and predictive nature of significant others' appraisals on individuals' self-concept.

The primary implication of the study may be that children who do not receive positive appraisals in general and specifically from their peers may suffer from low self-concept and may also become at risk for developing social, academic and

behavioral problems (La Greca, 1998; Waas & Graczyk, 1999). Thus, it is imperative that interventions are available to these children. Research has demonstrated that peer perceptions of one another, and ultimately one's own self-concept may improve if children practice new skills in the presence of their peers who provide feedback, which is critical in helping them assess the effectiveness of their behaviors (Helper, 1997). Further, peer perceptions and students' self-concept levels seem to improve when students learn to increase positive self-talk and evaluative statements; and when significant others foster positive expectations in them (Burnett & McCrindle, 1999; DeMoulin, 1999; Obiakor, 1999).

It should also be noted that in this study the subject pool was predominately homogenous and favored the female gender. Future studies may address these limitations. Replication of the present study with a diverse group of children is clearly needed as research has demonstrated some differences in self-concept of students from diverse ethnic and cultural background. For example, teacher expectations have been found to differ when evaluating students who are not Caucasian, which inevitably affect the student's self-concept (Obiakor, 1999). Furthermore, previous research has suggested that cultural factors impact the development of self-concept (Cole et al., 2001). Future research may also focus on gender differences as well as determining what characteristics or behavioral repertoires of children lead to positive appraisals by their peers.

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