

ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NONPROMOTION
AND THE MALE STUDENT'S SELF-CONCEPT OF ACADEMIC
ABILITY AND HIS PERCEIVED PARENTAL, FRIENDS',
AND TEACHERS' EVALUATIONS OF HIS ACADEMIC ABILITY

by Axel Alfred Johnson III

The basic purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship existed between the practice of nonpromoting male students and the variables of: (1) the student's expressed self-concept of academic ability; (2) the student's expressed perception of his parents' evaluations of his academic ability; (3) the student's expressed perception of his teachers' evaluations of his academic ability; and (5) the sixth grade grade-point averages of the children who had been nonpromoted at least two years prior to the sixth grade.

In order to investigate the foregoing variables it was necessary to compare matched groups of nonpromoted and promoted students.

The matching was done on the variables of race, socio-economic status, academic ability, and point average in the grade in which the nonpromoted child was nonpromoted, which are noted in numerous studies as contributing significantly to the self-concept of children and their academic achievement in school.

Academic ability was considered to be represented by the mean score of the two most recent scores received by all the students of the population on the Lorge-Thorndike Test of Intelligence. These were used because of a change in intelligence tests used in the school system during the school careers of the students studied. Socio-economic status was determined by a score assigned to the student's fathers or in some instances, mothers, occupation. This score was arrived at by using the scale developed by Otis Duncan.

Grade-point averages were computed by assigning number scores to the letter grades received by the male students in spelling, reading, social studies, and arithmetic in each of the grades one through six.

The total population selected was composed of 350 seventh grade male students who had spent their entire school careers in an urban Middlewest public school system. Only the students who had been in the regular classroom program were included. The nonpromoted population was composed of fifty-three males who had been nonpromoted in a grade once in their school careers, grade four or before. The continuously promoted population consisted of 297 male students who had not been nonpromoted in a grade and who met all of the before mentioned criteria.

Data for the self-concept of academic ability, perceived parental evaluations of academic ability, perceived teachers' evaluations of academic ability,

and perceived friends' evaluations of academic ability, were collected by administration of the questionnaires developed by Wilbur B. Brookover to 206 seventh grade male students in the fall of 1967.

Chi-square analysis was used to determine the significance of the relationships explored. In all comparisons a 2 x 2 contingency table design was used, and the null hypotheses developed were rejected at the .05 significance level.

In order to make use of the chi-square analysis it was necessary to dichotomize the scores received by the students into high and low categories on academic ability, socio-economic status, grade-point average, self-concept of academic ability, and perceived parental, teachers', and friends' evaluations of their academic ability. Mean scores were computed for each variable, and all scores falling below the mean were classified as low scores, while those scores exceeding the mean were classified as high scores. It was then possible to do a chi-square analysis on each variable.

With the variables of academic ability, socio-economic status, race, and grade-point average partialled out, the nonpromoted male, when compared with his matched counterpart, is characterized by: (1) a significantly lower self-concept of academic ability; (2) a definite but not significant trend toward lower perceived parental evaluations of his academic ability; (3) not being significantly different on the ratings on perceived

teachers' and friends' evaluations of academic ability from his matched counterpart; and (4) a sixth grade grade-point average not significantly different from his matched counterpart.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The nonpromoting of children as a school policy is by no means only of recent concern to educators. Articles have been written expressing concern about the possible impact of a policy of nonpromotion upon the children who are nonpromoted for about as long as the graded school structure has been in existence. A great deal of confusion has centered around the policy of nonpromotion, as is well summarized in a recent book by John Goodlad and Robert H. Anderson.¹

They have noted that the criteria used by one teacher for nonpromotion are often the same criteria used by a different teacher for promotion. They relate that one teacher might nonpromote a student because she did not feel he made sufficient academic progress during the year to profit from the work of the grade above-- yet another teacher might promote the student because the teacher felt that if the child had not made the hoped for

¹John I. Goodlad and Robert H. Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1963), pp. 32-33.

progress, he might as well move on to another grade and teacher.

It appears from the writing of Goodlad, Anderson, and others that there are no uniform criteria which are followed to determine which children are to be promoted or nonpromoted or whether children should be nonpromoted.

Available research presents evidence which gives an indication that nonpromotion is detrimental to the social, emotional and academic development of children. But the evidence is inconclusive, and this is undoubtedly one reason why it can be seen in the literature that nonpromotion rates differ from school district to school district, school to school, and even within schools.

This study is directed toward acquiring information which could be useful in gaining a greater understanding of the practice of nonpromoting children, and hopefully toward providing information for teachers which could cause them to alter their current promotional practices.

Purpose of the Study

It is the purpose of this study to determine whether there are differences between male seventh grade students who have been nonpromoted once in their school careers and male seventh grade students who have been continuously promoted in regard to selected characteristics. These characteristics are:

1. The student's expressed self-concept of academic ability.

2. The student's expressed perception of his parents' evaluations of his academic ability.
3. The student's expressed perception of his teachers' evaluations of his academic ability.
4. The student's expressed perception of his friends' evaluations of his academic ability.
5. The sixth grade grade-point averages of the children.

For purposes of this investigation, matched groups were formed upon the variables of race, socio-economic status, academic ability, and point average in the grade in which the nonpromoted child was nonpromoted, which have been noted in numerous studies as contributing significantly to the self-concept of children and their academic achievement in school.

As has been noted in the introduction of this study, no consistent criteria are being used in the decision making process regarding which children are not to be promoted. That different criteria are followed is not of central concern in this study. What is important **is** whether a relationship does exist between nonpromotion and the before mentioned variables regardless of the reasons for the nonpromotion.

Significance of the Study

Each year many children are nonpromoted in the schools of our nation. Some of the past research has demonstrated that the practice of nonpromotion does

not accomplish what educators have long believed it accomplishes-- that of raising the eventual academic achievement level of those children who are not promoted. Dr. Wilbur B. Brookover and associates have demonstrated that the academic achievement level of children is highly correlated with self-concept of academic ability. It may be that a relationship does exist between the self-concept of academic ability of children and their nonpromotion. If this study demonstrates that a relationship does exist, then a new approach to answering many of the questions concerning nonpromotion will be found. It would lay the groundwork for future research to determine whether nonpromoting a child is a cause of a low self-concept of academic ability, or a low self-concept of academic ability is a cause of nonpromotion.

Nonpromoting a child has the effect of labeling a child as being less capable than the other children in his class. By doing this educators may be causing or compounding a child's low self-concept of academic ability. If this study illustrates that there is a relationship between nonpromotion and the male student's self-concept of academic ability, then teachers would have evidence which hopefully would cause them to think more carefully about nonpromoting children, and therefore alter their behavior. It also might help them to be more aware of children in their classes who see themselves in a negative light, and to try to provide these children with experiences that would cause them

to feel better about themselves, and hopefully to achieve better in school.

Relationships to be Explored

In order to study the following relationships matched groups were formed to control for differences in levels of academic ability, socio-economic status, academic achievement, and race. The relationships were:

1. Does a relationship exist between nonpromoted students and continuously promoted students with respect to their self-concept of academic ability?
2. Does a relationship exist between nonpromoted students and continuously promoted students with respect to their perceived parental evaluations of their academic ability?
3. Does a relationship exist between nonpromoted students and continuously promoted students with respect to their perceived teachers' evaluations of their academic ability?
4. Does a relationship exist between nonpromoted students and continuously promoted students with respect to their perceived friends' evaluations of their academic ability?
5. Do the nonpromoted and continuously promoted students differ with respect to their grade-point average of four basic school subjects in the sixth grade: reading, social studies, math, and spelling.

Definition of Terms

Many of the terms to be described are familiar to educators and layman alike, others are not. It is important that the meaning intended and used for each of these words or phrases be understood so that the author and the reader have a common base of understanding:

1. Promotion: the procedure by which a child is passed from grade to grade within the graded school structure. Usually done at the end of a school year.
2. Nonpromotion: the procedure by which a child is retained in a grade for a second year before being sent on to the next grade. Usually done at the end of a school year.
3. Socio-Economic Status: a measure of the father's or head of the household's occupational level as measured by the Duncan Scale.
4. Grade-Point Average: an average of the student's academic performance in four subjects: spelling, social studies, arithmetic, and reading. Letter grades were assigned numbers (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, E=0) and averages were computed.
5. Self-Concept of Academic Ability: refers to the expressed behavior in which one indicates to himself (publicly or privately) his

ability to achieve in academic tasks as compared with others engaged in the same task.

6. Perceived Parental Evaluations of Academic Ability: a student's expressed perception of his parents' evaluation of his ability to achieve in school in relation to other students.
7. Perceived Teacher Evaluations of Academic Ability: a student's expressed perception of his teachers' evaluation of his ability to achieve in school in relation to other students.
8. Perceived Friends' Evaluations of Academic Ability: a student's expressed perception of his friends' evaluation of his ability to achieve in school in relation to other students.

Data Collection Procedures

The investigator first obtained permission from the superintendent and principals of an urban Middlewest school district to do this study in their district. The necessary data for the matching of the groups were obtained by using the information available in the cumulative records of the students at the junior high schools of the selected school system. This was done prior to the opening of school, which allowed for easy access to the

records and minimal disruption of the school program. The children from the sample were given the four Brookover schedules during the third week of school.

Data Analysis Procedures

All data were treated as group data yielding a single score for each group for each test. Matched groups were formed by partialling out the variables of academic ability, socio-economic status, race, and grade-point average in the grade in which the nonpromoted male was not promoted.

The scores which the matched groups of promoted and nonpromoted students received with respect to self-concept of academic ability, perceived parental evaluations of academic ability, perceived friends' evaluations of academic ability, were compared. The sixth grade grade-point averages of the matched groups were also compared.

Chi-square was used to determine the relative associations among the variables in the study. In all comparisons a 2 x 2 contingency table design was used, and the hypotheses, which were stated in the null form, were rejected at the .05 significance level.

Limitations and Scope of the Study

This study was intended to determine whether a relationship existed between the nonpromotion of male students and their: (1) self-concept of academic

ability; (2) perceived friends' evaluation of academic ability; (3) perceived teachers' evaluation of academic ability; (4) perceived parental evaluation of academic ability, and (5) sixth grade grade-point average. It was not intended to show cause and effect, which can only be adequately explored by means of a longitudinal study.

It should be noted that boys were selected to be studied because of the small number of girls who are nonpromoted during their school careers and the resulting difficulty of getting statistically significant results. Their test results could not be placed together with those of the boys as it was recommended by the author of the test schedules that the data for each sex be handled separately.

The measuring devices used to determine self-concept of academic ability, and perceived parental, teachers' and friends' evaluations of academic ability, were pencil and paper tests. Because of this the students could have answered as they thought the examiner would want them to answer. Other means could be used to study the variables with which this study is concerned, such as observation and inference, which could avoid the problem of self reporting.

Summary

The first chapter includes the problem to be studied, the questions centering around the problem,

the terms to be used throughout the study, the justification of the study, its limitations, and the procedures to be used in the collection and analysis of data.

A review of the related research to the study is included in the second chapter. The third chapter contains an outline of the instrumentation and research procedures, while Chapter IV includes an analysis of the data collected. The final chapter contains the summary, conclusions, recommendations for curriculum development, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTION

This chapter on the review of the literature includes an historical perspective on the development of the promotion-nonpromotion dilemma. Within this framework an explanation is presented on how the graded school organizational structure came into being, and how the questions which we have been asking for many years concerning promotion and nonpromotion practices have evolved.

Past and current promotion practices of the public schools of our nation will be reviewed, as will the apparent impact of these practices upon the academic, social, and emotional growth of children.

Within this chapter, the possibility of making use of the self-concept of academic ability as a means of determining whether continuous promotion or nonpromotion appears to be most beneficial to children is explored. Such areas as: (1) the development of the self-concept, (2) the impact of failure upon the self-concept, (3) school achievement and the self-concept, and (4) a review of the Wilbur B. Brookover studies of the self-concept of academic ability are included.

Promotion and Nonpromotion:
An Historical Perspective

The graded school, which was designed to add structure to what some believed were inadequately organized schools in the early nineteenth century, can be traced back as early as 1818.¹ In that year, the citizens of Boston proposed a three-year school for teaching the fundamentals required by the grammar schools. Between the ages of four and seven, children in these primary schools presumably would be taught simple arithmetic and some little reading.² Drake has written in regard to the 1818 school in Boston:

. . . At this time children were being admitted into the English grammar school in Boston from the primary school. These schools were being taught by one teacher in a one-room school building. The primary school was organized into six classes, beginning with the learning of the ABC's and providing elementary instruction in reading and writing. By 1823, the English grammar school was divided vertically into reading and writing schools, with the reading school being further divided into four classes. This general pattern continued to prevail until 1848, with a tendency toward grading as new buildings were constructed.³

The foundation for the graded school was being laid, and in 1848 what is considered to be the first graded elementary school in the United States was

¹William E. Drake, The American School in Transition (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1955), p. 225.

²Goodlad and Anderson, op. cit., p. 48.

³Drake, op. cit., p. 226.

organized-- The Quincy Grammer School of Boston, Massachusetts.⁴ The school was not only unique in that it was four stories high in contrast to the two-story reading and writing schools of the period,⁵ but also because of its interior. John D. Philbrick, principal of the Quincy Grammer School, wrote that:

. . . The essential features consisted, first in giving a separate room to each teacher; second, in grouping a sufficient number of these rooms in the same building to accommodate pupils enough for a good classification; third, in the provision of an assembly hall spacious enough to seat all the pupils accommodated in the building.⁶

The graded school structure caught on rapidly, and by 1870, according to Shearer, "the pendulum had swung from no system to nothing but system."⁷

Inherent to the graded structure was the necessity of a child to master the academic requirements at each grade level, or stay at that level until the subject matter was mastered. So until a child could perform at what the teacher and administration considered an adequate level, he or she stayed in the grade for two, three, or even four years.

⁴Ibid., p. 227.

⁵Goodlad and Anderson op. cit.

⁶John D. Philbrick, City School Systems in the United States (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1885), p. 158.

⁷William J. Shearer, The Grading of Schools (New York: H. P. Smith Publishing Co., 1947), pp. 480-481.

Promotion and Nonpromotion:
The Development of a New Dilemma

Promotion, or the advancement of a child in grade level because of the meeting of some set of academic and social standards, and nonpromotion-- the holding of a child at grade level because of the failure to meet some set of academic or social standards, are terms that have become very familiar to the members of our society. They are on the lips of almost every parent, grandparent, uncle, aunt, and child in the spring of each school year. For each June the teachers of the graded school systems in our nation face the extremely vexing problem. They must make a decision as to the students in their classrooms who will be promoted and those who will not be promoted. As one travels from school to school, he becomes aware that there is a great amount of time and worry involved for the teachers in making the extremely important decision for those children who have had difficulty in the classroom. He also becomes aware that there is a great variance among the criteria utilized by the teachers in coming to these decisions.

Goodlad and Anderson have written that the criteria used by one teacher for nonpromotion are often the same criteria used by a different teacher for promotion. They found that one teacher might retain a student because she did not feel he made sufficient academic progress during the year to profit from the work of the grade above-- yet another teacher might promote the student

because the teacher felt that if the child had not made the hoped for progress, he might as well move on to another grade and teacher. Goodlad and Anderson have summarized several other reasons put forth by teachers to explain the incidence of nonpromotion:

1. We cannot go on indefinitely pushing children up. Let's face it: some upper grades and certainly our high schools expect children to measure up. If we don't insist on certain standards now, children will be unprepared for what must inevitably come later.
2. The teacher in the grade immediately above expects children to come prepared; it's just too bad for the children if they are sent up unprepared.
3. Continued inability to do the work of the grade is discouraging and frustrating to children. They are better off if retained in a grade level where they can gain some success and satisfaction.
4. The presence of slow learners in the class presents a hindrance both to children and to teachers who already are badly over-loaded. Retaining slow learners will reduce this problem.
5. Immature children, by repeating the grade, will find more suitable playmates and work companions.
6. Promotion of all is unfair to those who have come up to grade standards. These more able students come to resent equal reward for obviously inferior performance.⁸

Goodlad and Anderson have written that when the question was reversed and teachers were asked to explain why many teachers apparently decide on promotion as the better alternative, the following reasons came forth.

1. If the teacher and child have already failed to make the hoped for progress, the child might just as well move on to another grade and teacher. (Sometimes this is stated that the slow learning child will achieve just as much in the grade ahead as he will by having to repeat the present one).

⁸Goodlad and Anderson, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

2. From the beginning, first-grade teachers must deal with a wide range of individual differences. They cannot reduce the range, and so teachers in higher grades must anticipate dealing also with the range as it exists.
3. Grade failure is itself more devastating to the child's adjustment than are his difficulties with the work at hand. Slow learners will have enough problems in school without adding the shame and humiliation of nonpromotion.
4. Since good teaching increases rather than reduces the range of abilities with which a teacher must deal, retaining a few children at the bottom end is not likely to reduce materially the next teacher's problem of dealing with individual differences. Besides, if each grade retains some children, each grade will carry these into the next year, thus assuring the presence of these slow learners in any case.
5. Chronological age is the best single criterion for determining the placement of a child with other children. Consequently, keeping children of the same age together (therefore promoting them), is the best way to assure appropriate work and play companions for all.
6. Class size and the cost of education are increased when even a small percentage of children is retained.
7. At elementary school levels, where children are called upon to compete regardless of their desire or readiness to do so, educational practices must be adapted to the welfare of the individual, not the child to arbitrary grade standards. Promotion is aligned with such a point of view.⁹

The difficulty which teachers have faced in choosing one of the two alternatives is undoubtedly due to the lack of clear cut criteria upon which to base their decision. The foregoing summary by Goodlad and Anderson lends evidence to this fact. Because of the apparent lack of criteria, attempts have been made by teachers to modify the decision process.

⁹Ibid., pp. 33-34.

New terms have been developed that represent policies that are somewhere between promotion and non-promotion. Some of them are: annual promotion, conditional promotion, double promotion, enrichment promotion, flexible promotion, individual promotion, probationary promotion, quarterly promotion, rapid promotion, selective promotion, semester promotion, and subject promotion.¹⁰ As will be made clearer later in this study, the use of such terms does not resolve the basic dilemma.

What has further complicated the promotion-nonpromotion decision process for teachers has been the conflicting reports which have appeared in the literature. Sandin has noted that several authors have written articles expressing opinions that a policy of complete promotion is designed to coddle the child, and that a need exists for perfect performance and adherence to grade standards. He further noted that it is claimed in some reports that nonpromotion is not so tragic as is supposed, and that pupils in a majority of cases do profit from repeating a grade to the extent that they develop new confidence, they become more stable emotionally, their attitudes toward school activities are brightened, and they are much happier as a result

¹⁰"Ten Criticisms of Public Education," National Education Association Research Bulletin, XXXV (December, 1957), 149.

of readjustment.¹¹

Sandin has also pointed up that in contrast, other writers are confident that nonpromotion is an undesirable experience for a child since it is claimed that it is often accompanied by an imposed change of school associates, by a change from favorable to unfavorable attitudes toward the school, and by humiliation and resentment that leads to undesirable behaviors.¹²

Further evidence of the inconsistency of beliefs which surround the promotion-nonpromotion question has been brought out by E. R. Steadman in a 1948 questionnaire study of ninety-three school systems. A mixed response to the question of a continuous progress policy was received from the teachers returning the questionnaire. Steadman found that in support of the policy, teachers expressed the opinion that keeping a child with his own age group made for the soundest emotional, mental, physical, and social growth and adjustment. They believed that a continuous progress policy reduced behavior problems, helped develop good work habits, and gave the child an opportunity to work according to his ability. In addition, the teachers found more satisfaction in the policy of no failures. For, under the old promotion plan, the teachers felt they had to press the

¹¹Sandin, Adolph, Social and Emotional Adjustments of Regularly Promoted and Nonpromoted Pupils (New York: Columbia University, 1944), pp. 13-14.

¹²Ibid.

child to try to do what he could not do.¹³

Steadman found that respondents who argued against the policy pointed out that it reduced incentive for superior scholastic achievement; led to problems for children who found the work beyond their capacity; created problems for the teacher who had to work with classes that had a wide range in achievement; caused problems for parents; created problems in high school; and produced administrative problems.¹⁴

It can be seen from the foregoing that a great variance in philosophy and belief exists in our society with respect to the form of promotion policy to follow in our schools. Many people believe in a strong nonpromotion policy, while others believe that a continuous progress policy is best.

It is hoped that the later chapters of this study will bring criteria and data to light which will help to resolve some of the promotion-nonpromotion dilemma.

The Promotion and Nonpromotion Practices

The promotion and nonpromotion practices being followed in most school systems of our nation are not uniform. Goodlad and Anderson have indicated that studies conducted over several decades have revealed

¹³E. R. Steadman, "Fifteen Who Were Not Promoted," Elementary School Journal, LIX (February, 1959), 272.

¹⁴Ibid.

nonpromotion rates varying from zero in some school districts to 34 per cent in others.¹⁵

Leonard P. Ayres, in his 1909 study, Laggards in Our Schools, reported that the average rate of nonpromotion for all grades of a kindergarten through twelfth grade school system was 16 per cent.¹⁶ Caswell, writing twenty-four years later in 1933, reported a nonpromotion rate for all grades of 10 per cent.¹⁷ Sandin, in his 1943 book, Progress in the Elementary School, listed the available statistics on the cumulative or yearly rates of nonpromotion published by cities and by state education departments from 1935-1941. Cumulative or yearly rates of nonpromotion by the state education departments in 1935-1941 are presented in table 2.1. Table 2.2 presents the cumulative or yearly rates of nonpromotion by cities in 1935-1940.¹⁸

Saunders reported in 1941 that from the 1920's to the late 1930's the average rate of nonpromotion in large cities dropped from 8.7 per cent to 4.0 per cent.¹⁹

¹⁵Goodlad and Anderson, op. cit. p. 30.

¹⁶Leonard P. Ayres, Laggards in Our Schools (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1909), pp. 141-158.

¹⁷Hollis L. Caswell, Nonpromotion in Elementary Schools (Nashville, Tennessee: George Peabody College for Teachers, Division of Surveys and Field Studies, 1933), p. 24.

¹⁸Sandin, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

¹⁹Carlton M. Saunders, Promotion or Failure for the Elementary School Pupil? (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), p. 44.

Table 2.1

Cumulative or Yearly Rates of Nonpromotion
State Education Departments 1935-1941.

| States | School Year | Elementary School Progress Percentages | |
|--------------------|----------------|---|--|
| Alabama | 1934-35 | 60.9 cumulative nonpromotion (rural) 37.3 " " (urban) | |
| Arizona* | 1938-39 | 6.7 nonpromoted | |
| Delaware | 1940-41 | 9.8 nonpromoted (white) 17.8 " (Negro) | |
| Florida | 1937-38 | 36.5 cumulative nonpromotion (white) 56.9 " " (Negro) | |
| Maryland | 1938-39 | 11.1 cumulative nonpromotion (white) 18.4 " " (Negro) | |
| North Carolina | 1934-35 | 37.7 overage for grade (white)** 46.5 " " " (Negro) | |
| Oklahoma | 1935-36 | 54.7 cumulative slow progress (white) 74.7 " " " (Negro) | |
| South Carolina* | 1939-40 | 10.4 cumulative slow progress (white) 8.9 " " " (Negro) | |
| Tennessee | 1937-38 | 12.0 nonpromoted (white) 15.8 " (Negro) | |
| Texas | 1937-38 | 43.8 cumulative nonpromotion (white) 66.2 " " (Negro) | |
| Virginia* | 1940-41 | 10.1 nonpromoted (white) 15.0 " (Negro) | |

*Progress percentages for these states have been computed from statistics in printed reports.

**Overage for grade may be owing to nonpromotion and other factors such as late school entrance or prolonged periods of sickness.

Note: See Bibliography for sources of statistics.

Table 2.2

Cumulative or Yearly Rates of Nonpromotion
By Cities 1935-1940

| Cities | School Year | Elementary School Progress Percentages |
|-------------------|----------------|---|
| Boston, Mass. | 1936-37 | 8.9 nonpromoted |
| Bethlehem, Pa.* | 1935-36 | 14.8 nonpromoted |
| Evansville, Ind. | 1935-36 | 50.0 cumulative nonpromotion in one third of the elementary schools |
| Hartford, Conn. | 1935-36 | 37.2 cumulative nonpromotion |
| New York, N. Y. | 1936-37 | 26.0 cumulative nonpromotion |
| Newark, N. J. | 1939-40 | 30.6 cumulative nonpromotion |
| Pittsburgh, Pa.* | 1939-40 | 35.4 overage for grade** |
| Rutherford, N. J. | 1935-36 | 12.0 overage in the elementary schools** |
| . | | 33.0 cumulative nonpromotion in the junior high school |

*Progress percentages for these cities have been computed from statistics in printed reports.

**Overage for grade may be owing to nonpromotion and other factors such as late school entrance or prolonged periods of sickness.

Thus it appeared that the average rate of nonpromotion had dropped considerably from the 16 per cent rate of 1909.

From the 1955 work of Lennon and Mitchell one can interpret a similar trend to that which was found by Saunder as they found an indication of a decline in the average age of children grade by grade. For example, in 1918 the mean chronological age of children in the fifth grade was eleven years and six months; it was eleven years and one month in 1926; ten years and eight months in 1940; ten years and seven months in 1946; and ten years and five months in 1952.²⁰

There are more recent indications that the trend in nonpromotion rates may again be on the rise, for in 1956 Jones found that an average of about 10 per cent of the public school pupils were held back in a grade at least once.²¹ Also, a 1958 Newsweek article reported that the New York City Board of Education announced that it had eliminated such "Boondoggling" courses as "Science in the Home."²² The article further noted that:

. . . Showing it really meant business, the board had earlier disclosed that the promotion rate

²⁰Roger T. Lennon and Blythe C. Mitchell, "Trends in Age-Grade Relationship: A 35-Year Review," School and Society, LXXXII (October 15, 1955), 123-125.

²¹James J. Jones, "Recent Trends in Promotional Theory," Progressive Education, XXXIII (January, 1956), 5-6, 15.

²²"Johnny Beware, " Newsweek, LX (September 1, 1958), 55.

among its 565,000 grade school children last June had been cut to 95.6 per cent, lowest in 23 years. In Chicago, simultaneously, the public schools flunked 6.44 per cent of the pupils. Washington D.C., reported that failures were at an all-time high: 12.7 this year and 12.8 last year, compared with 3.9 in 1953.²³

Added evidence that the trend is toward more non-promotion was found by Johnson in a 1966 survey of an urban Middlewest school system. He found that 11 per cent of the 400 students who had attended the system kindergarten through the seventh grade had been non-promoted at least once during their school careers.²⁴

It has been demonstrated that there is likely to be as great a variation from grade to grade within a school and from school to school within a system as between school systems in nonpromotion policies. This inconsistency was documented in a Nashville, Tennessee study where it was discovered that there was a reported variation among schools in nonpromotion rates for the first grade ranging from zero to 50 per cent. In one county school there were no first grade nonpromotions while in another, twenty-eight of fifty-six first grade children were nonpromoted, yet the range in ability levels among the nonpromoted children county wide came

²³Ibid.

²⁴Axel A. Johnson, "Promotion and Nonpromotion in An Urban Middlewest School System" (Unpublished research study, 1966), p. 16.

close to approximating the overall ability range in many classrooms.²⁵

Caswell has noted that the Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools in New York City for the School Year 1939-1940 stated that the rate of slow progress of children in the various districts of the city varied from 12.14 per cent in one district to 36.61 per cent in another school district.²⁶ He further stated that in Salt Lake City for the school year 1935-1936, the rate of nonpromotion in the first grade varied from 3.9 per cent in one school to 28.6 per cent in another school.²⁷

Among the twelve grades within the school system, it appears that the first grade has the highest non-promotion rate. This was demonstrated in an Ohio State University survey when it was found that in Montclair, New Jersey, in the school year 1947-1948, the nonpromotion rate for all elementary grades was 4.3 per cent, but for the first grade it was 9.5 per cent. This same trend was confirmed in Seattle in 1938-1939, where the rate for all grades was 2.9 per cent and for the first grade

²⁵Public Schools of Nashville, Tennessee; A Survey Report. (Nashville: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1931), p. 22.

²⁶Forty-Second Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, City of New York, School Year 1939-40 (Board of Education, City of New York, 1940), p. 148.

²⁷Forty-Sixth Annual Report of the Salt Lake City Board of Education, School Year 1935-36 (Board of Education, Salt Lake City, 1936), p. 43.

6.8 per cent. In Chicago it was found that rates varied from 20 per cent in the first grade to 3 per cent in various other grades.²⁸

Johnson, in his 1966 study, found that 34 per cent of the total number of nonpromotions kindergarten through seventh grade occurred in the first grade. Second grade followed closely behind with 32 per cent, with third grade next with 14 per cent of the total nonpromoted.²⁹

It appears from the literature that the percentage of boys nonpromoted each year far surpasses that of girls. In 1959 the National Education Association research staff sent questionnaires to all urban school districts of 100,000 or more population, to more than 400 urban districts between 2,500 and 100,000 population, and to a selected group of county and suburban school systems. There was an 83 per cent return of the four-fifths of this number who answered a question on differences between boys and girls in rate of promotion from grade one to grade two, 73.2 per cent reported a higher promotion rate for girls; 3.2 per cent reported a higher rate for boys; and 23.6 per cent, no difference.³⁰

In a study of seven elementary schools which

²⁸Hollis Caswell and Arthur Foshay, Education in the Elementary School (New York: American Book Co., 1957), p. 369.

²⁹Johnson, op. cit.

³⁰"School Admission and Promotion", National Education Association Research Bulletin, XXXVII (February, 1959), 15.

employed nonpromotion quite freely, it was found by Caswell and Foshay that in Grade 5A in these schools, 23 per cent of the boys and 7.4 per cent of the girls were not promoted.³¹ Johnson found similar results in the school system which he studied, for three boys were nonpromoted to each girl nonpromoted when the total number of nonpromotions were considered kindergarten through seventh grade.³² Caswell and Foshay found in their study that the achievement level of nonpromoted boys, as measured by the Stanford Achievement Test, was eleven years two months, and of the promoted girls, eleven years three months.³³ They concluded, as did the authors of the National Education Association on Research Bulletin, that the nonpromotion of boys is sometimes based upon factors other than academic achievement. The National Education Association has written that:

The fact that boys fail more often than girls, despite insignificant differences in scores on intelligence and achievement tests, indicates that promotion is based to some extent on factors other than academic achievement, such as deportment and neatness of written work.³⁴

Goodlad and Anderson stated their feelings about the apparent inconsistencies in promotion practices

³¹Caswell and Foshay, op. cit., p. 373.

³²Johnson, op. cit.

³³Caswell and Foshay, op. cit.

³⁴"Pupil Failure and Nonpromotion", National Education Research Bulletin, XXXVII (February, 1959), 16-17.

when they wrote:

Whether or not a child is promoted appears to depend more upon biological, economic and social chance than upon sound educational design or how hard he works. In fact, whether or not a child is promoted depends on where he happens to go to school.³⁵

In summary, it can be concluded that there are no consistent criteria for nonpromotion, and factors other than academic achievement often are influential in the very important decision. The apparent impact of nonpromotion upon the academic progress of children will be discussed in the next section.

Nonpromotion: Its Apparent Impact on
the Academic Progress of Children

The reason most often given by educators for nonpromotion is that the child who is being nonpromoted will gain in academic achievement and be prepared for the academic work of the next grade. The universality of this assumption was demonstrated by the National Office of Education in a nation wide survey. It was found that over 70 per cent of the urban schools in the nation reported that their promotion practices are based on the philosophy that children should be promoted only if their academic achievement is at a "satisfactory" level. Less than 12 per cent of the schools reported that factors of group progress are considered in their promotion policies, with less than 1 per cent reporting that the "social

³⁵Goodlad and Anderson, op. cit., p. 31.

promotion" principle was the decisive factor.³⁶

Evidence was brought to light on this subject prior to the 1960 study, for in 1935 a study was conducted by Otto in which he found that out of 1702 elementary school classroom teachers questioned on their promotion-nonpromotion practices, that 10.5 per cent failed only those who, they believed, were sure to profit by non-promotion. There were 7.5 per cent of the teachers who used chronological age as a major factor in promotion, and only 1.6 per cent of the teachers practiced 100 per cent promotion.³⁷

The question of the impact of nonpromotion upon the academic progress of children has long been debated. In one of the earliest studies on the subject, Keyes reported that only 21 per cent of a large group of repeaters did better after repeating a grade than before, and 39 per cent actually did worse.³⁸

Hall and Demarest, in a study on the impact of a promotion policy on a pupil's achievement in reading, concluded that keeping children with their own age group does not result in a lowering of academic achievement.

³⁶Stuart Dean, "Pass or Fail," Elementary School Journal, LXI (November, 1960), 86-90.

³⁷Henry Otto, Promotion Policies and Practices in Elementary Schools (Minneapolis: Educational Test Bureau, 1935), p. 25.

³⁸Charles H. Keyes, Progress Through the Grades of City Schools (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911), p. 17.

They found that after switching to a continuous promotional policy in the Phoenix Elementary Schools in 1948, the average reading score on the Iowa Every Pupil Achievement Test for the fourth and sixth grades demonstrated no marked difference. At the same time the average chronological ages of children in the grades was lowered. For example, in the sixth grade the average age in 1946-47 was twelve years and one month, while in 1955-56 it was eleven years two months. They found that a promotion policy encouraging continuous progress actually cut down the number of retarded readers in their schools.³⁹

Worth and Shores conducted a research project to determine if nonpromotion would improve achievement in the language arts. Sixty-six low achievers who had been nonpromoted and repeated the third grade were matched case-for-case with a like number of low achievers who had been promoted to the fourth grade. The matching was done on the basis of sex, IQ, chronological age, and achievement test data. The achievement of the pupils in eight aspects of the language arts was measured before the promotion decision and at the end of the experimental year. The tests used were the California Achievement Test (Primary Battery), and the Gates Advanced Primary Tests, Type 1 and 2. They found that where a relatively

³⁹William F. Hall and Ruth Demarest, "Effect on Achievement Scores of a Change in Promotional Policy," Elementary School Journal, LVIII (January, 1958), 204-207.

rigid system of grade placement of both pupils and content existed, low achievers in the language arts were likely to do as well when they were promoted as when they were nonpromoted.⁴⁰

Coffield, in a 1954 study, attempted to determine the impact of nonpromotion on educational achievement in the elementary school. Identification was made of 190 pupils who were in grade seven, and who had been non-promoted between grades three and seven. The subjects were matched with a promoted pupil who was in the same grade the year the failure occurred. Performance on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills served as the criterion measure. Coffield arrived at the following conclusions after tabulating the data he received:

1. Failed pupils typically gain approximately only six months in educational progress during the repeat year and still fail to achieve the norm for the grade involved.
2. Failed pupils typically gain approximately one year and three months in educational progress during the two years following failure and still fail to achieve the norm for the grade involved.
3. During the year following failure, the educational progress of failed pupils is typically about four to six months less than that of matching promoted pupils.
4. The educational progress of failed pupils during the two years following failure is not significantly greater (perhaps of the order of one to three months) than that made by promoted matches during the single year spent in the next higher grade.
5. The educational progress of seventh grade pupils who have experienced failure once is typically

⁴⁰Walter Worth and J. Harlan Shores, "Does Nonpromotion Improve Achievement in the Language Arts?" Elementary English, XXXVII (January, 1960), 49-52.

on a par with that of matched promoted seventh grade pupils who have spent one year less in school.

6. The educational progress of seventh grade pupils who have experienced failure once is typically eight months less than that of matched promoted seventh grade pupils who have spent one year less in school.
7. The educational progress of seventh grade pupils who have experienced failure once is typically not affected by the grade in which the failure was experienced.
8. The general level of achievement of a school's seventh grade class is not significantly affected by the rigidity or leniency of its promotion policy.
9. The variability of pupil achievement in a school's seventh grade class is not affected by the rigidity or leniency of its promotion policy.
10. The per cent of overage seventh grade pupils is significantly greater (perhaps of the order of ten per cent) in the case of schools having rigid promotion policies than in the case of schools having lenient promotion policies.⁴¹

In an extensive study of the achievement of sixty grade one nonpromoted children as compared with that of continuously promoted children of the same mental age, Grace Arthur found that the nonpromoted children achieved 99.3 per cent as much as the continuously promoted children in the next grade. From her data she concluded that it appeared as though the average nonpromoted child of the group studied learned no more in two years than did the average continuously promoted child of the same mental age in one year.⁴²

⁴¹W. H. Coffield and Paul Blommers, "Effects of Nonpromotion in Educational Achievement in the Elementary School," Journal of Educational Psychology, XLVII (April, 1956), 235-250.

⁴²Grace Arthur, "A Study of the Achievement of Sixty Grade One Repeaters as Compared with that of Non-Repeaters of the Same Mental Age," Journal of Experimental Education, V (December, 1936), 203-206.

Kowitz and Armstrong, in a study on the impact of a promotion policy on academic achievement, utilized the records of the Research Offices of the New York State Education Department to locate two school districts that had contrasting promotion policies and a reasonable amount of recorded data. They concluded after comparing the two districts that academic achievement apparently responds to school policy. A policy of "achieve or fail" seems to cause more change among pupils who are promoted than among pupils who are being nonpromoted. While there was a trend toward increased achievement in the school with an "achieve or fail" policy, the increase was limited largely to pupils who were in no real danger of being nonpromoted.⁴³

Klene and Branson attempted to resolve the difficulties of a possible cause and effect relationship by matching children, each of whom was to repeat a grade, on the basis of chronological age, mental age, and sex. Half were then promoted and half nonpromoted. The authors concluded that the potential repeaters profited more from promotion than did the repeaters from nonpromotion with respect to achievement.⁴⁴

Kamii and Weikart conducted a study of marks,

⁴³G. T. Kowitz and C. M. Armstrong, "The Effect of Promotion Policy on Academic Achievement," Elementary School Journal, LXI (May, 1961). 435-443.

⁴⁴Vivian Klene and Ernest Branson, "Trial Promotion versus Failure," Educational Research Bulletin, VIII (January, 1929), 6-11.

achievement, and intelligence of seventh graders who were nonpromoted once in two junior high schools in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The general procedure was to describe a group of pupils who were nonpromoted once in elementary school and compare them with a sample of pupils who have never been nonpromoted. The sample size was twenty-two boys and nine girls in each group. The authors concluded that the pupils who were nonpromoted once were found to have the following characteristics:

1. Their marks in academic subjects are significantly below the average of the regularly-promoted seventh graders, and the majority of their academic marks are D's and F's.
2. Their achievement levels in reading and arithmetic are significantly lower than those of the regularly-promoted pupils.
3. Their IQ's are significantly lower than those of the regularly-promoted pupils, but more than half of the retained pupils have at least average IQ's as measured by the California Test of Mental Maturity.
4. The reason for getting D's and F's can be attributed neither to low intelligence nor to poor basic skills, such as reading.⁴⁵

The authors noted that the differences between the nonpromoted pupils and the regularly promoted ones would have been even more dramatic if those who had been non-promoted more than once had been included in the non-promoted group.

In an earlier study Burdette Buckingham reported that after consideration of experiments dealing with the

⁴⁵Constance Kamii and David P. Weikart, "Marks, Achievement and Intelligence of Seventh Graders Who were Retained (Nonpromoted) Once in Elementary School," Journal of Educational Research, LVI (May-June, 1963), 452-459.

progress of several thousand Illinois school children, approximately one-third of the children did better work after repeating the grade, while the other two-thirds showed no improvement and in many cases did worse than before.⁴⁶

The National Education Association when researching pupil failure and nonpromotion came to many of the same conclusions as did the foregoing researchers. They stated that:

One study based on records covering a number of years showed that third-graders (in a number of different school systems) who were repeating the grade averaged only three months ahead of their achievement in grade three a full year earlier. An equal number of their classmates, who had matched them in test scores a year earlier, but had been promoted instead of being failed, had made six month's greater progress than those who failed. Although they did not fail again, the once-failed group was still behind the promoted group by the time each reached the seventh grade, even though the failed group had taken a year longer to reach grade seven.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Burdette Buckingham, Research for Teachers (New York: Silver, Burdett and Co., 1926), p. 303.

⁴⁷"Pupil Failure and Non-Promotion," National Education Research Bulletin, XXXVII (February, 1959), 16-17. For further studies in this area which have produced findings that demonstrate a greater gain in academic achievement by children who are socially promoted as compared with those who are nonpromoted, see Eugene Farley, Albin J. Frey, and Gertrude Garland, "Factors Related to Grade Progress of Pupils," Elementary School Journal, XXXIV (November, 1933), 186-193; Adolph Sandin, "Social and Emotional Adjustments of Regularly Promoted and Nonpromoted Pupils" (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1942); Walter H. Worth, "Promotion or Nonpromotion?" Educational Administration and Supervision, XLVI (January, 1960), 16-26; E. T. McKinney, Promotion of Pupils: A Problem of Educational Administration (Urbana: University of

Not all the literature has been favorable to a continuous promotion policy over a nonpromotion policy for Newlun has suggested that 100 per cent promotion has an adverse impact on pupils of normal intelligence. He contends that these pupils discover that they will be promoted whether they learn anything or not and, therefore, learn to get by without doing their best work.⁴⁸

In a follow up study of children experiencing nonpromotion, Francis concluded that a child's skills can be improved and his confidence increased by a year's repetition of a grade.⁴⁹

Russell found that:

. . . Although pupils and parents of pupils who have been retarded in a grade show more negative attitudes toward school than do pupils who have been regularly promoted and their parents, the differences are not great in most instances. . . In families in which pupils had failed in school . . . the parents seemed to attach less value to grade repetition than parents who had had no experience with the problem.⁵⁰

Illinois, 1928); Walker W. Cheyney and Philip A. Boyer, Extracts quoted in Elementary School Journal, XXXIII (May, 1933), 647-651; Report of the Division of Educational Research and Results for the Year Ended June 30, 1933 (Board of Education, School District of Philadelphia, 1933); Annual Report of the Superintendent of Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents for the Year 1937-38 (Board of Education, City of Richmond, 1938), p. 16.

⁴⁸Chester O. Newlun, "Who Fails in Your Schools?" American School Board Journal, CXXIII (August, 1951), 13-14.

⁴⁹Ercel B. Francis, "A Follow-Up of Nonpromotions," Journal of Education, CXXII (June, 193), 187-188.

⁵⁰David H. Russell, "The Influence of Repetition of a Grade and of Regular Promotion on the Attitudes of Parents and Children Toward School," California Journal of Elementary Education, XXI (August, 1952), 29-41.

Relying primarily on teacher judgment of the value of repetition, Templin found that 253 pupils who were repeating their grades appeared to profit from their experience. The teachers responded 70.9 per cent in favor of the repetition, as it appeared to them that the children were improved.⁵¹

The evidence presented appears to lend greater support to those who do not favor a policy of nonpromotion yet disagreement over the question still remains.

Nonpromotion: Its Impact on the Social and
Emotional Development of Children

Caswell and Foshay, in an analysis of research on this topic, concluded that failure is a deterrent to the development of sound attitudes. They have reported that nonpromotion often results in emotional depression and discouragement, in the student's distrust of his own abilities, and in the expectation of future failures. Caught up in a situation where he doesn't succeed and where continued striving does not lead to accomplishment and satisfaction, the child tends to rationalize his failure and to build up explanatory defense mechanisms.⁵²

Robinson has agreed with this point of view, as he has noted that the nonpromotion of children tends to replace their interest in learning with feelings of

⁵¹R. S. W. Templin, "A Check-Up of Nonpromotions," Journal of Education, CXXIII (November, 1940), 259-260.

⁵²Caswell and Foshay, op. cit., pp. 387-395.

resentment, that may very well be expressed in some form of aggression.⁵³

Hartsig and Langenbach, in studies of three children who had been nonpromoted, have come to similar conclusions. The summary of one of their three case studies illustrates the way in which one child was affected:

Retardation in the fifth grade had provided Andy with little or nothing to compensate for the observable harm that had been done him. He had become discouraged with lack of success, lost confidence in himself, and became more careless and less interested in school work. These are the obvious effects--the effects that he and others can recognize. The adjustment factors are of vital importance but cannot be observed by him. Neither in the classroom nor on the school grounds had Andy been successful with his peers. Aggression and attention-getting have become his pattern of behavior. These actions brought about non-acceptance on the part of his classmates, which in turn, caused Andy's social relationships to become poorer.⁵⁴

Adolph Sandin, in a study of the social and emotional adjustments of regularly promoted and non-promoted pupils, found by means of sociometric tests, rating scales, check lists, observations and interviews, that the typical pupil who had experienced grade failure as compared with his regularly promoted classmates was to a statistically greater extent more likely to:

⁵³B. B. Robinson, "Failure Is Too Costly for the School Child," Parents Magazine, XI (January, 1936), 22-23, 55-57.

⁵⁴Barbara Hartsig and Louise Langenbach, "Studies of Three Children Who Have Been Retained a Grade in School," California Journal of Elementary Education, XXI (August, 1952), 51-63.

(1) indicate that his companions were in upper grades, (2) wish to be in upper grades partly out of a desire to be with friends, and to (3) be pointed out by his classmates as one who associates with older children. Sandin concluded that the nonpromoted students did not consider their regularly promoted classmates as appropriate companions, which may in part account for the fact that repeaters often exhibited antisocial behavior in the company of their younger regularly promoted classmates.⁵⁵ The nonpromoted students were mentioned by children reliably more often as being unhappy and grouchy, quarrelsome and disagreeable, rude and impolite, inconsiderate, selfish, and boastful. Teachers also found the nonpromoted children to be more troublesome and aggravating during school hours than were their regularly promoted classmates of the same sex.⁵⁶

Sandin found the nonpromoted children to be lacking in self-confidence, self-respect, and general feelings of well-being.⁵⁷

McElwee, in a research study on the impact of nonpromotion upon the behavior of children, concluded that the incidence of behavior considered by teachers and administrators to be troublesome was more prevalent

⁵⁵Adolph Sandin, op. cit., p. 127.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 130

⁵⁷Ibid , pp. 131-136.

among nonpromoted than among the regularly promoted children.⁵⁸

Goodlad, noting that Sandin did not attempt to match a nonpromoted group of children with a promoted group, did so and compared their progress over a period of one year. He equated a group of fifty-five promoted second grade pupils with a group containing a like number of nonpromoted first grade pupils on the basis of chronological age, mental age, and achievement. Considerable preliminary research was done in order to secure equivalent conditions in regard to such matters as enrollment, urban-rural location of schools, physical normality of the selected children, and socio-economic status of the families. Goodlad utilized several instruments to enable him to determine the effect of nonpromotion upon the children. The California Test of Personality (Primary Series), sociometric "best-friend" questions, and administration of the Haggerty-Olson-Wickman Behavior Rating Schedules.⁵⁹ He found a year of experience as nonpromoted members of first grade classes had devastating results on the social

⁵⁸E. W. McElwee, "A Comparison of Personality Traits of 300 Accelerated, Normal, and Retarded Children," Journal of Educational Research, XXVI (September, 1932), 31-34.

⁵⁹John I. Goodlad, "Research and Theory Regarding Promotion and Nonpromotion," Elementary School Journal, LIII (November, 1952), 150-155. See also John I. Goodlad, "Some Effects of Promotions and Nonpromotion Upon the Social and Personal Adjustment of Children" (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1949).

acceptance of the children involved. The rejection by their peers increased the feelings of inadequacy in the nonpromoted children. More consistently than promoted children, they rated themselves as unwanted and unliked by their peers, and as the unhappy victims of quarrels and fights. Goodlad and Anderson further found that the nonpromoted children seemed, in many instances, to have resigned themselves to lack of success in school and expressed little fear of failure in school work.⁶⁰ They have concluded that the promoted children felt much better about themselves as people than did those who were non-promoted. Goodlad and Anderson posed the following question concerning the apparent lack of fear of failure in school work by the nonpromoted children: "Could it be that school failure of their children the previous June prompted the parents to confer with the teacher, with the consequence that they expected less of their children?"⁶¹

Stryker, in a case study on undergrading as a cause of delinquency, concluded that nonpromotion can be causal factor in the delinquency process. She studied one boy of twelve who was committed to a New Jersey reform school for truancy. She found that the boy was very dissatisfied with school as a result of demotion and

⁶⁰Goodlad and Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School, pp. 38-39.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 39.

consequent "undergrading," and that this was a very significant factor in his truancy. By the use of double promotion and the promise of early parole, the boy was motivated into doing excellent work and his entire attitude toward school and society was changed. Stryker concluded that pride in achievement, and success replacing failure, gave the boy a different outlook on life.⁶²

Evidence that the impact of nonpromotion on the social and emotional development of children may not be as negative as is indicated by many of the foregoing studies has been made available by the studies of Anfinson and of Worth.

Anfinson conducted a study in an effort to determine the relationship between nonpromotion and personality adjustment as measured by the Symonds-Bloce Student Questionnaire and the Bell School Inventories. The author matched 116 pairs of students of junior high level on the basis of chronological age, school attendance, sex, socio-economic status, and intelligence, with one member of each pair having been promoted regularly and the other having been nonpromoted in some previous grade. Although the findings indicated slight but not significant differences between the groups, with more unfavorable personality characteristics reflected by the repeaters, the author concluded:

This investigation has served as a step in

⁶²Sue B. Stryker, "Undergrading as a Cause of Delinquency," School and Society, XXVI (December 24, 1927), 821-822.

procuring evidence which renders questionable validity of the present-day policy of reducing or eliminating nonpromotion in the schools. The statement has often been made that failure is extremely destructive in the case of a given child because of the irreparable damage to his personality and because of the development of undesirable attitudes and inferiority complexes. The findings of this study indicate that, because of the apparently variable effects of nonpromotion on different individuals, sweeping statements of this kind should be modified; for, as will be recalled, poorly adjusted and well adjusted pupils were found in both the non-repeater and the repeater groups.⁶³

Worth conducted a study in which he sought to determine the impact of promotion and nonpromotion on the school achievement and social-personal development of matched groups of third and fourth grade pupils ordinarily categorized as low achievers in a large urban school system. He matched two groups of sixty-six children with respect to IQ, sex, chronological age, and total achievement. One group consisted of low achievers who had been promoted to the fourth grade, the other group composed of low achievers who were nonpromoted and repeated the third grade. Each group consisted of forty-six boys and twenty girls. Information was secured by means of a questionnaire completed by each pupil's teacher about selected environmental and instructional factors judged to be influential in determining school progress. Teacher ratings on seven personality traits were collected, as

⁶³R. D. Anfinson, "School Progress and Pupil Adjustment," Elementary School Journal, XLI (March, 1941), 507-514.

well as choice by classmates on a sociometric test.⁶⁴

Worth concluded that:

The findings of this study concerning the impact of promotion and nonpromotion on social-personal development seem to run counter to those reported in the bulk of previous research on this problem. Nonpromotion does not appear to have an adverse effect on the social-personal development of low achievers. On the contrary, low achievers who are nonpromoted tend to be rated as high or higher on personality traits, and be accorded the same, and sometimes better, sociometric status than those who are promoted. This suggests the possibility that the greater gain in achievement made by the promoted pupils may have been at the expense of their social-personal development.⁶⁵

Jablow believes that the difficulty which children who are socially promoted into the next year's grade encounter is due to the frustration of not being able to do the academic work of that grade. Because of this inability to do the work, the child becomes a disciplinary problem.⁶⁶

Nonpromotion: Its Possible Contribution to the School Dropout Problem

The negative attitudes toward school and learning which appear to accompany nonpromotion may contribute to the yearly school dropout rate. Kelley contends that the dropout is not strictly a secondary school problem,

⁶⁴Walter H. Worth, "Promotion or Nonpromotion" Educational Administration and Supervision, XLVI (January, 1960), 16-26.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 23.

⁶⁶Lillian Jablow, "Deferred Promotions in Grade One," Baltimore Bulletin of Education, XXV (December, 1947), 146-147.

but one which also concerns the elementary school. He postulates that perhaps different and better treatment in the elementary school might be one of the most fruitful ways of reducing the number of youths who leave school before graduation.⁶⁷ He concludes that the future dropout is overage for his grade, at least by the time he gets to the third grade. This means that he has already been told he is a failure-- he feels rejected and alienated.⁶⁸

Livingston, in a study on dropouts and the elementary schools, found that children who dropped out of school left voluntarily for a variety of stated reasons. He concluded that the most significant fact about the pupils who withdrew before they entered ninth grade was that each child was retarded at least one grade. It was also found that 84 per cent of the dropouts were retarded at least two grades. Livingston also noted that about 1 per cent of those who graduated were retarded one grade, and none was retarded more than one grade.⁶⁹

Sandin found that those children who were non-promoted or were making slow progress frequently revealed their feelings when they stated what they were going to do when they quit school, or what they were going to do

⁶⁷Earl C. Kelley, "Seeds of Dropouts," Childhood Education, XXXIX (May, 1963), p. 420.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹A. H. Livingston, "Key to Dropout Problem in Elementary Schools," Elementary School Journal, IL (February, 1959), 268.

when they entered high school. Sandin used the following statement as an example that either quitting school or going into high school would, in the understanding of the children, solve many of the difficulties which they feared in the elementary school: "If I ever get out of school I'm never going to another schoolhouse again. I'll get a job and do what I like to do and I'll bet nobody will make me spend a lot of time on a bunch of dry books."⁷⁰

Livingston concludes that the high association between grade failures in the elementary school and later withdrawal indicates that the failure of a grade may be an immediately recognizable sign of the dropout. He believes that after a careful look at its promotion policy, the elementary school faculty should attempt to set up a program to help overcome the problem of early withdrawal and yet not set these children and young people apart from other pupils.⁷¹

Nonpromotion: The Cost to the Taxpayer
in Dollars and Cents

Woodrow Wilson Brown conducted a study in 1955 on the incidence and cost of nonpromotion in the public schools of York, Pennsylvania. The cost of nonpromotion was based on per pupil cost of current expenses and expenses of instruction for the period, in grades one through nine, and on per pupil-subject costs in grades

⁷⁰Sandin, op. cit., p. 69.

⁷¹Livingston, op. cit., p. 370

ten through twelve. He found the mean annual cost of nonpromotion was 5.5 per cent of the current expenses and expenses of instruction for the York School System or \$95,809.24 and \$68,512.35, respectively.⁷² Thus it appears that nonpromotion is quite an expensive policy to follow

Summary of Promotion - Nonpromotion Dilemma

It can be concluded from the foregoing summary of the literature on promotion and nonpromotion that the policy of nonpromotion is widespread; varies greatly from school system to school system; varies within school systems and individual schools; and is more prevalent in the lower grades of the school organizational structure. It can also be concluded that a policy of nonpromotion is expensive in terms of dollars and cents.

The literature lends evidence to the conclusion that the policy of nonpromotion is more detrimental to the academic, social, and emotional growth of children than is a policy of nonfailure. There is no, however, complete agreement on this conclusion, for studies have been done which have offered evidence which is not in agreement with the majority of the findings.

The next section will be concerned with the

⁷²Woodrow Wilson Brown, "An Application of Selected Related Factor to the Incidence and Cost of Nonpromotion in the Public Schools of York, Pennsylvania," Dissertation Abstracts, XV (December, 1955), 2437.

self-concept, a possible vehicle to answering some of the questions centering on the promotion-nonpromotion dilemma.

The Self-Concept:
Its Relationship to the Problem

This section of the related literature to the topic of promotion and nonpromotion is being written in an effort to point up the utility of the concept of the self-concept and its development to the understanding of the impact of the promotion-nonpromotion policies of the schools of our nation upon our children. The uses which have been made of the self-concept in education and related areas will be reviewed, as well as how this conceptual framework can help answer some of the questions presented earlier in the study.

It should first be noted that there are many definitions given to the word self, and although each has a long and interesting history, this study is primarily concerned with the psychological uses of the term.⁷³ In the psychological literature two chief meanings have evolved: the self as an individual who is known to himself, and the self as a subject or agent.⁷⁴ As Wylie has noted, the words "self-concept" have come

⁷³C. T. Onions, The Oxford Universal Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), pp. 1834-1836.

⁷⁴H. B. English and Ava C. English, A Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological and Psychoanalytical Terms (New York: Longmans, Green, 1958), pp. 484-485.

into common use to refer to the first meaning.⁷⁵ The self was given an important place in psychological literature in the late nineteenth century by William James, but it wasn't until nearly the late 1940's that the literature began to show the rising interest in the concept.⁷⁶ Through the years various groups of psychological thought have found the self a useful tool in explaining and understanding behavior. The phenomenological theorists, neo-Freudians, gestaltists, and others, have all incorporated the self into their "theoretical" framework. Adler, Allport, Freud, Horney, Lecky, Maslow, Rogers, Snygg and Combs, and Brookover all have been concerned with some aspect and the self as subject or agent.⁷⁴

Disagreement over what constitutes the self, and whether it is and/or should be considered as unconscious

⁷⁵Ruth Wylie, The Self-Concept (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 1.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷A. Adler, The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1924); S. Freud, The Ego and the Id (London: Hogarth Press, 1950); K. Horney, The Neurotic Personality of Our Times (New York: W. W. Norton, 1937); P. Lecky, Self-Consistency: Motivation and Personality (New York: Harper, 1954); C. Rogers, Client-Centered Therapy (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1951); D. Snygg and A. W. Combs, Individual Behavior (2nd Ed.: New York: Harper, 1949); Wilbur B. Brookover and David Gottlieb, A Sociology of Education (New York: American Book Co., 1964).

or conscious phenomena is debated in the literature.⁷⁸

The definitions and propositions which will be used frequently in this section of the study are those arrived at by Wilbur B. Brookover and associates in their six year longitudinal study of the self-concept of academic ability and the impact of significant others upon this concept.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Don E. Hamachek, The Self in Growth, Teaching and Learning: A Book of Readings (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.) has presented several articles which illustrate the variance in point of view as to the position which self-concept should hold in psychological and sociological theory. See especially the following articles: Camilla M. Anderson, "The Self-Image: A Theory of the Dynamics of Behavior," Mental Hygiene, XXXVI (April, 1952), 227-244; Peter A. Bertocci, "The Psychological Self, the Ego and the Personality," Psychological Review, LII (March, 1945), 91-99; Bartlett H. Stoodley, "The Dynamics of the Conscious and Unconscious," The Concepts of Sigmund Freud, (New York: The Free Press, a Corporation, 1959); Clark E. Moustakas, "True Experience and the Self," The Self: Explorations in Personal Growth (New York: Harper, 1956); M. Brewster Smith, "The Need for a Phenomenological Approach in Personality Theory: Some Critical Remarks," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XLV (November, 1950), 516-522; Donald Snygg, "The Need for a Phenomenological System of Psychology," Psychological Review, XLVIII (September, 1941), 404-424; Donald Snygg and Arthur W. Combs, "The Phenomenological Approach and the Problem of 'Unconscious' Behavior: A Reply to Dr. Smith," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XLV (November, 1950), 523-528; A. H. Maslow, "Existential Psychology - What's In It for Us?" ed. Rollo May, Existential Psychology (New York: Random House Inc., 1961); and Carl R. Rogers and B. F. Skinner, "Some Issues Concerning the Control of Human Behavior," Science, CXIV (November 30, 1956), 1057-1066.

⁷⁹Wilbur B. Brookover, Self-Concept of Ability and School Achievement III, Report of Cooperative Research Project No. 2831, U.S. Office of Education (East Lansing, Michigan: Educational Publication Services, College of Education, Michigan State University, 1967), p. 8.

The work of Brookover will be discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter. The theoretical base from which the concepts used by Brookover has stemmed from the earlier work of Charles H. Cooley⁸⁰ and George H. Mead.⁸¹ A recent book by John W. Kinch has stated this self-concept framework in a very concise form.⁸²

The first sections of this chapter will present factors which appear to be important in the development and evolution of the self-concept of children.

The last section will describe the theoretical position taken by Dr. Wilbur B. Brookover and associates which it is hoped will help provide the theoretical framework from which to answer some of the questions which surround the promotion-nonpromotion dilemma.

Several different terms are used by various authors that are quoted and referred to in the following sections. Self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-regard, self-image, and self-assurance are terms which may vary somewhat in definition, but all refer to the general framework of the self-concept.

⁸⁰Charles H. Cooley, Human Nature and the Social Order (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902).

⁸¹George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1934).

⁸²John W. Kinch, "A Formalized Theory of the Self-Concept," The American Journal of Sociology, LXVIII (March, 1953), 481-486.

The Development of the Self-Concept

The self-concept is thought by many in the literature to be an integral part of the human being from early in his psychosexual and social development until the time of his death.⁸³ Through his interactions with others the child comes to see himself much as he perceives those who are important to him see him. The self-concept appears to be very dependent upon significant others, and is affected by changes in these important people.⁸⁴ Thus, although the self-concept becomes an integral part of the individual, such factors as the stage of psychosexual development, group and peer affiliation, and significant others are influential in the development and alteration of that self-concept.

Parents as Significant Others and Their Impact Upon the Self-Concept

Several studies have provided evidence to the concept that the significant others who are most important to the development of the self-concept in children are parents. Medinnus and Curtis have studied the relationship

⁸³L. B. Ames, "The Sense of Self of Nursery School Children as Manifested by their Verbal Behavior," Journal of Genetic Psychology, LXXXI (February, 1962), 193-232. Ames estimates that the child becomes aware of himself as a distinct individual sometime during his first year.

⁸⁴For a more detailed description of the theoretical foundation upon which the "significant other" is based, see Mead, op. cit.

between self-acceptance and child acceptance in a non-clinical group of mothers of young children. The authors made use of two measures of self-acceptance and one measure of child acceptance that were given to fifty-six mothers in a parent participating cooperative nursery school. They hypothesized that a significant positive relationship existed between maternal self-acceptance and child acceptance, and found that it was supported by their data.⁸⁵

The relationship of parental interest to the child's level of self-esteem has been investigated by Morris Rosenberg in a study of high school juniors and seniors. By use of a questionnaire which was answered by a stratified sample of children from ten New York State high schools, the author was able to determine that rather extreme indifference of the part of the parent is associated with peer self-esteem, but that whether the interest in the child is strong or mild appears to make less difference. Rosenberg also found that students

⁸⁵Gene R. Medinnus and Floyd J. Curtis, "The Relation Between Maternal Self-Acceptance and Child Acceptance," Journal of Consulting Psychology, XXVII (December, 1963), 542-544. The self-acceptance measures were the Bills Index of Adjustment and Values (Bills, Vance, and McLean, 1951), and a semantic differential scale of 20 bipolar adjectives in which the distance between the mother's ratings of "me (as I am)" and "me (as I would like to be)" was defined operationally as the extent of self-acceptance. The child acceptance measure consisted of the same set of bipolar adjective with the distance between the mother's ratings of "my child (as he is)" and "my child (as I would like him to be)" defined as the extent of maternal acceptance of the child.

who report only punitive responses tend to have lower self-esteem than those who report only supportive responses, but students who report indifferent responses have lower self-esteem than either of these groups. An illustration was given in which students who said their mothers were dissatisfied with their poor marks had higher self-esteem than those who said their mothers seldom commented on their marks.⁸⁶ The old cliché that one would rather have negative attention than have no attention at all appears to be supported by Rosenberg's findings. Rosenberg concluded his study by writing that:

Of course, it is probably not simply interest which accounts for the observed relationships. Very likely such lack of interest in the child goes along with lack of love, a failure to treat the child with respect, a failure to give him encouragement, a tendency to consider the child something of a nuisance and to treat him with irritation, impatience, and anger. But whatever other kinds of parental behavior may be reflected in these indicators, they probably at least reflect the idea that the child is important to someone else, that others consider him of worth, of value, of concern. The feeling that one is important to a significant other is probably essential to the development of a feeling of self-worth.⁸⁷

Thus it would appear that it is very important to the development of the self-concept of children that parents be able to accept themselves, as well as to be

⁸⁶Morris Rosenberg, "Parental Interest and Children's Self-Conception," Sociometry, XXVI (March, 1963), 35-49. Rosenberg measured self-esteem by means of a ten-item Guttman scale which has a satisfactory level of reproducibility and scalability.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 49.

interested in their children.⁸⁸

Further evidence of the importance of parents as significant others was found by Brookover in the area of self-concept of ability and school achievement. Since this study will be dealt with in considerable detail later in this chapter the author will not go into detail to describe the procedures and methodology at this point. Generally, Brookover found that the significant others who were by far most significantly responsible for a change in the self-concept of academic ability of children to be the child's parents. Teachers and friends had much less impact upon this aspect of the self-concept when compared to parents, although teachers and friends did appear to be important.⁸⁹

The importance of the teacher to the self-concept of children and academic achievement is illustrated in the following section.

The Teacher as Significant Other and Academic Achievement

The importance of the perception of children of their teacher's feelings toward them as related to

⁸⁸For further discussion on this topic, see for instance: Beatrice Simcox Reiner and Irving Kaufman, Character Disorders in Parents of Delinquents (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1959). The volume presents a very clear picture of what can happen to children of parents who are not truly capable of being interested in their children.

⁸⁹Brookover, Self-Concept of Ability and School Achievement, III, pp. 69-79.

self-perception, school achievement and behavior has been studied by Davidson and Lang. A check list of trait names, consisting of 35 descriptive terms was administered to 89 boys and 114 girls in grades four, five, and six, in a New York City public school. The subjects were rated by their teachers for achievement and on several behavioral characteristics. The major findings of the study were: (1) the children's perception of their teacher's feelings toward them correlated positively and significantly with self-perception-- the child with the more favorable self image was the one who more likely than not perceived his teacher's feelings toward him more favorably; and (2) the more positive the children's perception of their teacher's feelings, the better was their academic achievement, and the more desirable their classroom behavior as rated by the teachers.⁹⁰

Staines has made note of the importance of the enhancement of the self-concept for academic achievement. He has stated that:

. . . Its presence should be recognized and its importance stressed by all teachers, and its controlled development made a major teaching aim. But since the psychology of the self has been little emphasized in courses on educational psychology and not at all by traditional practice in schools, it is certain that few teachers are

⁹⁰Helen H. Davidson and Gerhard Lang, "Children's Perceptions of Their Teacher's Feelings Toward Them Related to Self-Perception, School Achievement and Behavior," Journal of Experimental Education, XXXIX (December, 1960), 107-118.

aware of its importance. The implications for pre-service and in-service training are clear, but much more research must be done in the field.⁹¹

Not only are the parents, teachers and friends of a child important to the development of his self-concept of academic ability, but research demonstrates that the organizational climate of the school, grouping procedures, and situational significant others are also important. Since these factors do not appear to be as important as the other topics with which this study is concerned, they will not be dealt with in detail. See the bibliography of this study for relevant articles on the before mentioned topics.

The topic of failure and its impact upon the self-concept of ability of children is considered in the next section.

Failure: Its Impact Upon the Self-Concept

There have been many studies which have shown that stress and pressure over fear of failure do not enhance the self-concept, but rather they tend to lower it significantly. This finding is relevant to education, for nonpromotion can very easily be interpreted as failure by a child.

In a study on the levels of aspiration, behavior, and feelings of adequacy and self acceptance, Cohen used

⁹¹J. W. Staines, "Self-Picture as a Factor in the Classroom," British Journal of Educational Psychology, XXVIII (June, 1958), 111.

analysis by college students of incidents of their own lives to obtain the following generalizations:

1. Success generally leads to a rising of the level of aspiration, and failure to a lowering.
2. The stronger the success, the greater is the probability of a rise in level of aspiration; the stronger the failure, the greater is the probability of a lowering.
3. Shifts in level of aspiration are in part a function of changes in the subject's confidence in his ability to attain goals.⁹²

Suinn and Hill have also been interested in the prediction that anxiety, which may be caused by fear of failure, significantly influences the relationship between self-acceptance and acceptance of others. In an effort to measure the degree of correlation between self acceptance and other acceptance the authors used the Phillips Self-Other Questionnaire. To gain a measurement of anxiety, they made use of the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale and the Sarason General Anxiety Questionnaire as measures for generalized anxiety, and the Sarason Test Anxiety Questionnaire as a measure for specific test anxiety. The tests were then administered to ninety-two students enrolled in summer and fall general psychology classes at two colleges. The results of the study indicate that: (1) anxiety is significantly associated with both lowered self-acceptance and lowered acceptance of others; and (2) anxiety disrupts the self-acceptance

⁹²L. D. Cohen, "Levels-of-Aspiration, Behavior, and Feelings of Adequacy and Self-Acceptance," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XLIV (July, 1949), 314.

at a greater rate than acceptance of others; and (3) when it is low, anxiety permits the usual self-acceptance and acceptance of others correlation to exist.⁹³

Horowitz, in an effort to determine the relationship of anxiety, self-concept, and sociometric status, administered the Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale, the Children's Self-Concept Scale, and a ranking sociometric to 111 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade children. The author's results indicated that the more anxious children tended to hold poorer self-concepts and tended to be less popular than less anxious children.⁹⁴ These findings are similar to those of McCandless, Castaneda and Palermo, who found by means of the Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale, a negative correlation between anxiety and sociometric status among fourth and fifth graders such that the more anxious children tended to be less popular.⁹⁵

⁹³Richard M. Suinn and Hunter Hill, "Influence of Anxiety on the Relationship Between Self-Acceptance and Acceptance of Others," Journal of Consulting Psychology, XXVIII (April, 1964), 116-119.

⁹⁴Frances D. Horowitz, "The Relationship of Anxiety Self-Concept, and Sociometric Status Among Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Grade Children," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, LXV (September, 1962), 212-214.

⁹⁵B. R. McCandless, A. Castaneda, and D. S. Palermo, "Anxiety in Children and Social Status," Child Development, XXVII (September, 1956), 385-392. See also R. D. Trent, "The Relationship of Anxiety to Popularity and Rejection Among Institutionalized Delinquent Boys," Child Development, XXVIII (September, 1957), 379-384; L. P. Lipsitt, "A Self-Concept Scale for Children and Its Relationship to the Children's Form of the Manifest Anxiety Scale," Child Development, XXIX (December, 1958), 463-472; and S. Coopersmith, "A method for Determining Types of Self-Esteem," Journal of Abnormal and Social

Greenberg and Tannenbaum, members of the relatively new behavioral science of communications, attempted to determine the effect of cognitive stress upon communicator performance. They divided fifty-five Journalism students into three groups, each group receiving a different message and asked to write a story from the message. One of the groups received a message which was counter to their beliefs and therefore stressful; another group received a supportive message; and a third group received no message. The students were then judged on the effectiveness with which they wrote the story from the message, both from the structural characteristics of the message and a five step adjective scale filled in by judges to access the mood of the student. The authors found that the messages of the stress produced group contained more errors, were shorter, took a longer time to write, and were less readable than the other groups. The judges ratings also gave this indication.⁹⁶

The fact that identification of variables that lead

Psychology, LIX (July, 1959), 87-94; E. Stotland and A. Zander, "Effects of Public and Private Failure on Self-Evaluations," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, LVI (March, 1958), 223, 229; Stanley Coopersmith, "Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Sensory (Perceptual Constancy)" Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, LXVIII (February, 1964), 217-221; O. J. Harvey, H. H. Kelly, and M. M. Shapiro, "Reactions to Unfavorable Evaluations of the Self Made By Other Persons," Journal of Personality, XXV (December, 1957), 398-411.

⁹⁶Bradley Greenberg and Percy Tannenbaum, "Communicator Performance Under Cognitive Stress," Journalism Quarterly, XXXIX (Spring, 1962), 169-178.

to a change in self-concept is a difficult task is noted by Brookover:

It is important to note that the research literature indicates that change in self-concept as a response to failure is influenced not by one, but by several variables, although the nature of the association are not usually specified beyond indicating correlation.⁹⁷

Lafferty has written with respect to the effects of stress and anxiety due to a threat of failure:

A free and responsible citizen is not produced by failure but by success, not by rejection, isolation, and prejudice, but by feeling as if he belonged, by a belief in the possibility of altering his own life pattern, by an expectancy that he can succeed, and by the belief in his own intrinsic worth.⁹⁸

It can be concluded from the foregoing that stress and anxiety, which can be produced by threat of failure, can bring about a lowering of self-concept and self-concept of ability. Thus it may be possible that nonpromotion in a grade could lead to a loss in self-concept of ability.

Threat of failure can be closely associated with school achievement and self-concept of academic ability. The next section deals with this topic.

⁹⁷Brookover, Self-Concept of Ability and School Achievement, II, 23.

⁹⁸J. Clayton Lafferty, Values That Defeat Learning (Proceedings of the Eighth Inter-Institutional Seminar in Child Development held in 1962), p. 18.

School Achievement and the Self-Concept

The available research appears to indicate that self-concept and school achievement are positively related. Evidence in support of this position has been found by Bruck and Bodwin in their study on the relationship of the self-concept and scholastic underachievement. The authors utilized the Self-Concept Scale of the Machover Draw-A-Person Tests and correlated the scores with the presence or absence of underachievement for thirty children with learning difficulties and thirty underachievers. They obtained a significant correlation of .60, indicating a positive relationship between underachievers and a low self-concept.⁹⁹ Silverman found similar results with college students.¹⁰⁰

Stevens, using a group of college students as subjects, compared a group of fifty-two sophomores who were on the honor roll with a group of forty-nine sophomores who had been on probation because of poor grades. He controlled for intelligence by only considering subjects who scored on or above the 75th percentile of the Hemmon-Nelson Test of Mental Ability. The Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey and the

⁹⁹Max Bruck and R. F. Bodwin, "The Relationship Between Self-Concept and the Presence and Absence of Scholastic Underachievement," Journal of Clinical Psychology, XVIII (April, 1962), 181-182.

¹⁰⁰Irwin Silverman, "Self-Esteem and Differential Responsiveness to Success and Failure," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, LXIX (July, 1964), 115-119.

American Council on Education Psychological Examination were used to measure self insight for all subjects. The students were requested to rate themselves on ten personality traits on a five-step "Acceptance-Rejection" scale which was specifically designed for the study to measure self-acceptance. As a final task the students were asked to rank the ten personality traits of the Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey in the order in which they appeared most salient to them in their own personalities.¹⁰¹ The author received the following results:

1. Academically successful or achieving students showed better self-insight into their intellectual abilities than unsuccessful or failing students. It was suggested that the poorer self-evaluation of the academically unsuccessful students which was reflected in a distorted self-picture of their intellectual abilities had been due to defense mechanisms used to compensate for academic failure.
When the subjects were asked to estimate their own test performances on ten personality traits of the G-Z as a measure of self-insight the two groups could not be differentiated consistently.
2. When academically successful students were compared to unsuccessful students with reference to the degree to which they accepted or rejected themselves on the ten personality traits of the G-Z it was found that the group which was high in achievement showed a much greater degree of self-acceptance than non-achieving students who tended to reject themselves. While previous studies had mainly stressed external rejection of authority as the cause of academic failure the present

¹⁰¹p. H. Stevens, "An Investigation of the Relationship Between Certain Aspects of Self-Concept Behavior and Students' Academic Achievement," Dissertation Abstract, XVI (December, 1956), 2531-2532.

findings suggested that such external attitudes of rejection may become internalized.

3. The hypothesis that academically successful students differ from those who are successful with regard to the salience that they attach to the personality traits which were here under investigation was confirmed by the results of this experiment. The results also showed that successful college students conceive of their achievement-related personality characteristics as more salient than students who underachieve.

The conclusion was drawn that the three dimensions of the self-concept (self-insight, self-acceptance, salience of personality traits) which were investigated in this study are related to academic achievement.¹⁰²

Martin Fink, becoming aware in the clinical practice of school psychology of the relationship between academic achievement and the self-concept, conducted a study to document his perceptions. Pairs of achievers and under-achievers were formed, based on grade-point average and matched for sex and IQ. The Groups consisted of eighty-eight students from the freshman class of a rural California high school, twenty matched pairs of boys and twenty-four matched pairs of girls. The psychological data collected from these students was submitted to three judges, composed of two school psychologists and a clinical psychologist working with children. They were asked to make a clinical judgment as to the adequacy or inadequacy of the self-concept of each student. The results of Fink's study appears to confirm the hypothesis that a relationship does exist between adequacy of self-concept and level of academic achievement. The results

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 2532.

were especially clear for males, but not so for girls.¹⁰³

Studies by Renzaglia and Reeder, using general personality traits to determine self-concept have also found that a positive general self-concept is significantly related to high academic achievement.¹⁰⁴

Sopis has conducted a study of the self-concept of ability of a specific area-- that of reading. Pupils were screened from grades two through five with the Colvin Silhouette Test and rated high, average, or low self image as a reader, as a physical education student, as a music student, and as a smart or independent child. The author assigned pupils to motivational states using the foregoing ratings as variables.

Thirty boys who had high, average, and low self-concept as a reader and high self-concept as a physical education student were told that they were to do a reading task, whereas thirty boys with high, average, and low self-concept as a reader and high self-concept as a physical education student were instructed that they were to do a gym task. Thirty boys with high, average, and low self-concept as a reader and high self-concept in

¹⁰³Martin B. Fink, "Self-Concept as It Relates to Academic Underachievement," California Journal of Educational Research, XIII (March, 1962), 57-62.

¹⁰⁴G. A. Renzaglia, "Some Correlates of the Self Structure as Measured by an Index of Adjustment and Values," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1952); Thelma A. Reeder, "A Study of Some Relationships Between Level of Self-Concept, Academic Achievement and Classroom Adjustment," Dissertation Abstracts, XV (December, 1955), 2472.

"smartness or independence" were told that the task they were to do was easy for a boy who was smart or able to take care of himself. This same procedure was followed for girls with the exception that music motivation and music self-concept was substituted for physical education motivation and self-concept.

A supplementary design was made possible from the number of subjects for boys. Consequently, thirty boys with high, average, and low self-concepts as a reader and low self-concepts as a physical education student were told they were to do a reading task. Also, thirty additional boys with the same variables were told they were to do a gym task. Within the boy's and girl's designs, cells were comparable on IQ scores earned on the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test. Rows were comparable in reading ability measured on the Stanford Achievement Reading Subtest. All pupils were administered the disguised reading task which differed in level of difficulty and decorative motifs.

Sopis concluded from her data that there is a variable called self-concept as a reader, and that for boys, this variable does effect reading achievement. She also found that: (1) boys with a high self-concept as a reader have better reading achievement than boys with average or low self-concept; (2) for boys, a poor self-concept in an academic area depresses performance to a greater degree than a good self-concept in the same area improves performance; and (3) the reading

achievement of girls in grades two through five is comparable to the achievement of boys in these groups.¹⁰⁵

From the foregoing it can be concluded that the evidence now available indicates a positive relationship between self-concept of academic ability and academic achievement. It is in this specific area that Dr. Wilbur B. Brookover has centered his research. The next section will include a discussion of the work of Brookover and associates.

Self-Concept of Academic Ability:
The Wilbur B. Brookover Studies

As can be readily seen from the foregoing studies, the self-concept has been defined and measured in many different ways. Ruth Wylie, in her 1961 extensive review of the literature of the self-concept, has been critical of the work being done in the area of self-concept theory. Wylie has noted that the empirical evidence supporting the theories is limited when compared to the amount of work expended. She believes this to be due in part to four main factors:

1. The lack of proper scientific characteristics of the theories themselves;
2. The inevitable difficulties encountered in formulating relevant, well-controlled research in a new area;
3. The understandable fact that individual researchers in a new area are not part of a planned research program, and therefore cannot be easily synthesized;

¹⁰⁵Josephine F. Sapis, "The Relationship of Self-Image as a Reader to Reading Achievement," Dissertation Abstracts, XXVI (May, 1966), 6518.

4. Avoidable methodological flaws.¹⁰⁶

Wyllie noted that the general study of the past has attempted to cover too large an area of ground, recommending that future research be concerned with more specific aspects of the self-concept. She also recommended that more limited and well-analyzed measuring instruments be developed to aid in collecting the data from the more narrower area.¹⁰⁷

Brookover, in a series of studies on expressed self-concept of academic ability and school achievement, has met many of the criteria and criticisms of Wyllie.¹⁰⁸

Brookover's work has centered around three main projects sponsored jointly by the Cooperative Research Program of the United States Office of Education and Michigan State University. The projects represent continuous phases of a six-year longitudinal study of the relation of self-concept of academic ability to school achievement among students in one school class while in the seventh through the twelfth grade.¹⁰⁹ The research has been based on the symbolic interactionist theory of behavior, which has been developed by

¹⁰⁶Wyllie, op. cit.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., pp. 322-323.

¹⁰⁸Brookover, op. cit.

¹⁰⁹Brookover, Self-Concept of Ability and School Achievement, III, iii.

George H. Mead¹¹⁰ and C. H. Cooley.¹¹¹

The basic theory of the research of Brookover postulates that human behavior is a function of the expectations and evaluations of others who are significant to the actor as perceived by him and as internalized in a self-conception of what is appropriate and proper for him to do and what he is able to do. The author defined self-concept of ability as referring to "the evaluating definitions an individual holds of his ability to achieve in academic tasks as compared with others in his school class."¹¹²

The basic propositions of the theory of self-concept of ability assert that:

. . . A student's self-concept of academic ability results from his perceptions of the evaluations significant other hold of his ability. The student's self-concept of academic ability in turn functions to limit the level of academic achievement attempted. Self-Concept of academic ability is therefore hypothesized as an intervening variable between the expectations and evaluations of significant others and evaluations of significant others and school achievement. The relationship of perceived evaluations of significant others is conceptualized as necessary and sufficient condition, i.e., a change in the perceived evaluations of others will be reflected in a change in self-concept. The relationship of self-concept of academic ability to academic achievement, on the other hand, is hypothesized as a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the occurrence of a particular level of academic performance.¹¹³

¹¹⁰George H. Mead, op. cit.

¹¹¹C. H. Cooley, op. cit.

¹¹²Brookover, op. cit., p. 139.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 140.

Brookover found that parents were the most important significant others over the six year period. Friends, who were at no point as important significant others as were parents to the self-concept of academic ability, tended to become more important to the subjects as time passed. Thus, in the later years of adolescence the peer group became more important than it had previously.¹¹⁴ From the Brookover data, teachers were not seen by children as being as important significant others as their parents or friends, but yet had some influence.

The findings indicated that a change in self-concept of academic ability over two year periods was significantly related to parallel change in grade-point average.¹¹⁵

Brookover has written that:

The relationships supporting the social psychological theory of school learning presented here are not therefore greatly affected by variation in either measured intelligence or socio-economic status. Rather, the evidence indicates that much of the correlation between these variables and school achievement is accounted for by variation in self-concept of ability.¹¹⁶

The instrument which was used by Brookover to measure self-concept of ability was developed especially for the study. The evidence accumulated from research

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 141.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 143.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 145.

employing the Michigan State University Self-Concept of Academic Ability Scale suggests that it is able to predict accurately theoretically-derived relationships suggested by the symbolic interactionist framework.¹¹⁷

Paterson has noted that:

Guttman scalogram analysis, factor analysis and individual item analysis all affirm the basic homogeneity of the Scale with respect to content, although a minor time dimension was found in factor analysis which distinguished present-oriented from future oriented items.¹¹⁸

Paterson has also noted that there is some evidence that the Scale can be utilized effectively across different IQ and social class levels, although detailed analysis by sub-group has not been made.¹¹⁹ Paterson has also noted that there is "ample evidence to suggest that all analysis using the Scale should be done separately for males and females."¹²⁰

Summary of Review of the Literature

This chapter has been devoted to the dilemma surrounding the educational practice of nonpromotion in a grade. The available evidence has indicated that

¹¹⁷Ann Paterson, "Reliability and Validity of Self-Concept of Ability Scale," Self-Concept of Ability and School Achievement III, ed. Wilbur B. Brookover. (East Lansing, Michigan: Educational Publication Services, College of Education, Michigan State University, 1967).

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 169.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 171.

¹²⁰Ibid., pp. 171-172.

nonpromotion of boys appears to negatively affect their academic achievement and their social and emotional states of being.

The self-concept, which has been defined in many ways, was defined in this section as the symbolic behavior in which the individual articulates a program of action for himself as an object in relation to others. It was stated that the self-concept is not a static phenomenon, but is ever changing and complex. It appears to be affected by the child's stage of psychosexual development, parent, friend, and teacher association, as well as by anxiety and stress brought about by fear of failure, which may be connected to one of many educational practices or policies.

The significant others of a child appear to be very important in the development and evolution of his or her self-concept of academic ability. It appears that the parents of a child are the most important significant others, although friends and teachers are also important as significant others, and that how a child perceives his parents as seeing his academic ability will often determine how well he performs.

Since nonpromotion in a grade could have an impact upon the self-concept of academic ability of a child because of the impact of failure upon himself and upon how he visualizes those who are significant to him seeing him, an attempt will be made in this study to answer the questions put forth in chapter I by finding

if a relationship does exist between nonpromotion and self-concept of academic ability.

The next chapter will include the instrumentation and research procedures used in this study.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

The research procedures of this study will be discussed under five general headings: (1) Identification of the problem; (2) Hypotheses to be tested; (3) Sampling procedures; (4) Instrumentation, and (5) Procedures for treatment of the data.

Identification of the Population

Information about the students was obtained from their cumulative school records at each of the three junior high schools in which the students were enrolled.

The total population used for this study was composed of 350 male seventh grade students who had attended the urban Middlewest school system throughout their school careers. This was from a total of 550 seventh grade boys in the school system. The other 200 had either left the school system and returned, or had entered the system after the kindergarten year. This was done because of the vastly different promotional practices in various school systems which could have affected the results of the study. Only the students who had been in the regular classroom program of the system were included. The nonpromoted population was

composed of fifty-three males who had been nonpromoted once in their school careers. The continuously promoted population consisted of 297 male students who had not undergone the experience of being nonpromoted.

Hypotheses to be Tested

The following null hypotheses have been derived in an effort to determine if a relationship exists between nonpromotion and the variables concerned.

Hypothesis I: There are no significant differences between matched groups of continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male students with respect to self-concept of academic ability (SCA).

Hypothesis II: There are no significant differences between matched groups of continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male students with respect to perceived parental evaluations of their academic ability (PPEV).

Hypothesis III: There are no significant differences between matched groups of continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male students with respect to

perceived teachers' evaluations of their academic ability (PTEV).

Hypothesis IV: There are no significant differences between matched groups of continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male students with respect to perceived friends' evaluations of their academic ability (PFEV).

Hypothesis V: There are no significant differences between matched groups of continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male students with respect to sixth grade grade-point average (GPA).

Sampling Procedures

The entire population of 350 male students, as has been defined in previous sections of this study, was used to arrive at mean scores for the children on the variables of academic ability, socio-economic status, grade-point average, and race. Since the before mentioned variables could possibly have an effect upon the variables of self-concept of academic ability, perceived parental evaluations of the student's academic ability, perceived teachers' evaluations of the students academic ability, and perceived friends' evaluations of the student's academic ability, as was noted in chapter two of this

study, the variables were partialled out. This was done by comparison of matched groups.

Matched groups were arrived at by randomly selecting continuously promoted students to match the nonpromoted sample of students in each cell of the appropriate characteristics. Table 3.1 contains the composition of the matched groups. A table of random numbers was used for the selection of the groups.¹

Instrumentation

The following instruments were given to the students during the third week of September, 1967.

1. The Michigan State University Self-Concept of Academic Ability Scale (SCA) (Appendix A)
2. The Michigan State University Perceived Parental Evaluations of Ability Scale (PPEV) (Appendix B)
3. The Michigan State University Perceived Friends' Evaluations of Ability Scale (PFEV) (Appendix C)
4. The Michigan State University Perceived Teachers' Evaluation of Ability Scale (PTEV) (Appendix D)

The Michigan State University General Self-Concept of Academic Ability Scale (SCA) was developed by

¹Hubert M. Blalock, Social Statistics (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1960), pp. 437-440.

Table 3.1

Distribution of Promoted and Nonpromoted
Males Scoring Either High (H) or Low (L)
With Respect to IQ, Socio-Economic
Status, (SES) and GPA

| Variables | | | | Groups | | Matched Totals |
|-----------|-----|-------|------|----------|-------------|-------------------|
| IQ | SES | RACE | GPA* | Promoted | Nonpromoted | |
| H | H | Cauc | H | 64 | 1 | 2 |
| H | H | Negro | H | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| H | H | Cauc | L | 42 | 1 | 2 |
| H | H | Negro | L | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| H | L | Cauc | H | 33 | 0 | 0 |
| H | L | Negro | H | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| H | L | Cauc | L | 28 | 2 | 4 |
| H | L | Negro | L | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| L | H | Cauc | H | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| L | H | Negro | H | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| L | H | Cauc | L | 29 | 11 | 22 |
| L | H | Negro | L | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| L | L | Cauc | H | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| L | L | Negro | H | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| L | L | Cauc | L | 55 | 31 | 62 |
| L | L | Negro | L | 22 | 5 | 10 |
| Totals | | | | 297 | 53 | 106 |

*GPA for grade in which nonpromoted child was retained.

Dr. Wilbur Brookover and associates at Michigan State University under U. S. O. E. Cooperative Research Project Number 845. Each item on it and the other measuring instruments is scored from five to one, with the higher self-concept alternatives receiving the higher values.

On the SCA each item asks the student to compare himself with others in his social system on the dimension of academic competency. The three other scales ask the student to rate himself as he would perceive others (parents, teachers, friends) as seeing him in comparison with others in his social system on the dimension of academic competency.

Reliability of the Instruments

The reliability coefficients for the self-concept of academic ability scale (SCA) are higher than those typically reported for attitude tests. Hoyt's Analysis of Variance Reliability Coefficients for 513 male seventh graders was found by Brookover to be .820. For eighth graders, Brookover found Hoyt's Analysis of Variance scores for the perceived parental evaluations of ability, perceived teachers' evaluations, and perceived friends' evaluations of ability to be .838, .918, and .755 respectively.

All of the foregoing are adequate for group comparisons. The scores for the latter three scales are, as for the former scale, higher than those typically

reported for attitude measures.²

Other Data Used

Data which was essential to the study was obtained from the cumulative school records of the students. The data obtained was:

1. The two most recent Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Tests given the student. These were used because of a change in intelligence tests used during the school careers of the students.
2. The promotional record of each child.
3. The race of each child.
4. Academic grades for each year in which the child attended school for spelling, reading, social studies, and arithmetic.
5. The occupation of the father or mother of each student, which is kept up to date in the cumulative folder.

Procedures for Treatment of the Data

The five hypotheses were tested using the matched groups of promoted and nonpromoted seventh grade males. Chi-square analysis was used to determine the relationships of the variables to nonpromotion. Two by two

²Brookover, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

contingency tables were used. The formula used was:

$$X^2 = \frac{N \left(\frac{|AD-BC|}{N} \right)^2}{\frac{(A+B)(C+D)(A+C)(B+D)}{N^2}} \quad \text{d.f.} = 1$$

Siegel notes that the formula has the advantage of incorporating a correction for continuity which markedly improves the approximation of the distribution of the computed X^2 by the chi-square distribution.³

Dichotomization of Variables

Chi-square analysis requires the classification of data into two discrete categories. For each of the variables in which it was appropriate, a mean score was computed, and the scores were placed in either a high or low category. For the variables of academic ability, socio-economic status, grade-point average, and race, the entire population was used in the computation. For the dichotomization of self-concept of academic ability, perceived parental evaluations of academic ability, perceived teachers' evaluations of academic ability, and perceived friends' evaluations of academic ability scores, the mean score was arrived at from a random sample of 100 male seventh grade students. This was done because of the logistical difficulties which would have been encountered in testing the entire population. All of the nonpromoted students and the matched population were tested.

³Sidney Siegel, Nonparametric Statistics (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1956), pp. 107-108.

The mean scores, ranges, race composition, and number of students involved in the study is presented in table 3.2

Table 3.2

Mean Scores of Variables and Ranges of Scores
for High and Low Categories for
Dichotomization of Variables

| Variable | Mean | Low | High | Number |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------------|--------------|--------|
| Academic Ability (IQ) | 101.8 | 101 or Below | 102 or Above | 350 |
| Socio-economic Status | 38.09 | 1-38 | 38-100 | 350 |
| *Grade Point Average | 2.6 | 0-2.5 | 3.0-4.0 | 350 |
| Self-Concept Academic Ability | 28.47 | 0-28 | 29-40 | 100 |
| PPEV | 19.08 | 0-18 | 19-25 | 100 |
| PTEV | 18.65 | 0-18 | 19-25 | 100 |
| PFEV | 18.99 | 0-18 | 19-25 | 100 |

*Grade-point average was computed for each grade, and was within .02 of a point of 2.6 for each grade, so the average used was 2.6.

Summary

Chapter three has included a description of the research procedures employed in this study. Identification of the population, the hypotheses to be tested, and the sampling procedures were covered in detail. The instrumentation and the statistical procedures for

treatment of the data were discussed in the latter sections of the chapter. Chapter four will contain an analysis of data using the statistical procedures described in the foregoing.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis of the data which was theoretically derived and supported from the previous chapters of this study. It will contain an analysis of the relationship of the educational practice of nonpromotion and the variables of self-concept of academic ability, perceived parental evaluations of academic ability, perceived teachers' evaluations of academic ability, perceived friends' evaluations of academic ability, and sixth grade grade-point average.

Analysis of the Relationships

The level of academic ability, socio-economic status of the family, grade-point average, and race were the variables upon which the nonpromoted males and continuously promoted males were matched. The comparison of the seventh grade continuously promoted males and nonpromoted males was made to test the following null hypotheses that no significant differences existed between the two sub-populations on the stated criteria.

Hypothesis I: There are no significant differences between matched groups of

continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male students with respect to self-concept of academic ability.

The population mean score for self-concept of academic ability (SCA), presented in table 3.2 was 28.47 of a possible 40. Of the 53 continuously promoted male students, 17 (32%) were classified as having high scores of 29 or above, while 8 (15%) of the 53 nonpromoted students were placed in the high category.

Chi-square analysis was used to test hypothesis one. A rejection limit of .05 was established. The results of this analysis are presented in table 4.1. Examination of the table indicates that continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male students differed significantly with respect to self-concept of academic ability, even when the academic ability, socioeconomic status, race, and grade-point average differences had been partialled out. This difference was significant at the .02 level of confidence. Therefore, the null hypothesis that no significant differences exist between matched groups of continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male students with respect to level of self-concept of academic ability was rejected.

Hypothesis II: There are no significant differences between matched groups of continuously promoted male

Table 4.1

Chi-Square Analysis of Association Between Matched Groups of Continuously Promoted Males and Level of Self-Concept of Academic Ability

| Groups | Self-Concept of Ability | | Totals |
|-------------|-------------------------|-----|--------|
| | High | Low | |
| Promoted | 17 | 36 | 53 |
| Nonpromoted | 8 | 45 | 53 |
| Totals | 25 | 81 | 106 |

$\chi^2 = 5.23$ 1 d.f. Significant Beyond the
.02 Level of Confidence

students and nonpromoted male students with respect to perceived parental evaluations of their academic ability (PPEV).

The population mean score for perceived parental evaluations of academic ability, presented in table 3.2 was 19.08 of a possible 25. Of the 53 continuously promoted male students 23 were classified as having high scores of 19 or above, while 17 of the 53 non-promoted male students scored in the high category.

Chi-square analysis was used to test hypothesis two. A rejection limit of .05 was established. The results of this analysis are presented in table 4.2. Examination of the table indicates that continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male students

did not differ significantly with respect to perceived parental evaluations of their academic ability, even when academic ability, socio-economic status, race, and grade-point average differences had been partialled out. This difference was significant at the .16 level of confidence. Therefore, the null hypothesis that no significant differences exist between matched groups of continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male students with respect to level of perceived parental evaluations of their academic ability was accepted.

Table 4.2

Chi-Square Analysis of Association Between
Matched Groups of Continuously Promoted Males and
Nonpromoted Males and Level of Perceived Parental
Evaluations of Their Academic Ability

| Groups | Perceived Parental Evaluations | | Totals |
|-------------|--------------------------------|-----|--------|
| | High | Low | |
| Nonpromoted | 17 | 36 | 53 |
| Promoted | 23 | 30 | 53 |
| Totals | 40 | 66 | 106 |

| | | |
|-----------------|--------|-------------------------------------|
| $\chi^2 = 1.96$ | 1 d.f. | Significant Beyond the .16 Level |
|-----------------|--------|-------------------------------------|

Hypothesis III: There are no significant differences between matched groups of continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male

students with respect to perceived teacher evaluations of their academic ability (PTEV).

The population mean score for perceived teachers' evaluations of academic ability, presented in table 3.2 was 18.65 of a possible 25. Of the 53 continuously promoted male students 18 were classified as having high scores of 19 or above, while 16 of the 53 nonpromoted male students were placed in the high category.

Chi-square analysis was used to test hypothesis three. A rejection limit of .05 was established. The results of this analysis are presented in table 4.3 Examination of the table indicates that continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male students did not differ significantly with respect to perceived teacher evaluations of their academic ability, even when academic ability, socio-economic status, race, and grade-point average differences had been partialled out. This difference was significant at the .60 level of confidence. Therefore, the null hypothesis that no significant differences exist between matched groups of continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male students with respect to level of perceived teachers' evaluation of their academic ability was accepted.

Hypothesis IV: There are no significant differences between matched groups of continuously promoted male

Table 4.3

Chi-Square Analysis of Association Between
Matched Groups of Continuously Promoted and
Nonpromoted Males and Level of Perceived
Teachers' Evaluations of Their Academic Ability

| Groups | Self-Concept of Ability | | Totals |
|-------------|-------------------------|-----|--------|
| | High | Low | |
| Nonpromoted | 16 | 37 | 53 |
| Promoted | 18 | 35 | 53 |
| Totals | 34 | 72 | 106 |

$\chi^2 = .309$

Significant Beyond
the .60 Level

students and nonpromoted male
students with respect to per-
ceived friends' evaluations of
their academic ability (PFEV).

The population mean score for perceived friends' evaluations of academic ability, presented in table 3.2 was 18.99 of a possible 25. Of the 53 continuously promoted male students 16 were classified as having high scores of 19 or above, while 16 of the nonpromoted male students were placed in the high category.

Chi-square analysis was used to test hypothesis four. A rejection limit of .05 was established. The results of this analysis are presented in table 4.4 Examination of the table indicates that continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male students did

not differ significantly with respect to perceived friends' evaluations of their academic ability, even when academic ability, socio-economic status, race, and grade-point average differences had been partialled out. This difference was significant at the .85 level of confidence. Therefore, the null hypothesis that no significant differences exist between matched groups of continuously promoted male students with respect to level of perceived friends' evaluations of their academic ability was accepted.

Table 4.4

Chi-Square Analysis of Association Between
Matched Groups of Continuously Promoted Males and
Nonpromoted Males and Level of Perceived Friends'
Evaluations of Their Academic Ability

| Groups | Perceived Friends' Evaluations | | Totals |
|-------------|--------------------------------|-----|--------|
| | High | Low | |
| Nonpromoted | 16 | 37 | 53 |
| Promoted | 16 | 37 | 53 |
| Totals | 32 | 74 | 106 |

$\chi^2 = .044$
 1 d.f.
 Significant Beyond
 .85 Level

Hypothesis V: There are no significant differences between matched groups of continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male

students with respect to sixth grade grade-point averages.

The population mean score for sixth grade grade-point average, presented in table 3.2 was 2.6 of a possible 4.0. Of the 53 continuously promoted male students in the matched groups, 8 (15%) were classified as having high scores of 3.0 or above, while 11 (20%) of the 53 nonpromoted male students were classified as having high scores.

Chi-square analysis was used for the test of significance to measure hypothesis five. A rejection limit of .05 was established. Table 4.5 contains the results of this analysis. Examination of the table indicated that there was no significant difference between the two sub-populations on sixth grade grade-point average. Therefore, the null hypothesis that no significant differences between matched groups of continuously promoted male students and nonpromoted male students with respect to sixth grade grade-point average was accepted.

Summary

This chapter has presented an analysis of the data derived from the previous chapters of the study.

For examining whether there was a relationship between nonpromotion and the variables of self-concept of academic ability, perceived parents' evaluations of academic ability, perceived teachers' evaluations of

significant difference in perceived teachers' evaluations of academic ability, perceived friends' evaluations of academic ability, and eventual sixth grade grade-point average.

It was found in the process of group selection when the entire population was studied that the non-promoted population differed significantly from the promoted population with respect to academic ability, socio-economic background, and in eventual sixth grade grade-point average. There was no significant difference found in the percentage of male Negro or male Caucasian students nonpromoted.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This chapter summarizes the purposes and findings of the previous chapters, as well as the conclusions of the investigation, followed by recommendations for curriculum development and suggestions for future research.

The basic purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship existed between the practice of nonpromoting male students and the variables of:

1. The student's expressed self-concept of academic ability.
2. The student's expressed perception of his parents' evaluations of his academic ability.
3. The student's expressed perception of his teachers' evaluations of his academic ability.
4. The student's expressed perception of his friends' evaluations of his academic ability.
5. The sixth grade grade-point averages of the children.

In order to investigate the foregoing variables it was necessary to compare matched groups of nonpromoted and promoted students. The matching was done on the

variables of race, socio-economic status, academic ability, and grade-point average in the grade in which the nonpromoted child was nonpromoted, which are noted in numerous studies as contributing significantly to the self-concept of children and their academic achievement in school.

Academic ability was considered to be represented by the mean score of the two most recent scores received by all the students of the population on the Lorge-Thorndike Test of Intelligence. Socio-economic status was determined by a score assigned to the student's fathers or in some instances, mothers, occupation. This score was arrived at by using the scale developed by Otis Duncan.

Grade-point averages were computed by assigning number scores to the letter grades received by the male students in spelling, reading, social studies, and arithmetic in each of the grades one through six.

The total population selected was composed of 350 seventh grade male students who had spent their entire school careers in an urban Middlewest public school system. Only the students who had been in the regular classroom program were included. The nonpromoted population was composed of fifty-three males who had been nonpromoted in a grade once in their school careers. The continuously promoted population consisted of 297 male students who had not been nonpromoted in a grade and who met all of the before mentioned criteria.

Data for the self-concept of academic ability, perceived parental evaluations of academic ability, perceived teachers' evaluations of academic ability, and perceived friends' evaluations of academic ability, was collected by administration of the questionnaires developed by Wilbur B. Brookover to 206 seventh grade male students in the fall of 1967.

Chi-square analysis was used to determine the significance of the relationships explored. In all comparisons a 2 x 2 contingency table design was used, and the null hypotheses developed were rejected at the .05 significance level.

In order to make use of the chi-square analysis it was necessary to dichotomize the scores received by the students into high and low categories on academic ability, socio-economic status, grade-point average, self-concept of academic ability, and perceived parental, teachers', and friends' evaluations of their academic ability. Mean scores were computed for each variable, and all scores falling below the mean were classified as low scores, while those scores exceeding the mean were classified as high scores

It was then possible to do a chi-square analysis on each variable. A summary of the findings is discussed in the next section.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this project are summarized below

in accordance with the results obtained by testing the null hypotheses stated in chapter four.

1. There was a significant difference found between matched groups of continuously promoted male seventh grade students and male seventh grade students who had been nonpromoted with respect to self-concept of academic ability. The difference was significant at the .02 level of the confidence.
2. There was no significant difference found between matched groups of continuously promoted male seventh grade students and male seventh grade students who had been nonpromoted with respect to perceived parental evaluations of academic ability. The difference was significant at the .16 level of confidence.
3. There was no significant difference found between matched groups of continuously promoted male seventh grade students and male seventh grade students who had been nonpromoted with respect to perceived teachers' evaluations of academic ability. The difference was significant at the .60 level of confidence.
4. There was no significant difference found between matched groups of continuously

promoted male seventh grade students and male seventh grade students who had been nonpromoted with respect to perceived friends' evaluation of academic ability. The difference was significant at the .85 level of confidence.

5. There was no significant difference found between matched groups of continuously promoted male seventh grade students and male seventh grade students who had been nonpromoted with respect to sixth grade grade-point average. The difference was significant at the .65 level of confidence.

Conclusions

It is concluded that when the variables of academic ability, socio-economic status, race, and grade-point average in the grade in which the nonpromoted child was nonpromoted were partialled out, the nonpromoted male, when compared with his matched counterpart, is characterized by: (1) a significantly lower self-concept of academic ability; (2) a definite, but not significant trend toward lower perceived parental evaluations of academic ability; (3) a similar rating on perceived teachers' evaluations and perceived friends' evaluations of academic ability as the matched counterpart; and (4) a sixth grade grade-point average not significantly different from his matched counterpart.

It appears therefore that a relationship does exist between nonpromotion and self-concept of academic ability. It cannot be concluded from this study, however, that the nonpromotion brought about the low self-concept of academic ability. Therefore, it is possible that the nonpromotion was a result of a low self-concept. However, the matching of point averages in the grade in which the nonpromoted child was nonpromoted should have minimized this possibility. The matching, coupled with the current theoretical knowledge concerning the impact of failure upon children, would tend to support the former position.

If nonpromotion does cause a lowering of a child's self-concept of academic ability, and therefore lower his achievement level, then an alteration in promotional policies would seem in order. The basic concept behind nonpromotion, that of helping the child to develop academic skills so that he can progress normally in the academic sphere, does not appear to be valid. Through examination of the total population the nonpromoted population scored significantly lower on the eventual sixth grade grade-point average than did the entire population, and was not significantly different from the eventual sixth grade grade-point average of the matched population. It would appear that the expected academic gain from the nonpromotion did not occur. There is a possibility that the nonpromoted population could have received a significantly lower point average had they been promoted, but because of

the matched groups this does not appear to be the case. Yet the possibility can not be ruled out because of the basic design of the study.

If the child who is nonpromoted has a significantly lower self-concept of academic ability prior to a non-promotion, then it would appear that educators could identify this early in the child's school career and plan curricular activities which would help the child feel successful and could help the child develop a more positive self-concept.

Recommendations for Curriculum Development

Based upon the data obtained in this study and the information acquired from reviewing the literature, the following recommendations are made to educators at all levels:

1. It is recommended that children be continuously promoted rather than non-promoted if the reason given for the nonpromotion is an expectation of future academic gain. It was found in this study that there was no significant difference between matched groups of continuously promoted and nonpromoted male students with respect to grade-point average in the sixth grade. This was in agreement with the large majority of findings in the literature. The belief that a second year in a grade will

help a child to acquire the gains necessary for later academic achievement appears to be fallacious.

2. It is recommended that a testing or observation program for determining the self-concept of academic ability of preschool children be developed. When children who have a low self-concept of academic ability are identified, efforts can be made to overcome their apparent handicap. It was found in this study that nonpromoted male students, as compared with matched groups of continuously promoted male students, have a significantly lower self-concept of academic ability. There are undoubtedly many children who come to school with a low self-concept of academic ability. Brookover has found that there is a high correlation between self-concept of academic ability and school achievement. Therefore, early identification of a child with a low self-concept of academic achievement could help prevent his having future academic difficulties.
3. It is recommended from the results of this study and previous research that when children are identified who have a low self-concept of academic ability, programs be designed which permit more communication between the

school and parents of the children. Included within the program should be a counseling service to help parents to see their child in a more positive light.

4. It is recommended that whenever a child is identified as having a low self-concept of academic ability that the school mental health worker, whether school psychologist, psychiatrist or social worker, be consulted.

A poor self-concept of academic ability can give an indication that an individual will not do well in school academically. This has great implications for the mental health of the child, as there is a close inter-relationship between learning and emotional problems. Ginzberg has noted that a disturbed childhood is likely to be reflected in learning difficulties; whereas, children who do poorly in school are likely to develop emotional problems.¹

Therefore close coordination between the teacher, mental health worker, community agencies, and the family is necessary to help the child.

5. It is recommended that a flexible organizational

¹E. Ginzberg, The Ineffective Soldier (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), I, 118.

structure be adopted. A philosophical change would necessarily accompany the organizational change to be effective. Such a structure and philosophy would eliminate the problem of nonpromoting children, and would facilitate devising constructive individualized programs for children who come to school with a low self-concept of academic ability.

Suggestions for Future Research

There appears to be a relationship between self-concept of academic ability and nonpromotion. To determine whether nonpromotion caused a lowered self-concept, or a lower self-concept led to nonpromotion, or some combination of the two is involved, a longitudinal study is necessary. By means of such a study, some more light could be spread upon the question of what variables cause what effects.

By making use of a measuring device or an observation and inference technique, the self-concept of academic ability of boys and girls could be determined prior to attending any formalized school program. By doing this, the impact of the school and its programs upon the self-concepts of academic ability of the children could be determined.

By carefully noting the events which occur during the lives of the children, and by correlating these with their academic progress and self-concept of academic

ability, a better understanding of promotional policies and the impact of the school curriculum and organizational structure upon children could be developed.

Another area of possible future research could be that of determining if the children who are nonpromoted tend to score significantly lower on intelligence tests after they are nonpromoted as compared to their test scores before they were nonpromoted.

The self-concept of academic ability is associated with academic skill development, and since reading is the primary skill that is developed, a study to determine the correlation between reading skill development and self-concept of academic ability could be useful. How the children at the elementary level view their reading skills could be an indicator to their self-concept of academic ability and future academic success.

Future research could also be aimed at determining how events within the student's family, such as a divorce or death, could alter his self-concept of ability.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SELF-CONCEPT OF ABILITY - GENERAL*

Circle the letter in front of the statement which best answers each question.

1. How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with your close friends?
 - a. I am the best
 - b. I am above average
 - c. I am average
 - d. I am below average
 - e. I am the poorest
2. How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with those in your class at school?
 - a. I am among the best
 - b. I am above average
 - c. I am average
 - d. I am below average
 - e. I am among the poorest
3. Where do you think you would rank in your class in high school?
 - a. among the best
 - b. above average
 - c. average
 - d. below average
 - e. among the poorest
4. Do you think you have the ability to complete college?
 - a. yes, definitely
 - b. yes, probably
 - c. not sure either way
 - d. probably not
 - e. no

5. Where do you think you would rank in your class in college?
- a. among the best
 - b. above average
 - c. average
 - d. below average
 - e. among the poorest
6. In order to become a doctor, lawyer, or university professor, work beyond four years of college is necessary. How likely do you think it is that you could complete such advanced work?
- a. very likely
 - b. somewhat likely
 - c. not sure either way
 - d. unlikely
 - e. most unlikely
7. Forget for a moment how others grade your work. In your own opinion how good do you think your work is?
- a. my work is excellent
 - b. my work is good
 - c. my work is average
 - d. my work is below average
 - e. my work is much below average
8. What kind of grades do you think you are capable of getting?
- a. mostly A's
 - b. mostly B's
 - c. mostly C's
 - d. mostly D's
 - e. mostly E's

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APPENDIX B

PERCEIVED EVALUATIONS OF STUDENT'S ACADEMIC ABILITY BY PARENTS

Please answer the following questions as you think your PARENTS would answer them. If you are not living with your parents, answer for the family with whom you are living.

Circle the letter in front of the statement that best answers each question.

1. How do you think your PARENTS would rate your school ability compared with other students your age?
 - a. among the best
 - b. above average
 - c. average
 - d. below average
 - e. among the poorest
2. Where do you think your PARENTS would say you would rank in your high school graduating class?
 - a. among the best
 - b. above average
 - c. average
 - d. below average
 - e. among the poorest
3. Do you think that your PARENTS would say you have the ability to complete college?
 - a. yes, definitely
 - b. yes, probably
 - c. not sure either way
 - d. probably not
 - e. definitely not

4. In order to become a doctor, lawyer, or university professor, work beyond four years of college is necessary. How likely do you think your PARENTS would say it is that you could complete such advanced work?
- a. very likely
 - b. somewhat likely
 - c. not sure either way
 - d. somewhat unlikely
 - e. very unlikely
5. What kind of grades do you think your PARENTS would say you are capable of getting in general?
- a. mostly A's
 - b. mostly B's
 - c. mostly C's
 - d. mostly D's
 - e. mostly E's

APPENDIX C

PERCEIVED EVALUATIONS OF STUDENT'S ACADEMIC ABILITY BY FRIENDS

Think about your closest friend at school. Now answer the following questions as you think this FRIEND would answer them.

Circle the letter in front of the statement that best answers each question.

1. How do you think this FRIEND would rate your school ability compared with other students your age?
 - a. among the best
 - b. above average
 - c. average
 - d. below average
 - e. among the poorest

2. Where do you think this FRIEND would say you would rank in your high school graduating class?
 - a. among the best
 - b. above average
 - c. average
 - d. below average
 - e. among the poorest

3. Do you think that this FRIEND would say you have the ability to complete college?
 - a. yes, definitely
 - b. yes, probably
 - c. not sure either way
 - d. probably not
 - e. definitely not

4. In order to become a doctor, lawyer, or university professor, work beyond four years of college is necessary. How likely do you think this FRIEND would say it is that you could complete such advanced work?
- a. very likely
 - b. somewhat likely
 - c. not sure either way
 - d. somewhat unlikely
 - e. very unlikely
5. What kind of grades do you think this FRIEND would say you are capable of getting in general?
- a. mostly A's
 - b. mostly B's
 - c. mostly C's
 - d. mostly D's
 - e. mostly E's

APPENDIX D

PERCEIVED EVALUATIONS OF STUDENT'S ACADEMIC ABILITY BY TEACHERS

Think about your favorite teacher--the one you like best; the one you feel is most concerned about your schoolwork. Now answer the following questions as you think this TEACHER would answer them.

Circle the letter in front of the statement which best answers each question.

1. How do you think this TEACHER would rate your school ability compared with other students your age?
 - a. among the best
 - b. above average
 - c. average
 - d. below average
 - e. among the poorest
2. Where do you think this TEACHER would say you would rank in your high school graduating class?
 - a. among the best
 - b. above average
 - c. average
 - d. below average
 - e. among the poorest
3. Do you think that this TEACHER would say you have the ability to complete college?
 - a. yes, definitely
 - b. yes, probably
 - c. not sure either way
 - d. probably not
 - e. definitely not

4. In order to become a doctor, lawyer, or university professor, work beyond four years of college is necessary. How likely do you think this TEACHER would say it is that you could complete such advanced work?
- a. very likely
 - b. somewhat likely
 - c. not sure either way
 - d. somewhat unlikely
 - e. very unlikely
5. What kind of grades do you think this TEACHER would say you are capable of getting in general?
- a. mostly A's
 - b. mostly B's
 - c. mostly C's
 - d. mostly D's
 - e. mostly E's

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PROMOTION-NONPROMOTION

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SELF-CONCEPT

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