

THE SELF-CONCEPT, IDEAL-SELF, AND
CONCEPT OF MOTHER AND FATHER OF
MALE STUDENTS WHO SEEK HELP
FOR ACHIEVEMENT PROBLEMS

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ABSTRACT

THE SELF-CONCEPT, IDEAL-SELF, AND CONCEPT OF MOTHER AND FATHER OF MALE STUDENTS WHO SEEK HELP FOR ACHIEVEMENT PROBLEMS

by Jerry A. Treppa

This study proposed that male college students who have academic difficulties and seek help: (1) have a more negative self-concept than a control group of male students, (2) have a more unrealistic ideal-self concept than the control group, (3) will be more extreme in their conceptualization of their parents as individuals than average male students, and (4) will be less identified with their fathers than the control group.

The experimental sample was composed of male students who had voluntarily enrolled in the Methods of Effective Study courses in the Fall and Winter terms of 1964-1965 at Michigan State University. These students are seen as representative of male students who seek aid for academic difficulties. The control group was selected from male students who were enrolled in an introductory course in psychology during the same period. The Block Adjective Check List was given to all subjects at the beginning of the Fall

and Winter quarters. The test was administered one week later to the experimental group to procure an estimate of its reliability with this population. The Check List was modified slightly because of the needs of this study. A t-ratio and Karon's method (1965) of combining the significance level of the t-ratios obtained for the Fall and Winter terms for each person-concept of the Check List were chosen to compare the differences between the experimental and control groups.

The test-retest reliability coefficients indicate a high degree of stability, and the stability of ideal-self suggests that this person-concept is a stereotyped concept.

The combined data of the two terms supported the proposition that male students who have academic difficulties have a more negative self-concept than average male students. This finding adds further support to the view that students with academic problems have a structuralized, inadequate self-concept. This result of the study was predicted by Debolt's theoretical conclusions (1963) about the personality structure of these students.

No support was found for the proposition that male students with study problems have a more unrealistic ideal-self than the control group of students. Evidence was presented that suggested that college students' ideal-self is a cultural stereotype to which they aspire.

Jerry A. Treppa

The combined data of the two terms supported the proposition that male college students with academic difficulties are more extreme in their conceptualization of their parents as individuals than average male students. It was found that these students view their mothers more negatively than the control group of students.

The combined data of the two terms also showed a trend which supports the proposition that male college students with academic difficulties are not as identified with their fathers as average male college students. It is felt that this study raises a number of important questions about the parent-child relationship of students with study-problems.

It seems that the present study raises more questions about male students with study problems than have been answered. Implications for further research were discussed.

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By

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To my wife, Ann,
who makes it all worthwhile

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	v
INTRODUCTION	1
Propositions	5
METHOD	8
Subjects	8
Measuring Instrument	9
Procedure	14
RESULTS	15
DISCUSSION	20
SUMMARY	29
BIBLIOGRAPHY	33
APPENDIX	37

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Descriptive summary of the 101 and Non-101 samples	9
2. Coefficients of stability for the Block Adjective Check List variables of the Fall and Winter 101 sample	15
3. A comparison of the 101 and Non-101 samples on the Block Adjective Check List	17
4. The combined significance levels of the t-ratios obtained for the Fall and Winter terms for each person-concept of the Block Adjective Check List (Karon's procedure, 1965)	19

INTRODUCTION

Recent studies indicate that the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement is relevant to increasing our understanding of the problems of academic motivation and deserves more attention than it has been given in the past.

Debolt (1963) proposed that students who experience study problems of various kinds form a psychological entity. Using the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule, he attempted to examine the psychodynamic aspects of academic difficulties within a population of students enrolled in Psychology 101, Methods of Effective Study, at Michigan State University. Enrollment in this course is voluntary and provides these students with an opportunity to solve their academic difficulties by means of group counseling. Debolt found that the male and female "Methods of Effective Study" students were significantly higher in Abasement need and were significantly lower in Dominance need than the national norm of college students. The males were also lower in Achievement need, while the females were higher in Nurturance need than the normative group. The constellation of needs which emerged suggested to Debolt that this population of students

considers themselves to be inadequate persons.

We appear to have here a group of students characterized predominantly by feelings of worthlessness, inadequacy, and inferiority, and possessing little motivation to alter this state. In short, they are students with a structuralized and stable inadequate self-concept (Debolt, 1963, p. 23).

As Shaw et al (1960) have pointed out, there is a paucity of published studies which attempt to examine the relationship between self-concept and academic difficulties. The few studies which have been reported support Debolt's conclusion that students experiencing academic problems tend to view themselves as having little personal worth (Kirk, 1952; Kimball, 1953; Chickering, 1958; Shaw et al, 1960; Roth and Meyersburg, 1963). Both Kirk and Kimball believe that academic difficulties have meaning in terms of a pattern of deliberate failure. They believe that students who are subject to such failure are those who experience a great deal of conflict between them and one or both of their parents and who have self-derogatory and depressed attitudes toward themselves. Chickering, investigating the relationship between self-concept, ideal self-concept, and achievement, supports this latter notion. He found that the differences between achievers and underachievers are primarily related to differences in self-concept. He states, "Underachievers apply to themselves items seen as least self-descriptive by the general population . . ." (Chickering, 1958, p. 164).

Shaw et al were interested in studying self-concept of underachieving high school students and found significant differences in self-concept between these students and those who achieve academic success. The results for male under-achievers are clearer than the results for female under-achievers. His findings indicate that male underachievers have more negative feelings about themselves than do female underachievers. He concluded tentatively that female under-achievers feel more ambivalent about themselves than do female achievers.

More recently, Roth and Meyersburg, reporting their clinical experience with college students who seek help for academic difficulties, suggest that achievement patterns are related to an individual's personality organization. In discussing the "non-achievement syndrome," they suggest that self-depreciation is a major characteristic of such students. Roth and Meyersburg believe that these students have developed a pattern of relating to their environment in a self-defeating manner and have a negative self-concept.

The theoretical importance of the self-concept is recognized when one realizes that one of the major assumptions of all current theories of self is that the individual's self-concept has a predictable effect on his behavior. Rogers (1947, 1951) and Snygg and Combs (1949) believe that self-concept is a motivational construct and determines how

an individual relates to his environment. Most of the self-concept theories "suggest that the way in which an individual conceives of himself will be directly related to certain overt behavior consequences" (Ludwig and Maehr, 1965, p. 1).

Rogers (1951) indicates a need to study the self in all its ramifications. Wylie (1965) supports Rogers' notion when she states that separate considerations should be given to the ideal-self concept. Only recently has the ideal-self as a separate construct gained the attention that it theoretically demands.

Rogers suggests that clients who feel worthless have an unrealistic ideal-self. That is, the client has set his ideal-self at such a level that he is unable to meet his high standard and punishes himself for his consequent sense of failure. Borrowing from Horney, Rudikoff, one of Roger's colleagues, states that

. . . the well-adjusted person accepts his real self on which he focuses and which he tries to actualize, while envisioning an ideal toward which he realistically can move. This realistic ideal can be raised gradually as the individual approaches it. Lack of acceptance of the real self results in a kind of compensatory, unrealistic glorification of the idealized self. The individual then tends to focus on and tries to actualize this idealized self. Being unrealistic, this results in failure causing still further rejection of the real self with even greater need for elevation of the ideal. Consequently, the self and the ideal become more and more dissonant, and discomfort increases (1954, p. 96).

Based upon the above findings--that there is a relationship between feelings of worthlessness and having an unrealistic glorification of the ideal-self--one would expect that male students suffering from academic problems would have an extremely unrealistic ideal-self. This study, in part, will examine the validity of this assumption.

Clinical experience with males with study problems suggests that they view their parents differently from males who have no major study difficulties. This study affords us the opportunity, in part, to see how these two groups of students feel about their parents.

Previous findings and clinical work generate certain predictions about the psychodynamics of males with study problems. The present study investigates how male students with study difficulties differ from average college males in terms of self-concept, ideal-self, and attitudes toward parents.

Propositions

This study proposes that male college students who have academic difficulties and seek help differ from the control group of students in several ways.

First, male college students who have academic difficulties and seek help have a more negative self-concept than the control group of male students. This means that

the control group should have a higher valence score on the Block Adjective Check List for self-concept than the experimental group.

Second, male college students who have academic difficulties and seek help have a more unrealistic ideal-self concept than the control group of males. This difference will be measured in two ways: (a) the valence score on the ideal-self will be computed and the populations will be compared. Evidence presented earlier suggests that the experimental group will have a higher valence score for ideal-self than the control group on the Block Adjective Check List and (b) the two groups of students will be examined to see if each population selected a different pattern of items for ideal-self.

Third, male college students who have academic difficulties and seek help will be more extreme in their conceptualization of their parents than the control group of students. An extremely high or low score on each parent on the Block Adjective Check List would indicate an unrealistic concept of parents. This means that the experimental group of students should have either a higher or lower valence score on the Block Adjective Check List for each parent than the control group of students.

Fourth, male college students who have academic problems and seek help will be less identified with their

fathers than the control group of students. Based upon the assumption that identification with parents enters into the way in which parents are described by the Block Adjective Check List, it is expected that the experimental group of students should have a lower valence score on the Block Adjective Check List for the description of their fathers than the control group of students.

METHOD

Subjects

The Experimental Sample. In the present study, male students included in the experimental sample were voluntarily enrolled in Methods of Effective Study at Michigan State University. These students are seen as representative of those male students who seek help for academic problems. The 101 sample is a random sample of all male freshmen and sophomore students who enrolled in Methods of Effective Study in the Fall and Winter quarters of 1964-1965.

The Control Sample. A random sample of Non-101 freshmen and sophomore males (students not enrolled in Methods of Effective Study) were selected from those students who were enrolled in an introductory course in psychology in the Fall quarters of 1964-1965. This sample permitted a comparison of the sample of 101 male students with a sample of male students from a general population of freshmen and sophomore male students.

Of the forty-four subjects included in each random sample, half of them came from each quarter. Table 1 presents a summary description of the two samples.

Table 1. Descriptive summary of the 101 and non-101 samples

Term	N	101	Non-101
Fall	44	22	22
Winter	44	22	22
Total	88	44	44

Measuring Instrument

Block Adjective Check List. (See Appendix A.)

Based on the theorizing of Stoke (1950) and Sanford (1955), Block has said that the "similarity of one's ideal-self to one's parent is a kind of identification" (1958, p. 235). Using this conceptual framework, Block developed an adjective check list which he used to measure identification by comparing the similarity between an individual's ideal-self and the individual's concept of one or both of his parents.

The Block Adjective Check List contains a total of seventy-nine adjectives on each response sheet. For each response task the subject is asked to use only sixty adjectives, thirty of which are to be marked with an X and thirty of which are to be marked with an 0, to characterize the person he is asked to describe. An X is placed before an adjective if the subject feels it is true or characteristic of the person, while an 0 is located before an adjective if

he believes it is false or uncharacteristic of the person. Using this instrument as a measure of identification, Block used response tasks entitled: "Your Ideal Self," "Your Father," and "Your Mother."

Comparing the Semantic Differential and his Adjective Check List as measures of identification, Block (1958) found that the correlation coefficient between these two measures was .94 when correct for attenuation. One of the basic assumptions of the Semantic Differential is that to some degree "the technique reveals relationships among concepts of which the subject may be unaware" (Block, 1958, p. 235). Block's findings indicate that the Block Adjective Check List, which is less demanding of the subjects than the Semantic Differential, serves just as well as a measure of identification as the Semantic Differential. Block also found in this study that the split-half reliability of the Semantic Differential and the Block Adjective Check List was .70 and .86 respectively.

Chang and Block (1960) found this instrument quite helpful when they studied the identification of male homosexuals. Comparing the responses to the Block Adjective Check List made by a group of homosexuals with those of normal males, they found that the homosexual males tended to be less identified with the same-sexed parent and more identified with the opposite-sexed parent. That is, when the

homosexual subjects describe themselves, their self-ideals, their mothers, and their fathers, less similarity existed between their ego-ideals and perceptions of their fathers than between their ego-ideals and perceptions of their mothers.

Maes' study (1962) on identification of male college students also appears to present some experimental validation for the use of this Adjective Check List as a measure of identification--"providing that the meaning of identification is operationally and fairly narrowly defined and providing that the revised scoring system [Maes' system] is used" (Maes, 1958, p. 40). He was successful in using the Block Adjective Check List with his modified scoring system as a screening device for separating males into successful and unsuccessful identifiers.

The present study does not employ the Block Adjective Check List as it is conventionally used as a measure of identification. In this study, the Check List is used as a means of ascertaining how positive each subject's concept is of himself, his parents, and his ideal-self.

Since this study is concerned with each subject's evaluative description of each person he is asked to characterize and to a lesser degree with identification, neither the conventional "difference score" nor the "Maes direct-opposite score" are used in scoring the Check List. In

order to ascertain how positive each subject views these people, a "valence score" was obtained from each descriptive task. Using such a scoring system, the higher the score assigned to a particular "person-concept" the more positive the description. To obtain such a "valence score" requires the weighting of each checked adjective as indicating a positive or negative characteristic.

Prior to testing, a randomly selected group of ten undergraduate students were asked to rate the adjectives in the Block Adjective Check List as indicating a positive or negative characteristic. An adjective was weighted as a positive or negative characteristic when the majority of students defined it in this way. Thirty-five adjectives were seen as indicating a positive characteristic, while forty-one were seen as denoting a negative characteristic. Three adjectives were seen as neutral. (A copy of the instructions to the students and the group weighting of each adjective appears in Appendix B.) The defining of an adjective as indicating a positive or negative characteristic is used to obtain the "valence score" in the following way: an adjective is scored as indicating a positive description of the person named on the response sheet when a "positive adjective" is checked as being characteristic of the person-concept and when a "negative adjective" is checked as being uncharacteristic of the person the subject is asked to

describe. For example, if a subject checked energetic, warm and cooperative (defined as indicating positive characteristics) as being characteristic of a person and checked helpless, lazy and selfish (defined as indicating negative characteristics) as being uncharacteristic of this person, he would be describing this person in a positive manner. Likewise, an adjective is scored as indicating a negative description of the person named on the response sheet when a "negative adjective" is checked as being characteristic of the person and when a "positive adjective" is checked as being uncharacteristic of the person the subject is asked to describe. For example, if the subject checked friendly, relaxed, and sympathetic (defined as indicating positive characteristics) as being uncharacteristic of a person and checked dissatisfied, obnoxious, and sarcastic as being characteristic of this person, he would be describing this person in a negative way.

A plus (+) was placed beside the checked adjective that denotes a positive description, while a minus (-) was put next to each checked adjective that denotes a negative description. The score is the algebraic sum of the positive and negative adjectives checked. The maximum score that can be obtained is sixty, while the minimum score is zero.

Procedure

The Block Adjective Check List was administered to all subjects on the second class meeting at the beginning of the Fall and Winter quarters. The test was given again one week later to the 101 sample in order to obtain an estimate of its reliability with this population. Conditions beyond the control of the experimenter prevented him from giving the Check List again to the Non-101 sample.

Minimal instructions were given to the subjects, who were reassured that the Check List was for research purposes and not for purposes of evaluation. The person-concepts which the subjects were asked to describe were "Your Self," "Your Father," "Your Ideal-Self," "Your Mother," and "Your Best Friend." "Your Best Friend," while not a person-concept in the conventional Block Adjective Check List, was used as a buffer task. This study will not include the scores of "Your Best Friend" in the analysis of the data. Specific instructions for completing the Check List appeared on the first page of the test booklet. (See Appendix A.) "Your Self" was always the first person-concept the subjects were asked to describe.

A t-ratio was chosen to compare the differences between the means of the 101 sample and the Non-101 sample for self-concept, ideal self, and concepts of mother and father. A significance level of .05 was chosen in all cases; the direction of the statistical tests was in keeping with the above propositions.

RESULTS

Test-retest reliability coefficients or stability coefficients of the Fall and Winter 101 samples are given in Table 2. These coefficients are based upon the records of twenty Fall students and eighteen Winter students who took the Block Adjective Check List within one-week interval separating the two administrations.

Table 2. Coefficients of stability for the Block Adjective Check List variables of the Fall and Winter 101 sample

Variable	Stability	
	Fall	Winter
Self-Concept	.78	.81
Father	.81	.82
Mother	.74	.68
Ideal-Self	.98	.89

The test-retest reliability coefficients indicate a high degree of stability in the meaning of the descriptions of the person-concepts on the Block Adjective Check List for the 101 samples. The correlation coefficients of the ideal-self are so high as to suggest that this person-concept is a stereotyped one.

Table 3 reports the results of the test of differences with respect to the term enrolled between the 101 and Non-101 groups. It can be seen that there are no significant differences between the Fall 101 and Non-101 groups on any of the person-concepts of the Block Adjective Check List. However, the Winter groups of students were significantly different in the predicted direction on three concepts. The Winter 101 males scored significantly lower on self-concept than the Winter Non-101 males. This difference in the self-concept was significant beyond the .005 level of confidence. The Winter 101 males also rated the concepts of their mothers significantly lower than did the Non-101 males. This difference in concept of mother was significant at the .05 level of confidence. The Winter 101 males were more negative in the descriptions of their fathers than the control group. The difference in concept of father was significant at the .05 level of confidence.

When the Fall and Winter groups of 101 and Non-101 students were analyzed separately, differences were obtained between the two terms. The differences between the terms raise a question about whether or not the significant results obtained in the Winter term are a consequence of academic difficulties rather than an antecedent of them.

Table 3. A comparison of the 101 and Non-101 samples on the Block Adjective Check List

	Non-101 Sample			101 Sample			t-ratio
	M	S ²	N	M	S ²	N	
<u>Fall Quarter</u>							
Self	45.09	64.74	22	42.64	80.84	22	.96
Ideal1-Self	55.68	4.65	22	55.46	2.26	22	.39
Mother	49.43	31.00	22	47.27	49.71	22	1.14
Father	50.09	52.08	22	49.58	56.03	22	.25
<u>Winter Quarter</u>							
Self	50.32	40.49	22	43.14	77.10	22	3.09*
Ideal1-Self	55.36	6.10	22	56.16	3.80	22	1.19
Mother	48.77	105.95	22	40.73	95.26	22	2.33**
Father	50.32	59.93	22	45.82	102.11	22	1.70***

*p < .005, one-tailed.

**p < .05, two-tailed.

***p < .05, one-tailed.

To help answer this question, Karon's technique (1965)¹ was used to combine the significance levels of the t-ratios obtained for the Fall and Winter terms for each person-concept. The combined significance level of each person-concept for

the two terms is given by: (1) $\frac{(P_1 + P_2)^2}{2} = P_c$, when P_1

P_2 and P_c are the significance level of one-tailed tests in

the same direction, and (2) $P_c \times 2 = P'_c$ when $\frac{P'_1}{2} = P_1$,

$\frac{P'_2}{2} = P_2$, and $\frac{(P'_1 + P'_2)^2}{2} = P_c$. The latter formula is used to

obtain the combined significance level of two two-tailed tests, if the findings are in the same direction.

Table 4 reports the results of the combined significance levels of the t-ratios obtained for two terms for each person-concept.

Using this procedure to combine the Fall and Winter 101 and Non-101 samples, it was noted that a significant difference appeared between the two groups on self-concept ($p < .0146$) and concept of mother ($p < .0247$). The 101 males rated self-concept and concept of mothers significantly lower than did the Non-101 males. A trend was evident between the 101 and Non-101 males on concept of father

¹Bertram P. Karon, personal communication, 1965.

Table 4. The combined significance levels of the t-ratios obtained for the Fall and Winter terms for each person-concept (Karon's procedure, 1965)

	(Fall) P_1	(Winter) P_2	Combined Significance Value
Self	.1685	.0025	.0146
Ideal-Self	.3483	.1170	.1083
Mother	.1271	.0300	.0247
Father	.4013	.0446	.0944

($p < .0944$). The 101 males were more negative in the descriptions of their fathers than the control group of males; this finding is in the predicted direction. No significant difference appeared between the two groups on ideal-self.

DISCUSSION

Proposition 1, which states that male college students who have academic difficulties and seek help have a more negative self-concept than the control group of students, was clearly supported for the Winter group of students but not for the Fall group of students. These findings are comparable to the results which Borislow (1962) reported in which he stated that there are no general self-evaluation differences between groups of achieving and under-achieving students prior to one semester of college work.

When Karon's method (1965) of combining the significance level of the two independent experiments was used, it was found that the combined data of the two terms supported the proposition that 101 students have a more negative self-concept than the Non-101 students. The present findings about the 101 student's self-concept add further support to the belief that students with academic difficulties have a structuralized, inadequate self-concept. The results of the investigation were predicted by Debolt's theoretical conclusions about the personality structure of the Methods of Effective Study students.

No support was found for proposition 2; the 101 students did not have a more unrealistic ideal-self than the control group of students. A number of things become evident when the 101 and Non-101 students are compared on this concept: (1) The means of the four groups are extremely alike. (2) The variability of scores in each group is small. It can be observed that the variability of scores on ideal-self is much smaller than the variability of scores on any other concept. (3) When the 101 and Non-101 students were compared on the characteristics they would (and would not) like themselves to have, it was found that there was only a slight variation in the number of students in each group who chose a given characteristic and that the characteristics chosen by each group were almost identical. (See Appendix C and D for this comparison.)

These three findings suggest that college students' ideal-self is a cultural stereotype to which they aspire. Butler and Haigh (1954) also found data to indicate that ideal-self concepts are culturally stereotyped concepts which do not differ from person to person. They state:

By their very nature it seems probable that ideal concepts are largely general societal concepts, whereas self-concepts may be more idiosyncratic. . . . This notion is borne out by pilot studies which indicate that the correlations between the self-concept held by different clients are low (of the order of .2), whereas the correlations between ideal concepts held by different clients are higher (of the order of .5) (Butler and Haigh, 1954, p. 59).

Rudikoff (1954), studying the changes in self-concept, the ordinary person, and ideal-self in eight clients, obtained results that seemed to confirm the idea that ideal-self is a societal concept. Although she found that some changes occurred in ideal-self as the result of psychotherapy, these changes were not as substantial as those in the other concepts. Wylie (1961) offers further support to this belief that there is a considerable congruence between the individual's phenomenal ideal-self and the cultural stereotype of ideal-self. After reviewing the literature, Wylie concluded that there was low inter-subject variance on ideal-self reports.

The present results and conclusions about ideal-self raise some important questions. What role does education play in the establishment of this culturally stereotyped ideal-self? Do other cultures have a stereotyped ideal-self? Further research is needed to answer these considerations.

The role of ideal-self and self-concept should be studied further, since findings that support the belief that ideal-self is a societal concept have definite implications for the theories of identification.

The third proposition, that male college students with academic difficulties have either a more negative or positive conceptualization of their parents as individuals than the control group of students, was supported only for the Winter group with respect to their mothers. The

difference between the Fall 101 and Non-101 students was moderate and the direction of the difference was the same as the direction of the difference between the Winter groups. Analyzing the data of the two terms by Karon's method, proposition 3 was supported. The present evidence suggests that male college students with academic difficulties view their mothers more negatively than the control group of subjects.

Some support was found for proposition 4, which stated that male college students with academic difficulties are not as identified with their father as average male college students; i.e., they have a more negative view of their fathers than the control group of students. The Winter 101 males have a more negative concept than the Non-101 males; and although the results were not significant, the total sample presents a trend in this predicted direction.

The present study raises more questions about the parent-child relationship of students who have academic problems, since these students appear to have inadequate self-concepts and to view their mothers more negatively than the average student and since there is also some evidence that they are less identified with their fathers than the average student. The relationship between an individual having an inadequate self-concept and viewing his parents in a negative light can be explained in two different ways. Based on the theorizing of Rogers (1951), one could see these

students negative description of their parents as defensive behavior. Wylie's findings (1965) that individuals with high self-regard were associated with less rationalizing and projecting than individuals with low self-regard support the above interpretation. Another interpretation which seems equally reasonable is that these students have internalized parental attitudes of rejection. The Stevens' (1962) and the Roth and Meyersburgs' (1963) investigations are particularly relevant to such a viewpoint. Stevens, studying the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement, concluded that external attitudes of rejection may have been internalized by unsuccessful students. Adding to this belief, Roth and Meyersburg state:

The psychogenesis involves a series of very subtle devaluations of the child, stemming from the parent-child relationship. In our experience the most frequent pattern is that of the parent who pays no attention at all to the accomplishments or failures of the child. (These students frequently exclaim, "What's the use, nobody gives a damn," in reference to their current college failure.) The life space of the child and the life space of the parent are in different realms, a state of affairs which constitutes a parental rejection. . . . In order for the child to maintain some kind of identity with the parent he must learn to see himself as a failure. He must hold back his productivity and blame himself for his lacks (Roth and Meyersburg, 1963, p. 338).

This interpretation would lead us to question what the parent-child relationship was like, since this relationship is a potent factor in the formation of the individual's

self-concept and in terms of the way in which he reacts to his environment.

Out of the interaction of the child with the world about him, the individual comes to differentiate more and more clearly his phenomenal self. Obviously, this concept can only be a function of the way he is treated by those who surround him. As he is loved or rejected, praised or punished, fails or is able to compete, he comes gradually to regard himself in the terms of those who surround him. The child can only see himself in the terms of his experience, and in the terms of the treatment he receives from those responsible for his development. He is likely, therefore, to be strongly affected by the labels which are applied to him by other people. The dangers of describing a child with this or that label become apparent at once. He may have no other choice but to regard himself in terms of such symbols. If the reactions of those who surround him label him as a liar, a thief, a delinquent, or a "dummy," he may eventually come to see himself in the same light. He can only act in terms of what he regards as the truth about himself (Snygg and Combs, 1949, p. 83).

The results that 101 male students have a negative self-concept, view their mothers negatively, and tend not to be identified with their fathers, in general support the major assumption made by Debolt (1962), Gatley (1965), and the present writer. We assume that students who seek help for their academic problems have a negative self-concept prior to their academic difficulties rather than as a result of them. However, it is difficult to prove this assumption, since there is evidence to indicate that the Winter 101 and Non-101 males, who have been in college one or more terms, show a greater difference on self-concept than the Fall

males, who were new students. Debolt found a constellation of needs among the Fall 101 students, who were new students and had not experienced academic difficulties in college, which indicated that they had an inadequate self-concept. Gatley, using the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale (TMAS), found that Fall 101 students were no more anxious than other entering freshmen, despite the fact that Fall 101 students seem to anticipate academic difficulties and that they had knowledge of low scholastic aptitude scores predicting academic difficulties. Gatley feels that the low scores that the 101 students obtain on their scholastic tests are consistent with their poor self-concept. He states:

If 101 students are more comfortable with a view of themselves as poor students, it is logical that knowledge of low scholastic aptitude scores would not make them anxious. On the contrary, from the viewpoint of phenomenological personality theory, the 101 student would more likely experience anxiety if he were to anticipate doing well, not poorly in school (Gatley, 1965, p. 30).

Gatley also adds:

If the poor academic performance did lead to a new, and unexpected experience of self-disparagement, rather than serving to maintain an already structuralized inadequate self-concept, one would expect such a change to be accompanied by considerable anxiety. The present study finds that achievement problems and even their knowledge of aptitude scores predicting such problems, do not make 101 students anxious. The findings add further support to view then, that 101 students already have a structuralized inadequate self-concept by the time that they seek help in the Methods of Study course (Gatley, 1965, p. 32).

The result that male college students who have academic difficulties view their mothers negatively is one of the striking findings of this study. This result leads one to ask why these students have such a low opinion of their mothers. Three possible interpretations come to this writer's mind. It is possible that these male students have identified with their mothers and that the negative descriptions on self-concept and concept of mothers reflect this identification. That the 101 males tend to be less identified with their fathers than the Non-101 males helps to support this view. Another account of this finding is that these students may be attempting to lessen their feelings of inadequacy as males by downgrading the female image, their mothers. Still another possibility is that the 101 males, as a result of their college experience, have a more realistic view of their mothers than they had in the past. It is conceivable that experience with other students has shown them that their mothers are not as perfect as they once thought.

The present study raises more questions about these students than have been answered. The conclusions of the present writer are in accordance with Wylie (1961) and Medinnus (1965) who believe that more research of a developmental and longitudinal nature is needed to identify the factors that effect an individual's self-concept. One of

the factors that should be examined is the process of identification. Also, we need to examine the sex differences and the acceptance-rejection parental dimension on the development of the self-concept in order to shed some more light on the psychodynamics of students with academic difficulties. Information about these factors would be beneficial in counseling them.

SUMMARY

Recent findings have shown that the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement is important in increasing our knowledge of the problems of academic motivation. It is felt that other person-concepts such as ideal-self and concept of parents are also relevant to understanding male students who have study problems, since there seems to be an interaction between self-concept, ideal-self, and feelings about parents. This study proposes that male college students who have academic difficulties and seek help: (1) have a more negative self-concept than a control group of male students, (2) have a more unrealistic ideal-self concept than the control group, (3) will be more extreme in their conceptualization of their parents as individuals than average male students, and (4) will be less identified with their fathers than the control group.

The experimental sample was composed of male students who had voluntarily enrolled in the Methods of Effective Study course in the Fall or Winter terms at Michigan State University. These students are seen as representative of male students who seek aid for academic difficulties.

The control group was selected from male students who were enrolled in an introductory course in psychology in the Fall and Winter quarters. The Block Adjective Check List was given to all subjects at the beginning of the Fall and Winter quarters. The test was administered again one week later to the experimental group in order to procure an estimate of its reliability with this population. The Check List was modified slightly because of the specific needs of this study. Each adjective was weighted as indicating a positive or negative characteristic in order to obtain a "valence score" which represents the attractiveness of the person-concept described. A t-ratio and Karon's method (1965) of combining the significance level of the t-ratios obtained for the Fall and Winter terms for each person-concept of the Check List were chosen to compare the differences between the experimental and control groups.

The test-retest reliability coefficients indicate a high degree of stability, and the stability of ideal-self suggests that this person-concept is a stereotyped concept.

The combined data of the two terms supported the proposition that male students who have academic difficulties have a more negative self-concept than average male students. This finding adds further support to the view that students with academic problems have a structuralized, inadequate self-concept. This result of the study was

predicted by Debolt's theoretical conclusions (1963) about the personality structure of these students. Phenomenological theory was used to discuss this result and the implications that follow from it.

No support was found for the proposition that male students with study problems have a more unrealistic ideal-self than the control group of students. Evidence was presented that suggested that college students' ideal-self is a cultural stereotype to which they aspire.

The combined data of the two terms supported the proposition that male college students with academic difficulties are more extreme in their conceptualization of their parents as individuals than average male students. It was found that these students view their mothers more negatively than the control group of students. Three possible explanations were offered to explain this finding.

The combined data of the two terms also showed a trend which supports the proposition that male college students with academic difficulties are not as identified with their fathers as average male college students. It is felt that this study raises a number of important questions about the parent-child relationship of students with study problems.

The relationship between an individual having a negative self-concept and viewing his parents in a similar

light was explained in two different ways. It is thought that this relationship could represent either defensive behavior on the part of the students or an internalization of parental attitudes of rejection.

It seems that the present study raises more questions about male students with study problems than have been answered. Implications for further research were discussed.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

NAME : _____ AGE : _____ SEX : _____
STUDENT NUMBER : _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CHANG-BLOCK ADJECTIVE CHECK LIST

We are using the Chang-Block Adjective Check List to develop one part of a measure which can be used in the future to tell how well people understand themselves and other people.

At the top of this page we are asking you to write in the information requested. Your name and student number are needed to contact you in case further studies are necessary. The other information will be used in interpreting the results. The responses you give in this task will be treated anonymously. That is, the individual sheets will be separated from the first page. The worth of this research depends upon how honestly and conscientiously you approach the following tasks.

At the top of page 2 in capital letters, is the phrase, "Your Self." Below this heading is a list of 79 adjectives. You are to describe "Your Self" as you see yourself in terms of these adjectives. Mark an X before an adjective if you feel it is true or characteristic of you. Mark an 0 before the adjective if you believe it is false or uncharacteristic of you.

There is one restriction placed upon you. You are permitted to make only 30 X's and 30 0's. No more and No less. Please check the list when you have finished to be sure you have exactly 30 X's and 30 0's.

When you have finished the description of yourself, turn the page and describe the person named at the top of the page in the same fashion. This task may seem somewhat tedious to you, but please do it as carefully as possible.

YOUR BEST FRIEND (Sex _____)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ___ absent-minded | ___ persevering |
| ___ affected | ___ personally charming |
| ___ ambitious | ___ precise |
| ___ assertive, dominant | ___ psychologically secure |
| ___ bossy | ___ reasonable |
| ___ calm | ___ rebellious |
| ___ cautious | ___ relaxed |
| ___ changeable | ___ resentful |
| ___ conceited | ___ reserved, dignified |
| ___ confident | ___ restless |
| ___ considerate | ___ sarcastic |
| ___ cooperative | ___ self-assured, poised, self- |
| ___ cruel, mean | confident |
| ___ defensive, self-excusing | ___ self-controlled |
| ___ dependent | ___ self-indulgent |
| ___ determined | ___ selfish |
| ___ disorderly | ___ self-pitying |
| ___ dissatisfied | ___ sense of humor |
| ___ dramatic | ___ sensible, level-headed |
| ___ dull | ___ sentimental |
| ___ easily embarrassed | ___ shrewd, clever |
| ___ easily hurt | ___ sincere |
| ___ energetic | ___ slow in speech and movement |
| ___ fair-minded, objective | ___ snobbish |
| ___ frank | ___ sophisticated |
| ___ free with praise | ___ stubborn |
| ___ friendless | ___ suspicious |
| ___ friendly | ___ sympathetic |
| ___ helpless | ___ tense |
| ___ hostile | ___ timid, meek, submissive |
| ___ idealistic | ___ touchy, irritable |
| ___ imaginative | ___ tactless |
| ___ impulsive | ___ unconventional |
| ___ inhibited | ___ undecided, confused |
| ___ intelligent | ___ unhappy |
| ___ interests wide, versatile | ___ uninterested, indifferent |
| ___ introspective, self-aware | ___ unworthy, inadequate |
| ___ lazy | ___ warm |
| ___ masculine | ___ withdrawn, introverted |
| ___ obnoxious | ___ worried, anxious |

APPENDIX B

DIRECTIONS: Below is a list of seventy-nine adjectives. Some of these adjectives are regarded by the people of our society as socially undesirable, while others are seen as desirable. Mark a + before the adjective if you feel it indicates a characteristic which is commonly viewed as socially desirable. Mark a - before the adjective if you believe it suggests a characteristic which is socially undesirable.

-	absent-minded	+	persevering
-	affected	+	personally charming
+	ambitious	+	precise
-	assertive, dominant	+	psychologically secure
-	bossy	+	reasonable
+	calm	-	rebellious
+	cautious	+	relaxed
+	changeable	-	resentful
-	conceited	+	reserved, dignified
+	confident	-	restless
+	considerate	-	sarcastic
+	cooperative	+	self-assured, poised, self-confident
-	cruel, mean	+	self-controlled
-	defensive, self-excusing	-	self-indulgent
0	dependent	-	selfish
+	determined	-	self-pitying
-	disorderly	+	sense of humor
-	dissatisfied	+	sensible, level-headed
0	dramatic	+	sentimental
-	dull	+	shrewd, clever
-	easily embarrassed	+	sincere
-	easily hurt	-	slow in speech and movement
+	energetic	-	snobbish
+	fair-minded, objective	+	sophisticated
+	frank	-	stubborn
+	free with praise	-	suspicious
-	friendless	+	sympathetic
+	friendly	-	tense
-	helpless	-	timid, meek, submissive
-	hostile	-	touchy, irritable
0	idealistic	-	tactless
+	imaginative	-	unconventional
-	impulsive	-	undecided, confused
-	inhibited	-	unhappy
+	intelligent	-	uninterested, indifferent
+	interests wide, versatile	-	unworthy, inadequate
+	introspective, self-aware	+	warm
-	lazy	-	withdrawn, introverted
+	masculine	-	worried, anxious
-	obnoxious		

APPENDIX D

A comparison of 101 and Non-101 students on characteristics they would not like to have. N = 44 for each group.

Non- 101		101	Non- 101		101
40	absent-minded	44	1	persevering	—
21	affected	21	—	personally charming . .	—
—	ambitious	1	1	precise	—
4	assertive, dominant . .	5	1	psychologically secure .	—
38	bossy	41	—	reasonable	1
2	calm	—	24	rebellious	27
—	cautious	2	1	relaxed	—
14	changeable	14	25	resentful	30
43	conceited	43	2	reserved, dignified . .	1
—	confident	1	22	restless	22
—	considerate	—	28	sarcastic	31
—	cooperative	—	—	self assured, poised,	—
43	cruel, mean	44	—	self-confident	—
30	defensive, self excusing	30	1	self-controlled	—
26	dependent	22	14	self-indulgent	16
—	determined	—	38	selfish	40
37	disorderly	40	37	self-pitying	32
32	dissatisfied	36	—	sense of humor	—
13	dramatic	17	1	sensible, level-headed .	—
37	dull	41	2	sentimental	4
27	easily embarrassed . .	27	3	shrewd, clever	1
25	easily hurt	29	1	sincere	1
—	energetic	—	38	slow in speech & movement	30
—	fair-minded, objective	—	38	snobbish	44
2	frank	—	7	sophisticated	12
8	free with praise . . .	4	26	stubborn	27
34	friendless	41	18	suspicious	20
—	friendly	—	—	sympathetic	—
40	helpless	40	20	tense	25
38	hostile	39	36	timid, meek, submissive.	36
7	idealistic	7	38	touchy, irritable . . .	36
—	imaginative	2	33	tactless	31
18	impulsive	17	12	unconventional	9
18	inhibited	20	30	undecided, confused . .	22
—	intelligent	—	39	unhappy	37
—	interests wide, versatile	—	27	uninterested, indifferent	26
9	introspective, self-aware	6	35	unworthy, inadequate . .	22
41	lazy	42	—	warm	—
2	masculine	—	29	withdrawn, introverted .	21
38	obnoxious	40	26	worried, inadequate . .	25

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