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A behavioural checklist for the measurement of self-esteem in the classroom

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**A BEHAVIOURAL CHECKLIST FOR THE MEASUREMENT OF
SELF-ESTEEM IN THE CLASSROOM**

Dawn Metcalfe
BA UWA, PgradDipPsych Curtin

**This thesis is Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Award of
Master of Psychology
At the Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences,
Edith Cowan University,
Joondalup Campus**

May, 1997

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

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DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
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FULL NAME: Rosemary Dawn Metcalfe

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DATE: Monday, February 8, 1999

ABSTRACT

The study sets out to develop a behavioural checklist for the measurement of self-esteem in the classroom. The importance of self-esteem to learning and adjustment to life's situation is well recognised by educational practitioners and theorists. This study examined the concept of self-esteem and the need for an objective instrument to measure the concept in children aged 6 to 12 years. The development of the instrument was in four phases and in every phase the input and feedback of classroom teachers was considered crucial. The resulting instrument therefore comprises descriptions which are entirely teacher-generated. At several points in the process other educational professionals such as school psychologists have given valuable feed-back and comment on the face validity of the checklist. Because the LAWSEQ (Lawrence Self-Esteem Questionnaire) is in present use in Western Australian schools, the scores of the Behavioural Checklist were compared with the LAWSEQ self-report to establish some measure of the concurrent internal validity of the instrument.

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Finally I would like to thank my husband, Toby, for his support and careful typing of much of this document.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
ABSTRACT...	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS...	iii
LIST OF TABLES ...	vi
LIST OF FIGURES ...	vii
 CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION	 1
Background ...	2
Need for the study ...	4
Specific Research Objectives	5
Statement of the Problem	5
Objective ...	6
Significance of the Study ...	6
Definition of Key Terms ...	7
Outline of the Study	7
Assumptions of the Study	8
Summary ...	8
CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW	9
Introduction	9
Problem of Definition	9
Definition of Self-esteem ...	13
Measurement of Self-esteem	16
The Problem of Self-report	17
Difficulties Associated with Observer Rating Scales ..	19
Problems of Behavioural Checklists	21
Summary ...	22

CHAPTER 3 : CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	22
Phase 1 	24
Phase 2 	24
Phase 3 	25
Phase 4 	25
CHAPTER 4 : PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION	28
Teacher Descriptors 	29
Preliminary Factor Analysis 	34
Summary 	37
CHAPTER 5 : VALIDATION OF THE BEHAVIOURAL CHECKLIST	41
Reliability of the Behavioural Checklist 	41
Validity of the Behavioural Checklist 	45
Correlation of the Behavioural Checklist with the LAWSEQ	46
CHAPTER 6 : SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	48
Introduction... 	48
Discussion 	48
Review of Objectives 	49
Conclusions... 	50
Implications... 	50
Research Implications 	50
Self-esteem Hierarchy 	51
APPENDICES	53
REFERENCES	61

LIST OF TABLES

		Pages
Table 1	Eigenvalue for Preliminary Factor Analysis	38
Table 2	Rotated Factor Matrix for Preliminary Factor Analysis	39
Table 3	Coefficient Alpha for Total Scale and Component Factors	42
Table 4	Allocation of High, Medium and Low Self-esteem by Two Tandem Teachers	44
Table 5	Gamma G and Somer's d	45
Table 6	Cross-tabulation Between the Behavioural Checklist and the LAWSEQ	47

LIST OF FIGURES

							Pages
Figure 1	Shavelson and Bolus Hierarchical Structure	...	...				12
Figure 2	Phases of the Thesis...	...	...	..	...	...	23
Figure 3	The LAWSEQ						
	Lawrence Self-Esteem Questionnaire	...	...	...			27
Figure 4	Initial Behaviour Checklist	...	...	...	...		33
Figure 5	Metcalfe Behavioural Checklist of Self-esteem				...		40

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem impinges on every area of life. Social interactions and relationships, aspirations in goal-setting, achievement in learning, successful acceptance of life situations and adjustment to change are determined largely by expectations of self. Teachers generally accept that confidence in their ability to do well is a great motivator for children to try new tasks. Historically self-esteem has been viewed as an important 'trait that influences achievement motivation'. Levin (1978, p. 392)

Effective social interactions and lasting relationships between people depend to a large extent on success in interpersonal communication and the forming of meaningful network systems. Those with confidence are more able to cement firm relationships than those who are anxious and withdrawn and perceive themselves as ineffectual. Failure to form effective social networks seems to be "accompanied by a loss of self-esteem and has profound effects on personality development" (Wolff, 1981, p. 142).

The ability to set realistic goals and the confidence to achieve these goals is determined largely by expectations of self. A low perception of self often hinders individuals from fully realising the skills they bring to a task and prevents them from reaching out towards goals which are well within their potential.

A necessary factor in any learning process is the self-confidence a person takes to the acquisition of new skills and knowledge. Confidence in self is often the factor which motivates and facilitates effective learning in

school and life situations. The successful acceptance and adjustment to life situations will be determined by our knowledge of ourselves and expectation of success or failure. Self-esteem is also important in our adjustment to change as it impacts upon how people view the world and adjust to life's demands and changes.

Youngs (1993, p. 59) provides a summary of this wider emphasis upon the importance of self-esteem when he states that:

Self-esteem is central to what we make of our lives: the loyalty we bring to preserving our health and well-being, and the commitment we have to discovering our potential. It is intricately tied to what we will achieve in the course of a lifetime It's no secret that self-esteem is somehow factored into the equation that determines a student's learning and overall school success.

This chapter reviews the background for the study on self-esteem, the need for the study, specific research objectives and the significance of the research. The chapter concludes with a definition of key terms, an overview of the content of the thesis and assumptions underlying the research.

Background

As an educational phenomenon, the significance of self-esteem in relation to attainment in the classroom has been well documented by Obiakor (1985), Burns (1981), Hughes (1984) and Lawrence (1983). There is evidence of some confusion and overlap between notions of self-esteem, self-image and self-concept. These terms are often used interchangeably by different authors and the differences will be discussed in a later chapter. All authors, however, agree that the child's view of himself/herself is crucial for successful learning. This is evident in the repeated emphasis on self-esteem expressed in policy documents of various educational bodies. For

example, a personal development guide published by the Education Department of Western Australia, 'Mirror of Me' (n.d., page 2), quotes from the Ministry of Education, Ontario (1975) the following paragraph:

The development and nurture of a positive self-image is the single most important ingredient for significant learning to take place. When a child has a positive self-concept, when he thinks well of himself, when he believes that he can succeed and achieve, when he perceives other people feeling that way about him, he will respond in a positive way with growth and increasing maturity.

Since there appears to be a positive relationship between self-esteem and success in the classroom, it is important that teachers take this into account when they assist children in their cognitive and social development. Although teachers may have a subjective evaluation of the child's level of self-esteem, there is a need to identify measures by which self-esteem can be accurately determined. The need arises for an instrument which allows teachers to gain a more objective indication of the self-esteem of each child in their care. Instruments currently in use often require administration and interpretation by specialists. To circumvent the necessity for the involvement of psychologists or other assessment specialists, it would be desirable that a tool be devised which can be administered by the classroom teacher. Such an instrument would need to be simple, reliable, valid, easy to administer and easily interpreted by the teacher to gain an assessment of the child's level of self-esteem. Thus, the instrument would need to be easily understood, unambiguous, and defined in terms already in use in the classroom teachers' vocabulary.

Among the instruments available are self-report ratings and observer rating scales, each of which requires a measure of objectivity which is often difficult to achieve. As can be appreciated, individuals vary in their ability to report accurately and without bias upon matters concerning themselves,

particularly in the areas of affect. Another difficulty evident when using these particular instruments of self-report is that of self-desirability, a term which describes the phenomenon of an individual's desired description of self rather than a more accurate appraisal. In the case of observer ratings, a phenomenon exists which Nunnally describes by the term 'other desirability' (1967, p. 487). This, like self-desirability, occurs when observers tend to say positive or negative things about people in their ratings of individuals.

Need for the Study

It appears from a perusal of the publications available that no behavioural checklist of self-esteem in the classroom is at present available. The obvious advantages of a behavioural checklist are that it is time-efficient and focuses on observed behaviours. Rating scales for each behaviour included in the checklist allow the observer to record the intensity of the focus behaviour and thus allow a more detailed observation of the subject. The observer simply selects and checks ratings of the stated behaviours. Hopkins and Antes (1990, p. 159) observe that, "a checklist facilitates recording by avoiding the need to write a narrative description of observations". Another time-efficient aspect is that the checklist limits the number of behaviours to be considered thus preventing the observer from spending time attending to less relevant behaviours.

Another advantage in having a behavioural checklist of self-esteem is that it could facilitate cooperation between school psychologists and teachers in dealing with difficulties within the classroom.

A final obvious advantage of a behavioural checklist is that, providing the person administering it has sufficient experience with the

person being observed, the data are relatively objective. This highlights the advantage of the checklist against the relatively subjective nature of alternative tools such as running records and self-report. In the case of running records, the observer's feelings and attitudes are variables difficult to control. Self-report introduces obvious subjective elements in that the respondent is reporting on self and thus aspects of social desirability, self-expectation, the need for approval, the tendency towards the positive and the differences between the real and the perceived become problematic. The behaviours to be observed should be described briefly and clearly to provide an economical, focussed and unambiguous framework for data collection. "Researchers find that, given care and skill in preparation, a checklist can facilitate observation by generating objective and well-organised data" (Hopkins and Antes, 1990, p. 160). The LAWSEQ which is widely used in Western Australian schools is a global measure of the child's sense of self-worth and is a valuable tool in assessing the overall sense of self-esteem. The Behavioural Checklist will measure the child's self-esteem in the school context and so will build from the more global measure and provide a supplementary source of information.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to develop and standardise such a behavioural checklist, which can be used for the measurement of self-esteem in the classroom. The intention is to move closer to the classical model of measurement as cited in Wells and Marwell (1976, p. 78) which is "to some extent (1) standardized, (2) objective, and (3) quantified."

Specific Research Objectives

Statement of the problem

An exhaustive search of the ERIC documents and of psychology extracts revealed that no behavioural checklist for the measurement of self-esteem in Australian classrooms is currently available. Given the

importance of self-esteem and the problems which have already been alluded to associated with the various self-report inventories and rating scales, there is a need for such a checklist.

Objective

The objective of this study is to develop a behavioural checklist to be used by the classroom teacher as a means of assessing and quantifying the self-esteem of children aged 5 to 12 years in a classroom setting. This will be done in four stages:

1. The identification of behaviours describing self-esteem.
2. The formulation of a Behavioural Checklist of Self-esteem based on the identified behaviours.
3. The analysis and refinement of the Behavioural Checklist.
4. The measurement of reliability and validity.

Significance of the Study

Outcomes of the present study will be the provision of a tool which:

1. Is easy to use for teachers wishing to identify levels of global self-esteem of children in their classrooms.
2. Will assist teachers in adjusting their teaching and in devising programs and opportunities to enhance self-esteem.
3. Will provide feed-back to other care-givers.

Definition of Key Terms

To facilitate the reading and interpretation of this thesis, the following key terms are defined as they apply to the current research.

Self-esteem - "the individual's affective global evaluation of the discrepancy between his self-image and his ideal self in his phenomenal field" (Lawrence, 1983, p. 47).

Global self-esteem - "an individual's overall feeling of self-worth" (Lawrence, 1988, p.8).

Self-image - how an individual sees himself/herself.

Self-concept - "the sum total of an individual's mental and physical characteristics and his/her evaluation of them" (Lawrence, 1988, p. 1).

Checklist - a list of items to be focussed upon in direct observation noting the frequency of occurrence for each item.

Behavioural checklist - a list of descriptors of behaviour of children aged 5 to 12 years. These behaviours are to be in terms used and understood by teachers in the everyday setting of the classroom.

Self-report - a report made by the child concerning himself/herself. This report can be in ratings of specific behaviours or in choices of given descriptors.

Outline of the Study

Chapter Two of this dissertation will provide a review of relevant literature concerning self-esteem, its importance in the learning situation and various instruments which are available for the measurement of the construct.

A conceptual framework of how the task of developing a behavioural checklist for the measurement of self-esteem will be implemented is outlined in Chapter Three.

Chapters Four and Five will give a description of the pilot study which includes the preliminary interviews and survey. Details of the scale construction including factor-analysis will be outlined.

Chapter Six includes the development, validation and the reliability of the final behavioural checklist. Discussion and interpretation of the results will be covered in Chapter Seven. Chapter Eight will provide a summary and presentation of conclusions.

Assumptions of the Study

1. The responses from the teachers actually represent the major behavioural characteristics of self-esteem.
2. A behavioural checklist is an effective measuring tool in the assessment of self-esteem in the classroom.
3. Because of the framework of the checklist, teachers will accurately and objectively assess each child's self-esteem.

Summary

In summary, self-esteem is generally accepted as a most important factor in adjusting to life situations and in fulfilling goals and aspirations.

The focus of this study is school-age children and the particular life situation is the class-room. It is evident that teachers appreciate the critical role of self-esteem in learning but are hampered in the lack of a suitable instrument for measuring the concept. The principal outcome of this present research is the devising of a behavioural checklist for the measurement of self-esteem in the classroom.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The recognition of the importance of self-esteem in the classroom and, indeed, in all aspects of life situations has given rise to wide-ranging discussion in the literature. The focus varies from examination of definition to appraisals of instruments to measure the construct and also includes discussion on how self-esteem affects various areas of the individual's life.

Problem of Definition

Current literature appears to use self-esteem, self-concept, self-confidence and other terms as applying to the same underlying concept. In this chapter the importance of self-esteem will be addressed. The difficulty of definition will be addressed and the definition arrived at for the purposes of this study will be discussed.

A review of the relevant literature did not reveal an appropriate checklist for the assessment of self-esteem of school-age children. There is, however, considerable discussion of the importance of self-esteem and the desire to have teacher-administered measures to identify the level of self-esteem. This review was based on a search of the ERIC documents and psychology abstracts under the descriptors '*self-esteem*', '*behavioural checklist*', '*learning*' and '*classroom*'.

Obiakor (1985, p. 1) recognises the role of self-esteem in his conclusion that self-concept plays an important role in a student's academic

achievement. He states that, "the identification of school related behaviours and the achievement of 'functional' self-concept are critical goal-directed educational ingredients." This relationship between achievement and self-concept is acknowledged throughout the literature, particularly by Burns (1981, p. 309) who observes that:

successful students are typically characterised by self-confidence, self-acceptance, feelings of adequacy and personal competence and generally more stable feelings of positive self-regard. On the other hand, research shows that unsuccessful students are characterised by feelings of uncertainty, low self-regard, self-derogatory attitudes and strong inferiority feelings.

Burns goes further in underlining the importance of self-esteem within a far wider frame of reference by stating that "self-understanding and relationships with others are so crucial a part of one's life that they ought to form a major part of any educational program" (1981, p. 310).

Youngs (1993, p. 61) supports these same views and states that "the higher a student's self-esteem, the better able he is to take on the challenges and frustrations associated with the learning experience." Youngs suggests that the student with high self-esteem brings to the learning situation several empowering characteristics. He includes the following:

- * ability to cope with adversity and diversity in the school place
- * ability in developing and sustaining nourishing relationships
- * better able to solve problems instead of worrying about them
- * he is willing to take risks - to extend the boundaries
- * the more responsibility she will take for her actions
- * the better able he is to recognise his strengths and capabilities
- * the more likely she will treat others with respect and fairness
- * the more resilient to problems (Youngs, 1993, p. 61)

In summary he adds that "self-esteem serves as a powerful coping and buffer strategy for overcoming obstacles: it helps the student compensate for weaknesses and setbacks" (p. 61). This latter statement has

immense implications when one considers that the classroom learning situation is indeed a preparation for life.

The characteristics identified by Youngs are similar to the incidental comments concerning children received from teachers by school psychologists in their daily work as consultants in the learning situation. There is also a marked similarity between Youngs' characteristics and those given by teachers when asked to describe behaviours typifying high self-esteem.

Hughes (1984) in her quest for appropriate instruments for measuring self-concept and self-esteem comments on the importance of self-concept in understanding any difficulty in children's behaviours. She examines the relationship between self-concept and adjustment, achievement, conduct disorders, social competence and psychopathology and concludes that: "direct assessment of a child's level of self-esteem provides relevant, useful data, especially when appraising the outcome of therapeutic interventions with a young person" (1984, p. 657).

Lawrence (1983, p. 58) in his research into literacy and self-esteem focusing on the relationship between self-esteem and attainment, observes that "the part played by the self-esteem of the child is one important piece in the jig-saw of attainment". In his thesis Lawrence gave conclusive evidence of this link and he demonstrated that an individual's attainments in the area of reading lifted significantly following programmed interaction with an adult. These interactive sessions were designed to enhance the child's self-esteem.

Shavelson and Bolus (1982, p.16) propose that self-concept is “a multifaceted, hierarchical structure with increasing stability of constructs toward the apex....Self-concept is a hierarchical construct with general self-concept at the apex and situation specific self-concepts...at the base”. (See Figure 1).

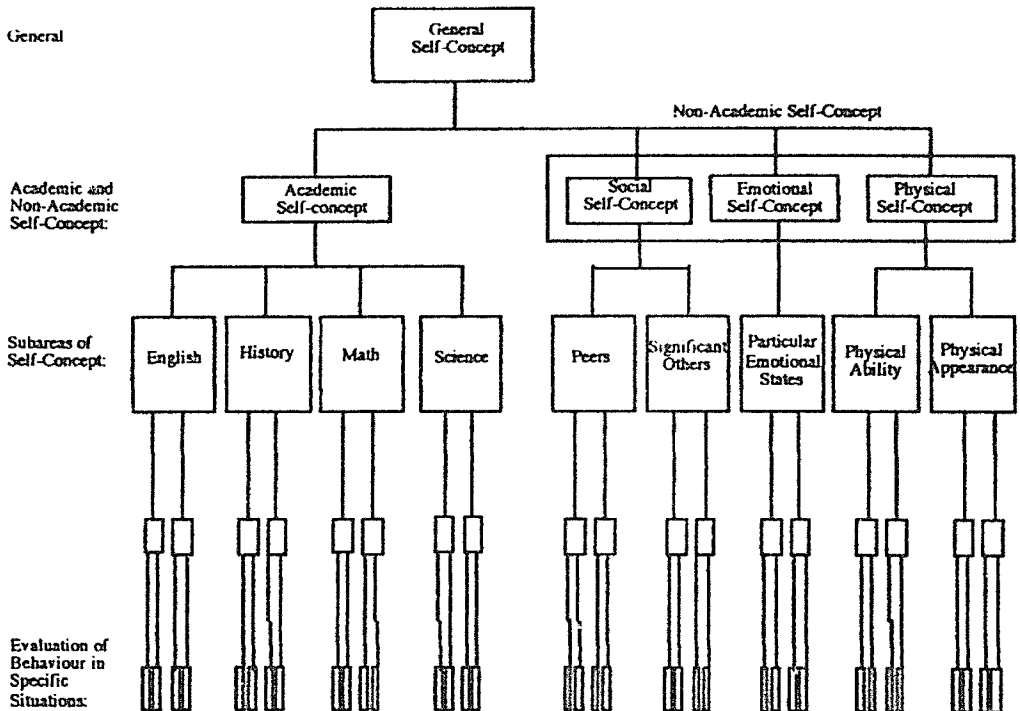


Figure 1. Shavelson and Bolus hierarchical structure (1982, p. 16)

This is an existing model which provides an overall framework for the study and understanding of an individual's self-worth. It recognises a global self-worth at its apex “General Self-Concept” emanating from a series of graduated levels based on specific situations moving through an accumulative process. The Behavioural Checklist will provide information for a particularly defined area, that is, the learning situation.

There is still much discussion concerning this model and even those who claim not to support the model make some concessions to it. For

example, Winne et al. (1977) are quoted by Shavelson and Bolus (1982, p. 4) as concluding that, "self-concept seems a more unitary construct rather than one broken down into distinct sub-parts or facets in the nomological network....much of the construct is shared and undifferentiable, but individual facets may be more or less relevant when self-concept is related to other constructs like achievement".

The importance of self-esteem is thus widely acknowledged in the literature. A review reveals, however, two particular problems in the specific area of this research proposal - problems of definition and of measurement.

Definition of Self-esteem

There appears to be some problem in finding one specific definition of self-esteem which is used consistently in the literature. The major writers in this area have consistently commented upon this sphere of difficulty. Wells and Marwell (1976, p. 7) comment that "any attempt to derive a fairly vigorous definition of self-esteem (or of its parallel constructs) from the literature is likely to be frustrated by the current state of vagueness and fragmentation". They state that "a sample of related names might include terms such as *self-love*, *self-confidence*, *self-respect*, *self-acceptance* (or *rejection*), *self-satisfaction*, *self-evaluation*, *self-appraisal*, *self-worth*, *sense of adequacy* or *personal efficacy*, *sense of competence*, *self-ideal congruence*, *ego* or *ego-strength*". It seems that the various writers bring into focus various aspects of the one phenomenon.

As Lawrence (1983, p. 18) observes, the difficulties of definition arise firstly because self-esteem is an "hypothetical construct and so has no existence as an observable entity" and, secondly, that "even where there is

some theoretical agreement, sometimes different terms are used to mean the same thing". Hughes (1984), addresses this problem by examining the issue of terms used in the literature - self-esteem, self-concept, self-image, self-perception - and observes two constructs which seem to predominate and describes them in this way. "Self-concept . . . as the descriptive perception of the self, and self-esteem as the evaluative assessment of the descriptions " (1984, p. 659).

From another point of view, Burnett (1994, p. 170) in his study investigating "the relationship and differences between children's descriptive and evaluative/comparative statements about some of their characteristics" finds that "self-description and self-evaluation are empirically indistinguishable, with the possible exception of School Self-Concept where the results were conflicting". Burnett acknowledges that further investigation of these findings is indicated but his study does serve to further highlight the difficulties associated with the use of various terms to describe self-esteem.

While recognising the confusion regarding the definition of self-esteem, Burns (1981, p. 28) observes that "conceptions of the self system are often considerably vague, occasionally mutually contradictory (especially in regard to terminology), and lacking any definitive or complete statement. Ideas other than facts dominate the scene". Burns (1981) reviews several definitions and the development of self-concept in psychological theory, citing William James as the first psychologist to make a significant contribution in this area. Burns quotes James' definition of 1890 which states that, "our self feeling is determined by the ratio of our actualities to our supposed potentialities", and produced the following equation to clarify his notion.

Measurement of Self-esteem

The second problem identified in the literature is that of finding a suitable instrument to measure the construct. Although a number of instruments are in use, several issues surrounding them need to be taken into account. An exhaustive search of the ERIC documents and of Psychology Abstracts reveals that there are only a few articles published since 1981 in which some attempt has been made to document the available instruments. It appears that most of these instruments are self report measures, although Hughes (1984) describes four rating scales which can be filled in by observer, teacher or parent. It is pertinent to this paper that nowhere in the literature is there reference to a *behavioural checklist* as an instrument for measuring self-esteem. In fact, there appears to be a dearth of appropriate and adequate instruments for teachers to use in classroom situations. This fact was also observed by Hughes (1984, p. 657), who stated that, "when clinicians wish to assess self concept or self-esteem while conducting personality evaluations, few adequate instruments are currently available."

Although there are some instruments suitable for measuring self-esteem in the classroom, they still demonstrate several problems. They include the problems of self-report, of observer/rating scales and of behavioural checklists.

The Problem of Self Report

There are several problems associated with the use of self-report in psychological measurement. These include social desirability, truth, distortion, and desire for approval.

Wells and Marwell (1976, p. 142) acknowledge this phenomenon in stating that "one of the primary behavioral divisions in self-esteem measures is the distinction between what people say and what they do - in self-preservation terms, the difference between the impressions the person "gives" (by verbal expressions) and those "given off" by the implicit content and form of non-verbal behaviour. . . . As an attitude assessment, self-esteem researchers frequently give greater weight to the latter process, because it seems less manipulable and deliberate (and in this sense, truer) particularly when observation of the person is surreptitious."

Hersen and Barlow (1982, p. 131) sum up the difficulties of self reporting by stating that "the self report system is one that is most subject to conscious distortion on the part of the patient or client". Burns (1981, p. 93) states that the weakness in the self report data is that the technique "requires the subject to report truthfully and willingly". He describes "demand characteristics" of subjects who acquiesce to society and 'social desirability' and who attempt to become 'model' subjects for the researcher. This desire for approval, according to Burns, can be a distorting variable in any research based on self-report. Hughes suggests that the factor of social desirability is especially likely to affect measures of self-esteem as the person is very "ego-involved in the assessment and the socially desirable answer is frequently transparent" (1985, p. 685).

The 'need for approval' tendency is apparent, states Hughes, particularly in research involving children where socialization has encouraged seeking approval from peers and adults. An aspect examined by Hughes is the tendency for children to be biased towards positive responses. This could be a factor of 'social desirability' suggests Hughes who cites Walker (1973) and Bridgeman and Shipman (1978) who found that children "do not always provide a definitely positive or negative response but tend towards the positive" (Hughes 1985, p. 671).

Wylie (1989, p. 120) in her review of ten self-concept, self-report instruments currently in use also notes the tendency towards the favourable. She states that, "a striking feature of all the tests is the tendency for the majority of subjects to attain scores on the self-favorable end of the scale". This seems to confirm Wylie's earlier observation that "there appears to be considerable consistency among the methodologically more adequate studies in showing trends towards self-favorability biases regarding evaluative characteristics." (1979, p. 681) She refers to a study by Baumhart in 1961 where 5,000 business executives were asked to complete questionnaires on ethical behaviour. Half of the sample were asked "What would you do?" and the remaining half "What would the average business executive do?" Wylie reports that "a much larger percent of the executives imputed to themselves more ethical behavior choices than were said to characterize the "average business executive." Although no significance tests are presented, the visual trends in the data appear to be extremely strong". (1979, p. 680)

In summary, self-report measures can be influenced both consciously and unconsciously by the person making the responses so as to affect the reliability and objectivity of the measure.

Observer/rating scales, on the other hand, are purported to be more objective measures but it will be seen that these also have inherent difficulties and associated problems of objectivity and reliability.

Difficulties associated with Observer/Rating Scales.

Observation and rating scales are used to recognise behaviour and from this, formulate certain inferences of motivation, feeling and intent on the basis of these observations.

Kerlinger (1965, p. 505) notes that "the major problem of behavioural observation is the observer himself" because he is "part of the measuring instrument". He goes on to say that the "strength and weakness of the procedure is the observer's powers of inference. . . . he brings behaviour and construct together". The observer's inferences are not infallible, however, and can be biased by ethnic, gender, age and socio-economic background issues. Kerlinger goes on to say that an observer can even affect the behaviour of the individual being observed simply by being present in the observed situation.

According to Thorndike and Hagen (1977, p. 451) there are two major problems that limit the validity of observer ratings. These are "the rater's *willingness* to rate honestly and conscientiously, in accordance with the instructions given to him" and "the factors that limit his *ability* to rate consistently and correctly, even with the best of intentions". Factors affecting these two aspects could be the number of observations to be made,

the importance the observer places on the task, identification with the persons being rated, unseen aspects of the construct being rated and idiosyncrasies of the observer.

Burns (1981, p. 91) also discusses 'social desirability' as being an issue in observation. He states that, "complete objectivity by an observer is impossible" as such factors as the observer's personal standards and criteria may affect his judgement. Ethnic and cultural issues need to be addressed as does the matter of specific social situation. Burns comments that, "the optimum approach to observing behaviour is to aim for objectivity in observation, then allow sensitivity, experience and empathy to play a larger part in forming more subjective influences" (1981, p. 91). Hughes comments that "a teacher observation instrument is probably more appropriate than a self-report from pre-school and kindergarten children" but warns evaluators to be certain of what they are evaluating, i.e. "overt behaviours on the part of children, or inference the raters are making about the child's feelings, or motivations based on the behavioural observations" (1985, p. 688).

The previous discussion notes many of the disadvantages of observer rating scales. There are, however, some advantages. Hopkins and Antes (1990, p. 158) note the usefulness of direct observation in that it "can identify levels of skill development. . . . provides a record for future comparison. . . . does not require a special laboratory setting".

In summary, it appears that observational techniques can be of real value when the limitations are recognised and steps taken to train the observers to be as accurate and objective as possible.

Problems of Behavioural Checklists

Behavioural checklists also depend upon observational methods as one individual fills out an inventory for someone else and so can be plagued with the same problems associated with observer/rating scales as described earlier. Nunnally (1967, p. 487) observes that such 'other' inventories 'tend to be dominated by a general factor, not unlike the factor of social desirability found in self-inventories. . . . the general factor that appears in ratings of normal people concerns *leniency*, the tendency to say good things or bad things about people in general other-desirability rather than self-desirability'. Nunnally further points out that often the observations are made in a contrived situation which is also like a 'situational test'. Another difficulty he notes is that often the observations are made by people who have insufficient experience with the person being observed.

On the other hand there appear to be many advantages in using a checklist as an observational tool. This is suggested by Hopkins and Antes (1990, p. 159) who state that 'a checklist has two major advantages in observation: it is a time-efficient method of recording, and the data are objective.' They cite many situations where a checklist facilitates judgement and state that:

In addition to being time-efficient, the checklist limits that amount of judgment the observer must exercise while performing the observation. The list assures that the observer will give attention to those facts important to the study while avoiding unimportant aspects. Judgments can be dealt with later when there is more time for consideration (p. 159)

Checklists provide a data base for future comparison and evaluation as they allow the observer to take note of individual aspects of a behaviour or construct. To minimise some of the problems associated with

observation, Hopkins and Antes make suggestions concerning the building of a checklist. These are that listed points should be specific, not lengthy, require a simple response and the observers should be trained and aware of the importance of the task to be completed.

It would appear that although there are difficulties associated with behavioural checklists there are also many advantages. The aim therefore when using a behavioural checklist would be to be aware of these disadvantages, to construct the checklist carefully and to train observers in the use of the instrument.

Summary

Although in recent years there has been much literature on research into self-esteem as a construct, there are difficulties associated with the various available instruments to measure such a construct. The current research proposal posits that the development of a standardised behavioural checklist to measure self-esteem would contribute to the research in this area. Because the proposed checklist would measure self-esteem in the classroom, it would also be of value in examining the various factors which contribute to positive outcomes in learning.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of the study is to develop a behavioural checklist to be used by classroom teachers as a means of assessing the self-esteem of children aged 5 to 12 years.

The research will be conducted in four phases:

1. Identification of behaviours describing self-esteem
2. Formulation of Behavioural Checklist of Self-esteem, based on the identified behaviours
3. Analysis and refinement of the Behavioural Checklist
4. Measurement of reliability and validity

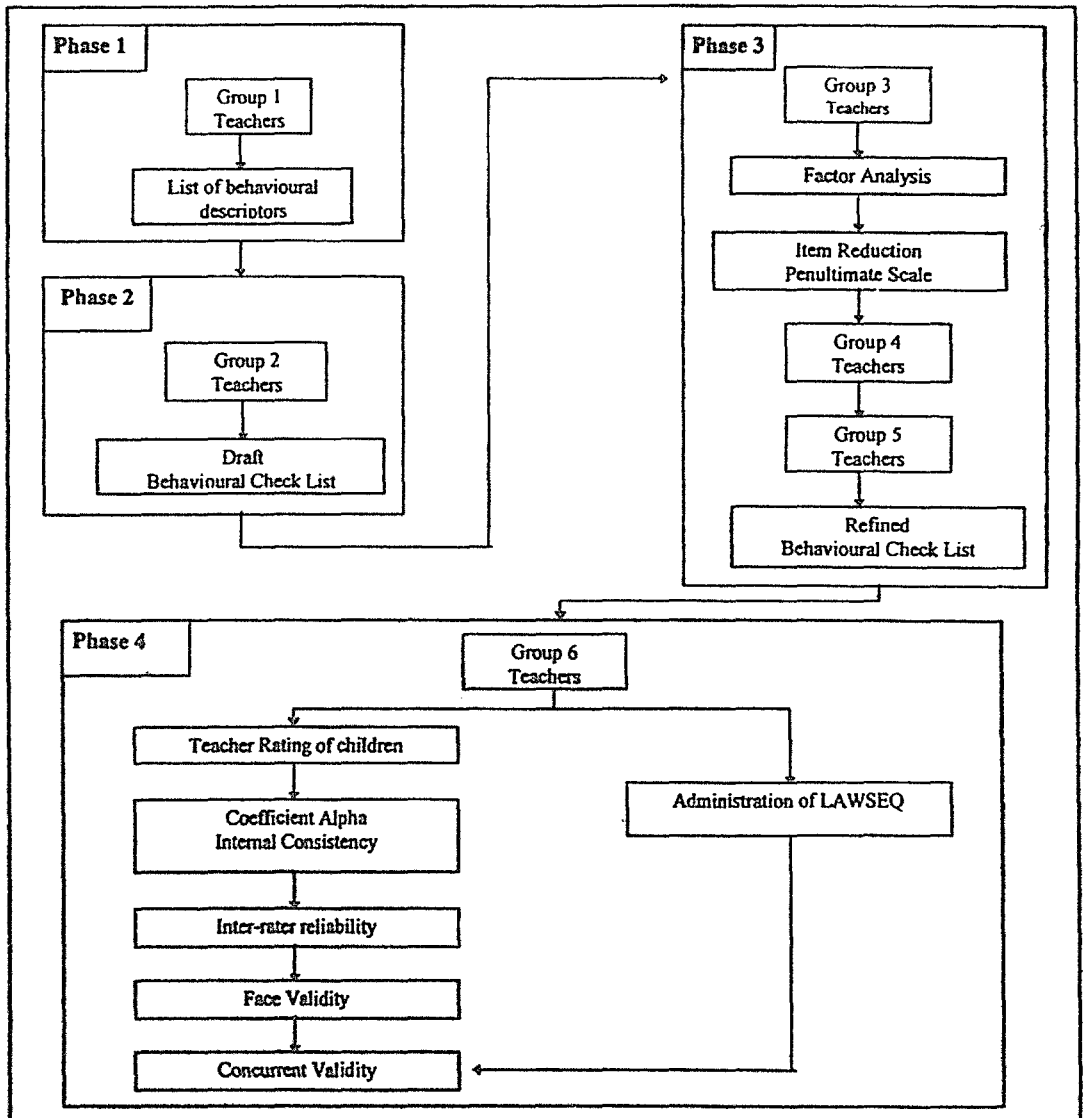
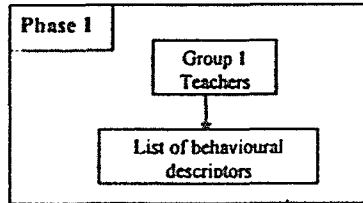


Figure 2 Phases of the thesis

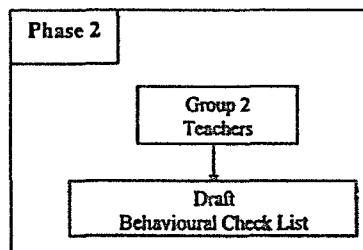
Figure 2 identifies each of the phases which comprise the context of the thesis. Each phase will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

Phase 1



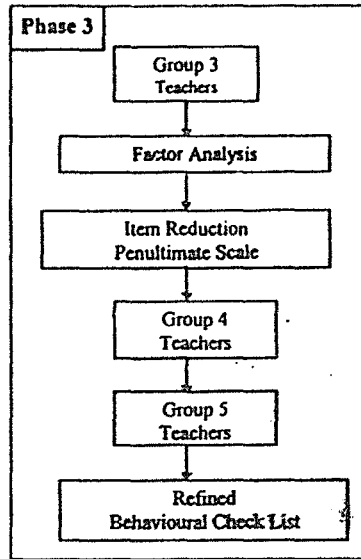
This component of the study seeks to identify the behavioural manifestations of high self-esteem of primary school children as described by classroom teachers. The study involves the selection of teachers from government and private schools in the metropolitan area of Perth. Teachers will be asked to provide behavioural descriptors of self-esteem as manifested in the classroom. These descriptors will be analysed to form the preliminary rating scale.

Phase 2



In this component of the study another group of teachers will be asked to examine the above list of behaviours and check them for ambiguity and redundancy. This phase should produce a list of behaviours which includes all behaviours from the brain-storming of Phase 1 stated in terms in every day use by classroom teachers. This list will then be ready for teachers to rate the behaviours according to their perceived high or low relevance to self-esteem.

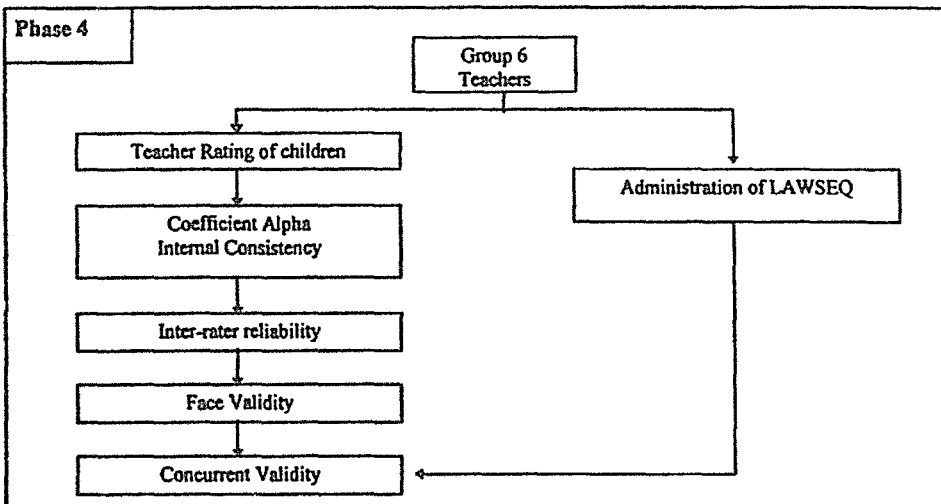
Phase 3



Once the preliminary behavioural checklist has been identified, the study will focus on ways by which the number of items can be reduced. This will be done by having a group of teachers rate each item on a scale of 1 to 4 according to its relevance to self-esteem (1 being the most relevant and 4 being the least) and performing principal component analysis.

Further discussion with teachers and psychologists will follow to reduce the total number of behaviours to a meaningful number of 20 items.

Phase 4



When the 20-item checklist is completed the next phase of the study involves determining the co-efficient alpha for internal consistency and other measures of reliability and validity.

To gain a measure of comparison with a self-report scale commonly used by psychologists in classrooms in Western Australian schools, the scores of the Behavioural Checklist will be compared with the Lawrence Self-Esteem Questionnaire (Lawrence, 1978). (See Figure 3)

LAWSEQ PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE

Yes No Don't Know

1. Do you think that your parents like to hear about your ideas?
2. Do you often feel lonely at school?
3. Do other children often break friends or fall out with you?
4. Do you like team games?
5. Do you think that other children often say nasty things about you?
6. When you have to say things in front of teachers, do you usually feel shy?
7. Do you like writing stories or doing creative writing?
8. Do you often feel sad because you have nobody to play with at school?
9. Are you good at mathematics?
10. Are there lots of things about yourself you would like to change?
11. When you have to say things in front of other children, do you usually feel foolish?
12. Do you find it difficult to do things like woodwork or knitting?
13. When you want to tell a teacher something, do you usually feel foolish?
14. Do you often have to find new friends because your old friends are playing with somebody else?
15. Do you usually feel foolish when you talk to your parents?
16. Do other people often think that you tell lies?

SCORING KEY:

Questions 4, 7, 9, 12 are distracters.

Score +2 for YES answer to Q.1.

Score +2 for NO answers to remaining scored questions.

Score +1 for DON'T KNOW answers to scored questions.

Score 0 for all other possibilities.

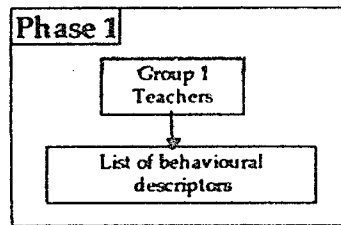
Maximum possible score in the direction of high self-esteem +24.

Figure 3. LAWSEQ - Lawrence Self-Esteem Questionnaire (Lawrence, 1988, p.16)

CHAPTER FOUR

PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

This chapter describes the preliminary stages in the development of a behavioural checklist to identify the level of self-esteem of children aged 5 to 12 years. There are three distinct phases: (i) Obtaining teacher descriptors of behavioural characteristics of high self-esteem; (ii) analysing, combining and reducing the descriptors into an initial checklist; and (iii) performing a preliminary factor analysis to reduce items to a smaller number for use by teachers.

Phase 1

Through the researcher's work experience, reading and discussion with colleagues the concept of self-esteem and its critical role in the learning situation grew increasingly important. Further, the possible link between self-esteem and success in a program of intervention became a focus of attention. Discussion with Dr Denis Lawrence, a psychologist eminent in his work in the area of self-esteem, narrowed the focus to the instruments available to measure the concept. Dr Lawrence, who devised the LAWSEQ (Lawrence Self-esteem Questionnaire), which is a self-report instrument, made the point that there was no objective checklist available to measure the concept in the classroom. He suggested strongly that this was needed and would be a valuable resource in the further study of self-esteem. As the need to develop a behavioural checklist of self-esteem in the classroom

became more evident, coupled with the encouragement of classroom teachers and colleagues, the decision was made to undertake the task.

Teacher Descriptors

Sixty-eight primary school teachers, who were interested in the concept and were willing to be involved in the research were asked to formulate lists of behavioural descriptions which they felt characterised high self-esteem. All were experienced teachers from government and private schools in the metropolitan area of Perth, Western Australia, and were at the time teaching in different year levels from year 1 to year 7.

Respondents were asked to list as many behavioural descriptors of self-esteem as they thought were relevant and each teacher was asked to do this without conferring with colleagues.

The resulting lists of descriptors which varied in length were submitted (Appendix A). Each list was analysed in terms of common expressions in behavioural descriptions of self-esteem observable in the classroom. It was found that there was considerable overlap. Some examples are:

Item 3 *Interacts positively with others* was chosen to encompass the following descriptions. Thus "interacts positively with others" can refer to aspects of behaviour involving socialising with others, being friendly, rarely fighting with friends and establishing positive peer interactions.

Popular with others
 Socialises easily with peers
 Friendly
 Makes lasting friendships
 Rarely fights with friends
 Makes friends easily
 Interacts with others
 Companionable with others
 Positive peer interactions

Item 20 *Takes risks/willing to have a go* was chosen to encompass the following descriptors and can be seen to refer to aspects of behaviour which involve taking initiative, accepting challenge, willing to move into untried areas.

Takes chances
 Takes risks
 Not afraid to try something new/different
 Thrives on challenges
 Always willing to have a go at new/different activities
 More likely to take on new opportunities, persevere with them and
 develop new talents
 Is a risk-taker

Item 9 *Perseveres/is not easily distracted* was chosen to describe the following behaviours of perseverance, accepting responsibility for own learning and moves consistently towards goals.

The ability to keep trying, not give up too easily

Will persevere

Follows through

Perseveres with problems

Not easily distracted

Resists distractions - is focussed on own work

Item 14 *Is assertive/not easily swayed by others' opinions* was chosen to describe behaviours expressing confidence in own opinions and judgment and maintaining of own views in face of criticism.

Prepared to stick with own opinions

Confident to provide their own point of view

Willing to express personal ideas

Confidence in their own opinions and judgment

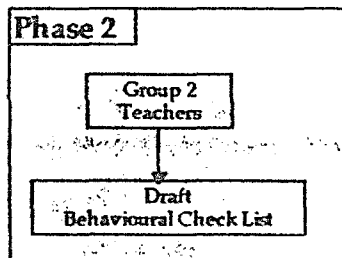
Maintain own point of view or value system

Not threatened by others

Doesn't bow to peer pressure

Confident in self judgment

Phase 2



A second group of 20 teachers was consulted to refine the descriptions of the initial scale. There was much discussion concerning the wording of items to accurately encapsulate the various descriptions of what was

considered to be the same behaviour. Items of similar descriptions were combined and a list of descriptors resulting from the initial responses was drawn up. This step was necessary as it is considered essential that the final instrument has items which are meaningful to the classroom teacher and expressed in terms typically used by teachers. During this stage many teachers commented that there was personal and professional value in the exercise of focusing upon high self-esteem and being required to describe the characteristics succinctly and clearly.

In addition, the final lists were discussed with other educational professionals including school psychologists who concurred with the teachers that the individual items did in fact describe aspects of high self-esteem. These professionals were not asked to compile lists because the aim of the study was to keep the ownership of the instrument with the teachers. On the basis of professional input, the lists were reduced again and sent back to the teachers for discussion. Subsequently a reduced list of 38 items was generated, for the third stage of the development of a behavioural checklist. See Figure 4.

BEHAVIOURAL CHECKLIST OF SELF ESTEEM

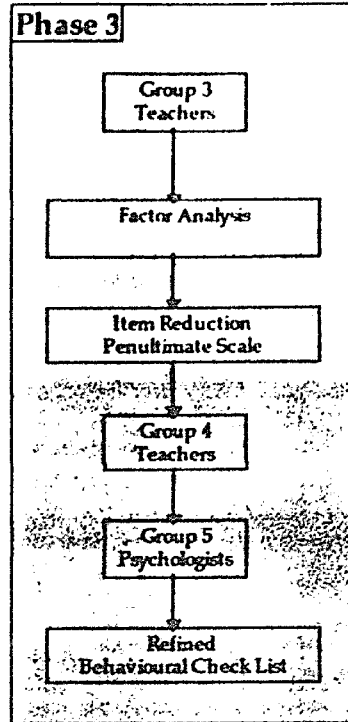
Indicators of high self esteem.

Please rate the relevance of each behaviour on a scale of 1 to 4, 1 being the most relevant and 4 being the least.

- ☐ Maintains eye contact
- ☐ Accepts consequences of own behaviour
- ☐ Displays sense of humour
- ☐ Has erect 'open' posture/positive body language
- ☐ Speaks clearly and audibly
- ☐ Requests/accepts help
- ☐ Interacts positively with others
- ☐ Accepts criticism
- ☐ Takes risks/willing to have a go
- ☐ Is helpful
- ☐ Has happy disposition
- ☐ Communicates feelings appropriately
- ☐ Is confident in a variety of situations
- ☐ Behaves appropriately
- ☐ Perseveres/Is not easily distracted
- ☐ Displays initiative
- ☐ Works independently
- ☐ Is self-motivated
- ☐ Accepts responsibility
- ☐ Has high self regard
- ☐ Considers others' points of view
- ☐ Is assertive/not easily swayed by others' opinions
- ☐ Accepts praise
- ☐ Takes pride in own achievements
- ☐ Completes tasks
- ☐ Is well organised
- ☐ Is friendly
- ☐ Exhibits a positive outlook on life
- ☐ Shows respect for others/property
- ☐ Is self motivated
- ☐ Sets realistic goals
- ☐ Is adaptable/Copes with changes to routine and circumstance
- ☐ Is decisive
- ☐ Displays leadership qualities
- ☐ Is tolerant/accepting of others
- ☐ Is an active participant
- ☐ Shows sensitivity to others' needs
- ☐ Is aware of own strengths and weaknesses

Figure 4 Initial behaviour checklist

Phase 3



Preliminary Factor Analysis

The resulting checklist of thirty-eight descriptors was given to ninety-two teachers, randomly selected from primary schools. Each teacher was requested to rate each described behaviour according to their perceived relevance of the presence of each behaviour to reflect self-esteem. A rating scale from 1 to 4 was used, 1 being the most relevant and 4 the least relevant to self-esteem.

The responses to all thirty eight behavioural descriptors for each of the ninety-two teachers were coded into an SPSS data set and subjected to a Principal Component Analysis to identify common descriptors and to reduce the number of items in the scale.

The Principal Component Analysis identified thirteen factors with an Eigenvalue greater than 1.0. These thirteen factors accounted for 72% of the

variance (See Table 1). A review of the resulting factor matrix indicated a number of descriptors belonging to several factors, each of which was very similar and highly correlated as manifestations of underlying behaviours of self-esteem. Since the aim of the research was to develop a behavioural checklist which would provide an easy, quick measure for teachers to identify a global level of self-esteem, and so as not to over-analyse the data, it was decided to focus only on the two factors making the greatest contribution to total variance.

To assist in interpreting the two factors, a Varimax rotation was performed. The result of this rotation is shown in Table 2. From this a reduced list of twenty items was selected, using the highest loadings on each factor. See Figure 4.

The first major factor was labelled 'Responsiveness' identified by a factor loading of 0.63172 on Item 12 *Accepts responsibility*. Other items having significant loadings (greater than 0.47391). on this factor are Items 4,5,6,8,9,10,12,16,17 and 19.

Similarly the second factor was labelled 'Confidence' identified by a factor loading of 0.65795 on Item 7 *Is confident in a variety of situations*. The other items having significant loadings (greater than 0.46303) on this factor are Items 2,3,11,13,14,15,18 and 20.

These were then combined into one scale and the resulting list of twenty behaviours was distributed among a group of twenty-five teachers, who were asked to check each behavioural description for clarity and possible ambiguity or overlap. They were also asked if the resulting scale represented a comprehensive list of behaviours, the presence of which, in

their opinion, indicated a measure of high self-esteem. Comments by teachers provided valuable feed-back. The comments included:

These descriptions are so apt

I know what you are looking for with these descriptions

I'd like to complete this for every child in my class

There's real value in considering children using these descriptions.

No further changes were made to the scale and it was established that, in the opinion of these teachers who had years of experience in the classroom, the twenty descriptors appear to express behavioural manifestations of self-esteem. Most of the teachers had taught in various locations and had taught children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, age, grade levels and learning ability. This was the basis of confidence that the checklist had application to children from a wide range of background and ability and not simply to mainstream children. This is not surprising in that all of the descriptions were collected from classroom teachers and were rated for their relevance to high self-esteem by ninety-two teacher colleagues. Thus the final version of the scale appears to have face validity as determined by classroom teachers.

The final copy of the Behavioural Checklist was given to a group of educational psychologists and all items were discussed in a group session. The following comments are examples of views expressed by members of the group:

- *this information would be handy when looking at a child who is under-achieving*
- *these behaviours are really important in the learning situation*
- *the language of the items of the checklist is clear and concise*
- *I know exactly what you mean by this description*
- *I've often heard teachers describe kids using these terms*

All agreed that the descriptions reflected high self-esteem as manifested in behavioural expressions in the classroom. Thus the Behavioural Checklist appears to have a certain measure of face validity.

Figure 5 shows the Metcalfe Behavioural Checklist of Self-esteem on which children are rated for each behaviour on a scale of 1 - 6, 1 being *never* and 6 being *always*.

Summary

This chapter has covered the process by which the Behavioural Checklist for the measurement of self-esteem in the classroom was generated. Classroom teachers have been involved at every stage - in the generating of descriptions, in discussion and reducing of ambiguous descriptions and in the reduction of the list of items to an optimum number of twenty. Chapter five will cover the validation of the Checklist, its internal reliability and inter-rater reliability. The Checklist will also be correlated with the LAWSEQ which is already being used in the classroom.

Table 1

Eigenvalue for preliminary factor-analysis

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Eigenvalue</u>	<u>Pct of Var</u>	<u>Cum. pct</u>
1	6.82346	18.0	18.0
2	3.06927	8.1	26.0
3	2.48942	6.6	32.6
4	2.04993	5.4	38.0
5	1.87364	4.9	42.9
6	1.69224	4.5	47.4
7	1.63987	4.3	51.7
8	1.58980	4.2	55.9
9	1.41973	3.7	59.6
10	1.34247	3.5	63.1
11	1.24860	3.3	66.4
12	1.10935	2.9	69.3
13	1.00873	2.7	72.0
14	.97684	2.6	74.6
15	.93656	2.5	77.0
16	.91107	2.4	79.4
17	.78102	2.1	81.5
18	.70270	1.8	83.3
19	.66159	1.7	85.1
20	.62466	1.6	86.7
21	.55298	1.5	88.2
22	.54545	1.4	89.6
23	.47418	1.2	90.9
24	.45395	1.2	92.0
25	.39746	1.0	93.1
26	.34524	.9	94.0
27	.32999	.9	94.9
28	.29956	.8	95.7
29	.27585	.7	96.4
30	.24517	.6	97.0
31	.22040	.6	97.6
32	.20509	.5	98.1
33	.16733	.4	98.6
34	.14407	.4	99.0
35	.12472	.3	99.3
36	.11986	.3	99.6
37	.09525	.3	99.9
38	.05252	.1	100.0

Table 2

Rotated factor matrix for preliminary factor analysis

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Is an active participant	.29509	.23377
Is assertive/not easily swayed	-.09464	.46304
Behaves appropriately	.55660	.21551
Positive body language	.00259	.56583
Confident in various situations	-.10044	.65795
Considers others' points of view	.16229	.17587
Is adaptable, copes with change	.09044	.56792
Accepts criticism	.37147	.32004
Is decisive	.24560	.42712
Maintains eye contact	.20745	-.08545
Communicates feelings appropriately	.47392	.33501
Is Friendly	.28985	-.00538
Sets realistic goals	.26179	.33887
Has happy disposition	.48900	-.00512
Requests/accepts help	.09913	.40955
Is helpful	.65235	-.10057
Displays sense of humour	.04422	-.03735
Works independently	.50474	.03275
Displays initiative	.07506	.34814
Interacts positively with others	.13991	.52248
Displays leadership qualities	.11185	.42358
Is self-motivated 1	.27990	.47312
Is self-motivated 2	.38324	.35835
Is well organised	.65841	-.00830
Exhibits positive outlook on life	.03494	.26358
Accepts consequence of own behaviour	.55145	.16645
Perseveres/is not easily distracted	.62582	.05583
Accepts praise	.38444	.41258
Takes pride in own achievements	.31580	.46871
Shows respect for others/property	.21724	.12679
Accepts responsibility	.63172	.19961
Takes risks/willing to have a go	-.02279	.66215
Has high self-regard	-.03834	.54069
Shows sensitivity to others' needs	.57834	.11615
Speaks clearly and audibly	.26563	.09052
Is aware of own strengths & weaknesses	.01711	.45079
Completes tasks	.75204	.06722
Is tolerant/accepting of others	.42269	.31612

METCALFE BEHAVIOURAL CHECKLIST OF SELF-ESTEEM

Please rate the child for each of the following behaviours on a scale of 1 to 6,
1 being never and 6 being always

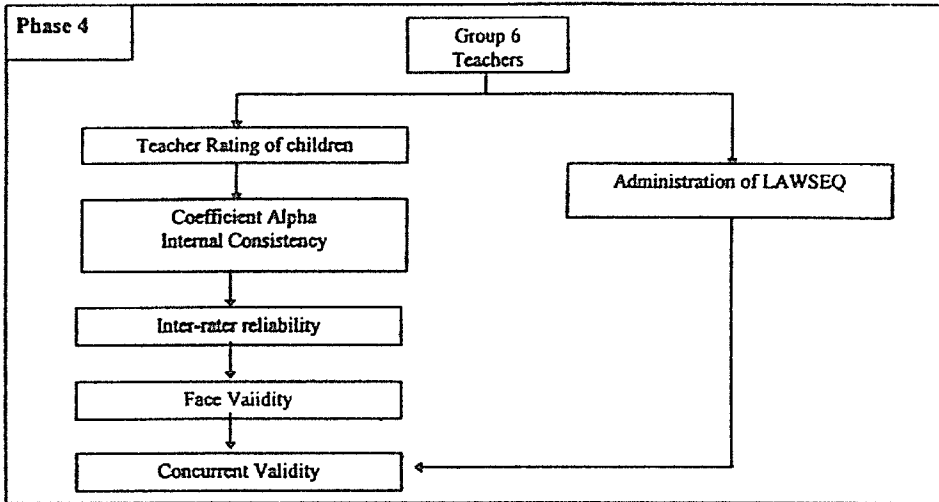
	1 never	seldom 2 sometimes	3	often 4	5 usually	always 6
1. Accepts consequences of own behaviour	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Has erect 'open' posture/ positive body language	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Interacts positively with others	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Is helpful	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Has happy disposition	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Communicates feelings appropriately	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Is confident in a variety of situations	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Behaves appropriately	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Perseveres/ Is not easily distracted	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Works independently	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Is self-motivated	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Accepts responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Has high self regard	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Is assertive/ not easily swayed by others' opinions	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Takes pride in own achievements	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Completes tasks	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Is well organised	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Is adaptable/ Copes with changes to routine and circumstance	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Shows sensitivity to others' needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Takes risks/ Willing to have a go	1	2	3	4	5	6

Figure 5. Metcalfe Behavioural Checklist of Self-esteem.

CHAPTER FIVE

VALIDATION OF THE BEHAVIOURAL CHECKLIST

Phase 4



Reliability of the Behavioural Checklist

To estimate the internal reliability of the proposed behavioural checklist, a group of teachers who were interested in the development of a checklist to gauge the level of self-esteem for children aged five to twelve years was invited to discuss the components of each item on the scale and establish criteria for rating the behaviour.

It was necessary to follow this procedure since the nature of the researcher's work is focused on small group classes. It is not possible to find a large group of children taught by the same teacher. It was therefore necessary to train a group of teachers in administering the rating scale and requesting them to rate their children on the level of self-esteem.

In addition the researcher administered the LAWSEQ (Lawrence, 1988, p. 16). The Lawrence Self-Esteem Questionnaire was devised to

measure self-esteem in Primary school children. There are sixteen questions including four which are innocuous and do not count and the children respond by checking columns labelled 'Yes', 'No', 'Don't know'. The questions were selected by Dr Lawrence "to cover the main areas of concern shown by children in an earlier counselling study" (Lawrence, 1981, page 245). See Figure 3.

By combining the ratings of the six teachers, a total sample of 107 students was obtained. These teachers had Primary classroom teaching experience ranging from three to thirty years. Their teaching experience was with a variety of children.

All ratings were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) data base and the coefficient α calculated. This gave a reliability estimate for the total scale of 0.9768 and for the two factors 'Responsiveness' (11 items) 0.9695 and 'Confidence' (9 items) 0.9549. See Table 3.

Table 3.

Coefficient Alpha for Total Scale and Component Factors

<u>Component</u>	<u>No. of Items</u>	<u>No. of Cases</u>	<u>Alpha</u>
Total Scale	20	107	0.9768
'Responsiveness'	11	107	0.9695
'Confidence'	9	107	0.9549

The reliability estimates for the total scale and the two sub-scales indicate a significant degree of internal consistency.

Since there have been concerns raised in the literature about the subjective nature of behavioural rating scales, it was decided to obtain a measure of inter-rater reliability using a pair of tandem teachers who would independently assess the same children in their class. To minimise differences in attitudes and personality between the two teachers, it was decided to seek a pair of teachers of the same gender who were similar in age, years of experience and who had similar teaching styles.

The tandem teachers selected for the inter-rater reliability estimate each has two and one half days teaching with a group of twenty-three Year 4 children. The subjects are from a medium level socio-economic background, living at home with parents or parent and represent a good cross-section of typical Australian suburban children. Both teachers are highly motivated and discuss their teaching programs with each other to achieve greater integration in planning.

Independent of each other, the teachers were asked to rate each child on the Behavioural Checklist. A Pearson Product Moment correlation between total scores on the Behavioural Checklist gave a value of $r = 0.868$ ($p < .01$) indicating significant agreement between the two raters.

Both the LAWSEQ and the proposed Behavioural Checklist are used to identify broad categories of self-esteem such as High, Medium and Low. This will be sufficient to identify those children who are at risk in school achievement due to low self-esteem. The total score for both scales is not relevant to teaching staff, whereas the global indication of self-esteem is of relevance.

Table 4 shows the cross-tabulation of global estimates of self-esteem allocated to the twenty-three children by the two teachers. High self-esteem indicates a score greater than 105, Medium between 85 and 104 and Low self-esteem less than 85.

Table 4.

Allocation of High, Medium and Low Self-esteem by Two Tandem Teachers

Teacher B	Teacher A			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Low	4	2		6
Medium	3	8		11
High		2	4	6
Total	7	12	4	23

In examining these results we notice that there are some outsiders. For example, 3 students rated 'Low' by teacher A are rated 'Medium' by teacher B and also 2 rated 'Medium' by teacher A are rated 'Low' by teacher B. Two factors could contribute to this apparent disagreement. Firstly the individual scores could have been close to the cut-off point between 'Low' and 'Medium' categories or, secondly, they may reflect a slight bias on the part of one or both of the teachers. The two students categorised as 'Medium' by teacher A and 'High' by teacher B may also have been affected by one of these two factors.

As expected from the inter-rater correlation of 0.868 on raw scores for the independent rating by the two teachers, an inspection of Table 4 shows considerable agreement on global estimates of self-esteem. The low sample of 23 students makes it impossible to use the χ^2 statistic since there are more than 20% of cells with an expected value less than 5.0. However, the less

restrictive Gamma Statistic G (Siegel and Castellan, 1988, p. 291) and Somer's index of asymmetric association, d, (p. 303), indicate a high degree of association between the ratings of both teachers. Table 5 shows the results for both Gamma G and Somer's d.

Table 5.

Gamma G and Somer's d

<u>Test</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Approx.value or T</u>	<u>Probability</u>
Gamma	.900	4.518	<.001
Somer's d	.659	4.518	<.001

From the results in Table 5 it can be inferred that the proposed Behavioural Checklist has good internal consistency ($r = 0.9068$, $p < 0.001$) and excellent inter-rater reliability ($r = 0.868$, $p < 0.001$) at the raw score level. The global measure of High, Medium and Low self-esteem showed significant agreement between the two teacher-raters (Gamma G = 0.90, $p < 0.001$ and Somer's d = 0.659, $p < 0.001$).

Validity of the Behavioural Checklist

As discussed in Chapter 4, the checklist appeared to have a measure of face validity when the educational psychologists, after discussion of the various items, agreed that they did, in fact, describe behaviours characteristic of children with high self-esteem.

This is also emphasised by teachers using the scale who state that:

- *these data give me some more information why some of my kids are succeeding and others failing*

- *so this is why some of my class are not quite getting there*
- *whatever this is measuring, it's pretty important in the learning situation*

Correlation of the Behavioural Checklist with the LAWSEQ

In personal discussion with Dr Denis Lawrence during the planning stage of this research concerning self-esteem in the classroom, he suggested that an instrument other than the LAWSEQ was needed to measure the concept. Since the LAWSEQ is self-administered the new instrument should be a behavioural checklist with observer ratings.

By combining the ratings of all the teachers a sample of 107 cases was gathered and a Pearson Product Moment Correlation of 0.254 between the LAWSEQ and the Behavioural Checklist was obtained. Although statistically significant ($p < .01$) the correlation is very low covering a common variance of only 6%.

However when broad bands of High, Medium and Low are considered both the Behavioural Checklist and the LAWSEQ have a significant measure of agreement as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Cross-tabulation Between the Behavioural Checklist and the LAWSEQ

LAWSEQ	Behavioural Checklist			TOTAL
	Low	Medium	High	
Low	19	5	12	36
Medium	10	13	15	38
High	6	15	12	33
TOTAL	35	33	39	107
$\chi^2 = 13.007 \quad df = 4 \quad p = 0.011$				

This shows considerable agreement between the ratings on the Behavioural Checklist and the LAWSEQ.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

INTRODUCTION

It is a commonly held belief amongst classroom teachers and professionals in related fields that self-esteem in the classroom is an important factor in learning. This is generally supported in the literature and a number of tools have been developed for the measurement of this concept. Given the problems associated with the various instruments which include self-report and observer ratings coupled with the fact that there is no behavioural checklist with Australian or British norms the need for a behavioural checklist devised in Australia became evident. Furthermore it was necessary that, if this checklist was to measure self-esteem in the classroom, then classroom teachers had to be involved at every stage.

This research aimed to investigate the importance of the concept of self-esteem for effective learning through a review of relevant literature. It also sought to provide an instrument for the measurement of self-esteem in the classroom to be used by the teachers who, having identified the children's levels of self-esteem, may then develop programs which would enhance self-esteem in the learning situation at class and individual levels.

DISCUSSION

The collection of data and discussions with classroom teachers and other professionals working with children in an educational setting, for example school psychologists, formed the basis for the assessment of the importance of self-esteem for effective learning and for the development of the Metcalfe Behavioural Checklist of Self-esteem in the Classroom.

Review of Objectives

The first phase in the development of the behavioural checklist was the identification of behaviours describing self-esteem. The resulting preliminary list of behavioural descriptors was presented to a second group of 20 teachers for further refinement. Given the wide range of experience and background of the teachers who contributed in this stage and their enthusiastic commitment to the task, confidence in the descriptions submitted is well founded. This was evident in the comments made by other teachers and professionals in education concerning the aptness and usefulness of the descriptors.

The third phase - the development of a 20-item Behavioural Checklist of Self-esteem - again reflected the interest and commitment of the teachers when 92 teachers completed the rating of 38 behaviours, reducing them to the required list of 20 items.

Phase 4 included the analysis of the Behavioural Checklist in terms of reliability and validity and was found to have good internal consistency and excellent inter-rater reliability at the raw score level. Face validity is evident in the comments and observations of teachers, educational psychologists and other educational professionals. An analysis of the raw scores shows a low correlation between the Behavioural Checklist and the LAWSEQ but in broader categories of Low, Medium and High ratings there is a considerable measure of agreement.

A significant problem in the design was that too many teachers were involved in observing small numbers of children. Ideally to cancel out many of the variables, it would have been better to have *one* teacher observing and rating a large number of children. Not only would this have

been difficult in practical terms but would have failed to address one of the criteria of observation which Nunnally proposes (1967, p. 488). He observes, "In spite of their problems, observations in daily life tend to be superior to other types of observational methods. Although such ratings frequently suffer because the observer had not had sufficient opportunities to observe the individual in circumstances relevant to the traits being rated, the situation in this regard tends to be much worse with the other observational methods".

Conclusions

On the basis of this research it can be concluded that the Metcalfe Behavioural Checklist for the measurement of self-esteem in the classroom is an instrument which is: (i) easy to use for teachers who wish to identify levels of self-esteem of children in their classrooms, (ii) of assistance to teachers in adjusting their teaching and in devising programs and opportunities to enhance self-esteem, and (iii) is able to provide feed-back to other care-givers.

Implications

The impact that self-esteem in the classroom appears to have upon a child's learning highlights the importance of the teacher's awareness of this phenomenon when creating a positive learning environment. In order to maximise the child's opportunity and potential to take full advantage of the learning situation teachers and other professionals need not only to be aware of the importance of self-esteem, but also need to have a knowledge of the child's level of self-esteem in the classroom.

Research Implications

This study has provided an instrument to give an objective measurement of the child's level of self-esteem in the classroom. This,

coupled with the LAWSEQ, a self-report instrument, should provide the teacher with data which may in some measure contribute to the overall picture of the child. This knowledge would be of value particularly in the case of children who were experiencing some difficulty in learning.

The Self-esteem Hierarchy

Because this research is situation specific, that is, examining children's self-esteem in the classroom, it is necessary to look at the notion of global self-esteem. Self-esteem must be examined in a full range of contexts as it is manifest, not only in the academic or learning situation but also in the social and physical milieu. Individuals may feel very ill at ease and inadequate on the sports field but because of academic success, maintain a high level of over-all self-esteem. Conversely someone who is not successful academically but displays notable sporting prowess and receives recognition and adulation in this feels confident and valued even in other situations. The same phenomenon exists for the attractive, socially adept and popular individual who may not shine either on the sports field or in the learning situation. The confidence, feelings of self-worth and willingness to take risks often transfer from one situation to another even though the new situation may not necessarily bring success.

The Shavelson and Bolus hierarchical structure model (1982, p. 16) is useful here in that it provides a framework which illustrates the manner in which situation-specific self-esteem contributes cumulatively towards global self-esteem or, in Shavelson and Bolus' term, "General Self-Concept".

Similarly Wylie proposes the term "over-all self-regard - my generic term to cover such "global" constructs as self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-favorability, and self-ideal discrepancies which are presumably determined

by some combination of cognitions and evaluations of many attributes of self. (1979, p. 4) Wylie also posits the argument that over-all self-regard is quite noticeably affected by the significant others in the individual's experience whether these significant others be parents, teachers, classmates or the 'gang'. For example, she suggests that, "very capable persons might set higher goals, experience greater expectations from teachers and parents, and experience as much or greater failure in relation to the goals they feel that they should be attaining as do persons of lesser abilities who are allowed to strive for lesser attainments". (1979, p. 358)

It is to be noted that this research is very situation-specific but many of the behaviours described by the teachers will still be valid for a child who is not gifted academically.

It appears that the LAWSEQ is, in fact, a global measure of self-esteem and this highlights a significant distinction between the LAWSEQ and the Behavioural Checklist which is related specifically to the learning situation. It is not surprising therefore, that, although the correlation between the LAWSEQ and the Behavioural Checklist is a significant correlation, it is nevertheless of low significance. It is interesting that, when each of the checklists is categorised into High, Medium and Low levels of self-esteem, the correlation is of much higher significance.

APPENDIX A
A SELECTION OF TEACHERS' BEHAVIOURAL DESCRIPTIONS

SOME ATTRIBUTES OF A STUDENT WITH GOOD SELF ESTEEM

Cheerful nature

Tries to best of ability in class

Usually neat and tidy in appearance

Has a group of good reliable friends

Polite without being 'crawly'

Has a sense of humour

Will participate in class activities

Will participate in extra activities such as sport or other school groups

Takes constructive criticism and help well

Displays a positive body language

Shows respect to people

Shows respect to property

Will ask for help when it is needed

Will help others in class

Doesn't need to continually seek praise from peers

1. WILLINGNESS TO SPEAK IN FRONT OF OTHERS
2. " " " TO TEACHER / ADULT PERSONALLY
3. " " " RECEIVE + PROVIDE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM
4. ABILITY TO ORGANISE THEMSELVES
5. " " " OTHERS
6. " " " PROVIDE / ACCEPT LEADERSHIP ROLE
7. CONFIDENCE TO PROVIDE THEIR OWN POINT OF VIEW.
8. CONFIDENCE TO PUBLICLY VOTE ON A MATTER IN A PERSONAL WAY - FREE FROM INFLUENCE
9. WILLINGLY VOLUNTEERS
10. GOOD EYE-CONTACT WHEN SPEAKING, OR BEING SPoken TO
11. CLEAR, STRONG ORAL VOICE
12. GOOD POSTURE WHEN SITTING / STANDING
13. ABILITY TO ~~BE~~ SIT STILL
14. SHOWS APPRECIATION WITHOUT PRATTING
15. SHOWS PRIDE IN WORK, ACHIEVEMENTS, AND PERSONAL HYGIENE / APPEARANCE
16. SETS GOALS FOR ACHIEVEMENTS
17. CONFIDENCE IN GREETINGS TO OTHERS

- 1 confidence in self
- 2 confidence with peers / friendships
- 3 verbally able to contribute
- 4 happy disposition
- 5 willing to 'have-a-go' - take chances
- 6 sensitive
- 7 good behaviour
- 8 not threatened by others
- 9 easy to set tasks - follows through
- 10 make friends easily
- 11 can see others' new points
- 12 willing to share
- 13 handles stress well
- 14 able to admit mistakes
- 15 creative
- 16 does all tasks well - to the best
he/she can.
- 17 doesn't bow to peer-pressure
- 18 able to communicate when hurt, angry
etc.
- 19 kind + helpful to others
- 20 has friends & family

Children with high self-esteem:

1. Are comfortable speaking their minds, or speaking up, if they feel inclined to do so
2. Are also comfortable to maintain a silence, not feeling a need to "impress".
3. Are critically accepting, but not judgemental, of others whether these others be of lower SE, disabled, of a different creed etc.
4. Likely to be comfortable (more so than others) speaking in front of their peers.
5. Less likely to need to please, although they may choose to do so.
6. Are usually popular because they are likely to be accepting of others.
7. With age, are more likely to develop independent (rather than group) opinions.
8. Are more likely to be critical (positive) listeners, open to the opinions/views of others, and with a preparedness/flexibility to change their own stance or opinion.
9. Are very unlikely to engage in, or even tolerate, bullying behaviour.
10. Are likely to be well-accepted by others - because of their non-judgemental nature. (This probably repeats Number 6 above.)
11. May have an inclination to help others in need and to display a "greater-than-average" degree of 'caring behaviour'
12. Are less likely to be troubled if their own achievement levels are below average. They may well be troubled, but are less likely to become depressed by this.
13. Are more likely to come from a close family where they have received very positive reinforcements and caring attention to emotional needs.
14. Are likely to be comfortable in acknowledging that they "DON'T KNOW".
15. Are less likely to get into emotional "games" with others.
16. Are more inclined to care for self.
17. Are often more willing to take on responsibility, while not accepting such responsibility blindly.
18. Are more likely to display enthusiasm about new opportunities.
19. Are more likely to be willing to take on these new opportunities, persevere with them, and develop new talents.
20. Have an awareness of their own skills/abilities/talents in an accepting and non-arrogant way.
21. Are more likely to be able to express, rather than suppress, their emotions.

1. head up
2. eye contact.
3. smiles spontaneously.
4. erect posture
5. open hands & arms in open positions.
6. body orientation when conversing
7. work open to view
8. eager to ^{answer} ~~answer~~ questions.
9. clear speech
10. audible speech
11. will attempt new tasks
12. will request help.
13. leadership beh.
14. +ve peer interactions.
15. tidy & clean personal presentat.
16. care about work presentat.
17. helpful with peers.
18. calm
19. sense of humor
20. absence of teasing, put-downs, sarcasm.
21. values other people's opinions.

APPENDIX B
PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM

Jolimont Primary School
 Hay St
 JOLIMONT
 22 nd November, 1995

Dear Parent or Guardian

I am a teacher with the Education Department and am carrying out research in the area of self-esteem. This research is towards a Masters degree at Edith Cowan University and will, I believe, be of educational benefit as there appears to be a link between self-esteem and school achievement.

There is a need for an objective measuring instrument to learn more about self-esteem in children and it is my goal to devise a checklist for this purpose.

I am seeking your permission to allow your child to participate in the study by responding to a self-esteem questionnaire. This confidential questionnaire will be used as a basis for devising a checklist of self-esteem

Your child's responses will be recorded by a number and not by name and so will remain anonymous. When I finally aggregate responses, there will be no possible risk of identification.

Would you please sign the attached consent form and return it via your child's teacher as soon as possible.

Your consideration is appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Mrs R.D. Metcalfe

I /wegive permission for my child.....
 to participate in the research being conducted by Mrs R.D. Metcalfe.

Parent/guardian's signature:.....Date.....

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