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Self-concept differences between bullied and non-bullied children

Wendy Forrest
Edith Cowan University

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**SELF-CONCEPT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BULLIED
AND NON-BULLIED CHILDREN**

BY

Wendy Forrest B.Ed.

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of

Bachelor of Education with Honours

at the Faculty of Education, Edith Cowan University

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare bullied and non-bullied children in order to ascertain whether the two groups varied on specific self-concept factors. The theoretical position was that low self-concept was related to bullying and as such, bullied children would score lower on a stipulated self-concept test.

The sample comprised fifty-three bullied and fifty-three non-bullied children from grades six to nine, selected from three large state city schools and six large state country schools with similar socio-economic status. The students were allocated to the “bullied” and “non-bullied” groups by class teachers using specified criteria. All fifty-three bullied children who agreed to participate were matched, where possible, for age and gender with fifty-three of the one hundred and twenty non-bullied children participating in the study.

The design used was an ex post facto design where the bullied (experimental) group and the non-bullied (control) group already existed in situ and self-concept features of the two groups had already occurred.

The two groups completed the Song and Hattie *About Myself* (1992) Self-concept Test. Means and standard deviations for the two groups were ascertained on seven self-concept factors: achievement self-concept, ability

self-concept, classroom self-concept, peer self-concept, family self-concept, confidence and physical self-concept.

The results of ANOVA tests showed significant differences between the bullied and non-bullied groups in achievement self-concept, classroom self-concept, peer self-concept, confidence and physical self-concept. Ability self-concept and family self-concept were not significantly different for bullied and non-bullied groups. Only confidence (lowest for bullied girls) was significant in gender differences. From these results it was concluded that a significant relationship existed between low self-concept and being bullied, and that victimisation was not gender-specific except for confidence in bullied girls.

It was suggested that applying self-concept enhancement techniques aimed at boosting self-concept in bullied children might not only generate higher self-concept in those factors under consideration but possibly also remove bullied children as targets of bullying.

DECLARATION

“ I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.”

W.I. Forrest

School of Education Studies

Churchlands Campus

1995.

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Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract.....	2
Declaration.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	5
List of Tables.....	8
List of Figures.....	9
List of Appendices.....	10
Chapter	
1 INTRODUCTION	11
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	14
Introduction	14
What is Bullying?	15
A Jungian Interpretation of Bullying.....	16
Bullies:Definition and Identification	17
Victimisation Trends	20
Victim Characteristics	23
Victimisation and Gender.....	25
Conclusion.....	26
Recent Studies on Bullied and Non-bullied Children	26
Significant Studies comparing Bullied and Non-bullied Children	26
Summary.....	29
Impact of the Literature on This Study	30
Conclusion.....	33

3	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND DERIVATION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	34
	Introduction	34
	Broad Aims	35
	Conceptual Framework	35
	Specific Research Objectives	36
	Research Questions	37
4	METHODOLOGY	38
	Research Design.....	38
	Sampling Procedure	39
	Research Procedure.....	41
	Measurement Instrument.....	41
	Data Collection	42
	Results.....	45
	Summary of Results	52
5	GENERAL DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS	53
	Summary of Discussion	58
	Implications of Results for Pedagogical Practice.....	58
	Wider Implications of the Study	62
	Suggestions for Further Study	63
	Conclusion	64

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
1 Mean performance of bullied and non-bullied groups on the Song and Hattie Self-concept Test subscales.....	45
2 Mean Performance of Song and Hattie’s Grade Seven Sample Compared with combined Bullied and Non-bullied Means from the present study.	46
3 Factorial Analyses of Variance of Scores on the seven Song and Hattie Self-concept Test subscales.....	48
4 Correlations of self-concept variables of the Song and Hattie Self-concept Test for bullied group.....	50
5 Correlations of self-concept variables of the Song and Hattie Self-concept Test for non-bullied group.	51

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
1	Decrease in victimisation from grades two to nine (after Olweus, 1993, p. 15).....	20
2	A model of victimisation showing alternative pathways to bullied or non-bullied status dependent on self-concept.....	22
3	The Song and Hattie (1992) model of self-concept.....	36
4	Bullied and non-bullied boys' and girls' group/gender interaction for confidence.....	49

LIST OF APPENDICES

	Page
1. The Song and Hattie <i>About Myself</i> (1992) Self-concept Test.	72
2. Scoring Sheet for the Song and Hattie <i>About Myself</i> (1992) Self-concept Test and reported means and standard deviations. ...	73

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Bullying in schools is a problem worldwide. Cowie and Sharp (1992, p. 37) claimed that it was a phenomenon embedded in pupil culture. Olweus (1993, p. 13) reported that 15% of Norwegian primary and junior high school students were involved in bully/victim problems. Whitney's survey on bullying in junior, middle and senior schools in Great Britain (1993, p. 9) indicated that 26% of primary school children and 16% of high school children were bullied regularly and that 15% of primary school children and 7% of high school children regularly bullied others. In the United States, Greenbaum (1987, p. 24) reported that ten out of one hundred students throughout the country were victimised regularly by bullies. Slee and Rigby, (1991, p. 615) investigated the extent of bullying among Australian school children from six to sixteen years old, and found, like Greenbaum, that one child in ten was subjected to peer-group bullying.

Despite the pressure being applied to schools by individuals, parent bodies and pastoral care groups to "do something" about bullying (Beare, 1994; Beare, 1995; Big push to stop bullies, 1994; Moran, 1995; School tackles bully problems, 1995), the Western Australian Education Department has issued no distinct policy on bullying (as distinct from sexual harassment) in schools. Educators may assume that the subject is covered by the Managing Student Behaviour (M.S.B.) policy guidelines, a product of the Report on Disruptive Behaviour in Schools (1985) chaired by L.W.

Louden. In the report (3.7.3) bullying was classified with vandalism, theft, absenteeism and lateness under the generic term "disruptive behaviours". Besag (1989, p. 6), who noted that teachers saw bullying only within the normal spectrum of disruption and aggression, and Maines and Robinson (1992, p. 18), who stressed that bullying must be understood to be more than just physical aggression, underscore the fallacy that bullying is simply aggressive behaviour that can be dealt with in the same way as fighting, insubordination or theft. Bullying is not 'just aggression' but a specific type of aggression, the characteristics of which are discussed in the section titled What is Bullying? in Chapter Two.

Many schools in Western Australia have formed anti-bullying policies on their own initiative, delegating teachers involved in pastoral care to attend various workshops on countering bullying. A whole school approach, including students who were neither bullies nor victims, has been adopted in many Western Australian schools. Australian research has found that schools with a low incidence of bullying were those where bullying was identified as an issue, not simply as an harassment policy (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, 1994, p. 36).

Olweus (1993, p. 113) analysed the results of anti-bullying intervention programs in forty-two schools in Bergen, Norway, from 1983 to 1985 and reported a 50% reduction in bully/victim problems in the Bergen schools. He stated that the program not only improved existing bullying problems, but also reduced the percentage of new victims. In British schools it is mandatory to have a written policy on bullying and to demonstrate that the policy is being acted upon. Educators in the United Kingdom have also developed

intervention programs to counteract bullying. Anecdotal reports by teachers who have used them are favourable (Maines & Robinson, 1992, p.21) but the fact remains that there is still an unacceptable level of bullying in schools. The phenomenon of bullying may not be well-enough understood, and this lack of understanding may prevent a more effective approach to overcoming the problem of bullying from being developed.

The etiology of bullying has been widely investigated (Heinemann, 1972; Olweus, 1987; Hoover and Hazler, 1991; and Rigby and Slee, 1993). Heinemann saw bullying as a product of mob mentality. Olweus (1993) and Slee and Rigby (1993) who compared bullied and non-bullied children to investigate differences between them, found that factors like deviation from the peer group and low self-concept were related to bullying. Hoover and Hazler's (1991) student survey on bullying indicated that students bullied children who were atypical. Griffiths (1993, p. 101) stated that some factors shown to be relevant to victimisation (being bullied) are peer, family, school and societal factors. In addition to those factors, Griffiths posited that the interplay of student characteristics with the environment was a dynamic requiring analysis.

What are the tensions underlying the interplay between victim and bully? Are the same tensions present between a bully and a non-bullied child? Does a bully have a different perception of a bullied child compared with a non-bullied child? If so, what are the characteristics that differentiate them? If some of these questions could be answered, the understanding of bullying might be advanced and a clearer perception of a solution to bullying made possible. This is the aim of the present study.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The earliest research into bullying comprised studies of group violence against individuals. Research into victimisation in schools did not occur until the late seventies. (In the present study, the terms bullying and victimisation have been used synonymously). Recent studies on victimisation have been based largely on comparing the characteristics of bullies, bullied and non-bullied children in order to discover relationships between certain characteristics and a predisposition to bully or be bullied. Griffiths (1993, p. 101) believed that victim/bully studies have been limited in two ways: firstly, researchers definitions of "bully" and "victim" were not unanimous; and secondly, the discrete bully and victim types were not differentiated. However, recent studies have revealed certain trends in bullying, and have discovered characteristics unique to bullies and victims which are absent in "ordinary" children. Bullying has been portrayed as a particular type of aggression which is widespread in schools of all socio-economic categories. The findings on bullying, bullies and bullied children are now discussed.

What is Bullying?

The definition of bullying cited by Olweus (1989, p. 9) is: persistent incidences of taunting, threatening, ostracism or physical attacks carried out on a student by one or more peers. This is the definition that will be adopted throughout this thesis. Besag's (1989, p. 4) three main indicators that distinguished bullying from other aggressive behaviours were: repetition, a power imbalance and its multi-faceted nature - verbal, physical, psychological or social. Maines and Robinson (1991, p. 6) simplified the parameters of bullying to: a situation in which power is imposed on a person in a negative way. One concern of Besag (1989, p. 4) and Hoover and Hazler (1991, p. 213) was that some social and psychological forms of bullying, such as highly competitive approaches to academic, sporting or social success were insidious because they were socially acceptable while eroding the self-esteem of less able children. It may be useful for schools to consider this perspective when designing intervention programs to counter bullying.

An anomalous aspect of bullying which Besag (1989, p. 28) noted was that there seemed to be little rationale to the bullying behaviour. This lack of rationale is evident in Arora and Thompson's (1991, p. 10) interviews with high school students in Britain investigating why students felt certain children were targeted as victims. The interviews elicited a range of responses from "because they were poor" to "because they were smaller". The victims in the study claimed they were picked on "for no reason". These responses to Arora and Thompson's survey raise the question of whether bullies really believe that "being poor" or "being smaller" are justifiable reasons for

attacking atypical peers, or whether the behaviour may be instinctive or subconscious. Jung (Hall and Lindzey, 1970, pp. 80-83) explained the retention of certain “irrational” personality traits in individuals as being a product of ancestral history. Jung claimed that the “archaic, primitive and innate” foundations of personality constitute an individual’s “collective unconscious” - the repository of latent memories inherited from ancestral origins. This may explain Besag’s observation that there was “little rationale” to bullying behaviour. Bullies, when interviewed, often “did not know” why they bullied (Boulton and Underwood, 1992, p. 85). It is possible that bullies are simply unwilling to articulate reasons for bullying. On the other hand, a conceptual framework based on Jungian understanding may help explain bullying behaviour.

A Jungian Interpretation of Bullying

The Jungian theory of personality differs from the Freudian theory. Jung, unlike Freud, posited that behaviour is conditioned by a person’s *future aims* as well as by past experiences (Hall and Lindzey, 1970, p. 80). Both Freud’s and Jung’s theories are psycho-analytic, placing emphasis on the unconscious. The “collective unconscious”, according to Jung, is universal, a fact attributable to the common evolution of the human brain. The “collective unconscious” furnishes people with a *predisposition* to retrieve archaic memories or archetypes. Individual experiences determine which (if any) archetypes are drawn from the past to fit a present situation (Hall and Lindzey, p. 83). The Jungian position that aims to play a part in human development encompasses the future, as well as the past and the present, giving the theory a three-dimensional scope absent in the Freudian theory

which focuses entirely on past events. Taking the three dimensions of time into account, bullying might be explained thus in Jungian terms:

Everyone is predisposed to archetypes that may be congruent with individual experiences. A child who encounters bullying behaviour in a parent or a teacher may retrieve the atavistic or even pre-human archetype of the strong, healthy creature driving out the ineffectual weak members of the tribe (or pack). The archetype, reinforced by adult models of bullying, may manifest itself in bullying behaviour in the present, and potentially in the future as the aim to drive out “the weak” persists. Some teachers project a heckling attitude towards students. A child who is predisposed to bully through primary influences of parents or peers may use a teacher’s denigratory attitude towards “weaker” students to justify continued bullying. Non-bullying role models should therefore be a priority in seeking to ameliorate student bullying.

Bullies: Definition and Identification

Olweus (1993, p. 9) defined bullies as children who persistently taunted, threatened, ostracised or physically attacked vulnerable children. How are bullies different from other aggressive children? Olweus (1984) discriminated bullies by the fact that they reserved their aggression for students who were weak, unpopular or unable to retaliate (in Hoover & Hazler, 1991, p. 213). Bullies were popular in contrast to chronically aggressive children, and were thought to receive less condemnation for their behaviour because they did not pick on everyone indiscriminately. Besag (1989, p. 18) listed some characteristics of bullies as: confident, dominant,

well-coordinated and tough. Juul (1990, p. 8) reported bullies to be aggressive, strong, impulsive and confident.

One problem with categorising children as bullies is that identification is not always unanimous. Teachers could often not agree on who were bullies, seeing them merely as aggressive children (Lowenstein, 1978, p. 147). For the purposes of this study, Lowenstein's criteria for identifying a bully will be used: observations by teachers over a protracted period identifying a child who persistently attacks another child physically, verbally, or psychologically.

A compounding problem in identifying bullies is that some bullies are also victims. Besag (1989, p. 14) reported Olweus's findings that 6% of bullied children also bullied others. Zubrick and Silburn (1993, p. 5) concurred with the explanation given by clinical psychologists that bully-victim behaviour was the result of transference of suffering. Some children who were bullied consequently inflicted similar suffering on others. Zubrick and Silburn's study on the mental health of school children in Western Australia (1993, p. 6) indicated that the bully-victim group (the "mixed group" in that study) had significantly high ratings of mental health morbidity in all of the eight behaviour syndromes they studied. The syndromes were defined as: withdrawal, somatic complaints, anxiety-depression, attention problems, thought problems, social problems, delinquency and aggression. Comparatively, bullies had high ratings in three of the syndromes and victims in five.

A further complexity in the problem of identifying bullies is the category this researcher will call the "closet bully" - a child who either joins in bullying

started by a chronic bully, or who stands by and does nothing about it. Whitney's survey on bullying in British schools (1993, p. 17) indicated that 16% of junior/middle pupils and 25% of secondary pupils would join in bullying. Rigby and Slee's study of attitudes of Australian school children to victims of bullying (1991, p. 632) showed that 20% of children supported bullying behaviour. Tattum (1993, p. 5) noted that even normally non-aggressive pupils could be drawn into bullying by peer-group pressure. Olweus and Roland (in O'Moore, 1989, p. 5) described these "hangers on" as having less homogeneous personality traits than "active" bullies.

Bullying is problematic because of the difficulties involved in first identifying bullies and then in deciding what type of bullying (physical, psychological or social) they are perpetrating. It was earlier surmised that bullying may be instinctive behaviour with the key to understanding it in analytic psychology. Many childhood behaviours, such as selfishness and random toilet habits are unacceptable in most cultures. Early parental training usually modifies such behaviours. By extension, such behaviour modification could also be applied to bullying behaviour. If socially acceptable behaviours like unselfishness and non-bullying are considered to be behaviours that are simply absent (unlearnt) in a young child, early parental training can likewise serve to establish these learnt, acceptable behaviours. A bullying child may have lacked such instruction at home and may benefit from school training in social skills.

Victimisation Trends

Olweus (1993, pp. 27 - 28) claimed that being a victim was something that characterised a student over a long period of time and that chronic victims were bullied through consecutive grades. Boulton and Underwood also found that victim status was stable from one year to the next (1992, p. 817). Victimisation is at its highest level, in terms of numbers of children bullied, in the lower primary grades, continuously declining through the middle grades, then stabilising in upper primary and lower secondary grades (Olweus, 1993, p. 15; Tattum, 1989, p. 23; Greenbaum, 1987, p. 24; Whitney, 1993, p. 9; Boulton and Underwood, 1992 p. 81). This declining, then flattening trend is similar for both boys and girls, though there are slightly higher numbers of bullied boys than bullied girls (Olweus, 1993, p. 15). The trend is obvious in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Decrease in victimisation from grades two to nine (after Olweus, 1993, p.15).

The stabilising of victimisation through years six, seven, eight and nine suggests that the children in these years are the long-term, chronic victims in

a school - the distillation of the large numbers of children who were bullied in grades one, two, three, four and five but who have now ceased to be bullied. The question that arises is: why have some children ceased to be bullied but not others? The answer may reside in perceptions of the bullying process which is now examined.

Griffiths (1993, p. 103) saw the victimisation process as a downward spiral in which the first step was being perceived as different and the penultimate step was low self-concept. However, a different perception of the victimisation process might place low self-concept near the beginning of the process. The reason for arguing that low self-concept may be an early step in victimisation is now expounded.

As Figure 1 showed, some children who are perceived as different and so bullied in grade two are no longer bullied in grade 3. By grade six, only half the number of children bullied in grade two are now bullied. Given that chronic victims are long-term victims bullied in consecutive grades (Olweus, 1993; Boulton & Underwood, 1992), and given that student enrolment in most schools remains reasonably constant, the assumption might be made that grades six through nine victims are those bullied consistently from grade two, through primary school into high school. The children who are not bullied after grade two, three, four or five may have developed some defence against being perceived as different and so bullied. Many studies (discussed later) have found that self-concept is a significant variable differentiating bullied and non-bullied children. If grade one or two children perceived as different by bullies displayed good self-concept when taunted, the bullies might no longer see them as targets, as their good self-concept might demonstrate that

they are not vulnerable to bullying. Olweus (1993) posited that bullies attacked vulnerable children. If, on the other hand, a child displayed low self-concept of the difference perceived by a bully, the low self-concept might act as a catalyst for further bullying. This could explain why only relatively small numbers of grade six victims remain from the high numbers of bullied children in lower primary grades. The victims who are eliminated early as targets of bullying may have shown good self-concept at the outset, or developed good self-concept as school progressed and so ceased to be bullied. Figure 2 clarifies the process, showing different pathways to either bullied or non-bullied status according to a child's reaction to a bully's criticism. A reaction displaying good self-concept may ensure a child is not bullied again but a reaction showing low self-concept may trigger further bullying. Self-concept enhancement may make the child less vulnerable to bullying.

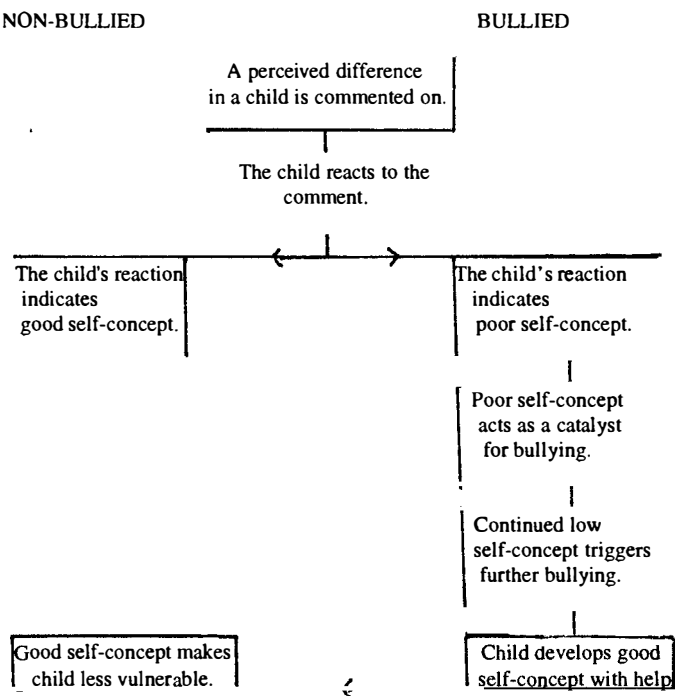


Figure 2. A model of victimisation describing alternative pathways to bullied or non-bullied status dependent on self-concept.

Victim Characteristics

Olweus (1993, p. 9) defined a bullied child as one who was persistently threatened, taunted, ostracised or physically attacked by one or more peers. That definition of "bullied child" or "victim" will be adopted throughout this study. Olweus (1993) used the term "whipping boys" for victims of bullying. Olweus listed possible signs of student victimisation as being repeatedly teased, called names, ridiculed, degraded; being involved in unequal fights; having belongings vandalised; and being excluded from the peer group (1993, p. 54).

Victims can best be studied in relationship to bullies, as bullying proceeds from the interaction between victims and bullies. Hoover and Hazler (1991) and Slee and Rigby (1993) juxtaposed victims and bullies in order to compare and contrast their behaviour and characteristics. Both studies indicated that while bullies were confident and popular, victims were anxious and unpopular. The studies also found that low self-concept was a victim characteristic that did not apply to bullies. Perry (in Hoover and Hazler 1991) found that victimisation was positively correlated with peer rejection.

Besag's comparison of victim/bully characteristics (1989, p. 18) appears as a series of dichotomous traits situated at opposite ends of a continuum of personality types: submissive/authoritative; anxious/confident; poor communicator/good communicator; sense of inferiority/sense of superiority; unsociable/sociable; unpopular/popular. The assumption might be made that the very nature of the contrasts may alert bullies to, and antagonise them

against, their "opposite numbers". But this does not explain why non-bullying children, who have the same positive traits as bullies, do not attack their "opposites".

Are bullied children different from non-bullied children? Besag (1989, p. 42) wrote of a predisposition of some children to being bullied. Rubin, Chen and Hymel (1993, p. 519) found that certain children had psychological characteristics which gave them a wary, inhibited temperament that alienated them from peers. Other children were thought to be vulnerable to bullying because of ethnicity, disabilities or physical features (Griffiths, 1994, p. 3). Maines and Robinson (1991, p. 7) posited that victims with physiological problems may be seen as being different from the "norm", making them become isolated, which further identified them as being different. Roland (1987, in O'Moore, 1998, p. 18) confirmed that victims' looks were somewhat unusual for example, obesity and handicaps.

Does the literature cited indicate that there is such a person as a "born victim"? Experts on bullying describe this term as a shibboleth which perpetuates the myth that bullying is natural. Many researchers refute the idea that external deviations play a great part in attracting bullying. In a study by Olweus (1993, p. 30), victims were assessed on 14 external deviant characteristics by teachers, and were found to have no more externally deviant characteristics than the non-bullied control group except for physical weakness in boys. Olweus (1993) pointed out that there were many atypical or externally deviant children who were not bullied. Tattum (1989, p. 23) supported Olweus's claim that physical traits have been overestimated as reasons for why pupils were victimised, with the qualification that individual

cases must be regarded as exceptions. The corollary to Olweus's and Tattum's observations is that there are some average-looking children who *are* bullied.

What do students think causes some children to be bullied and not others? In Boulton and Underwood's survey (1992, p. 85), nearly one third of all children interviewed said they could understand why certain children were bullied (without specifying the terms of reference for this "understanding"). Twenty-eight percent of bullies said certain children were bullied because they were "weaker" or "softer"; 20% of bullies did not know why they bullied other children; and 44% believed their victims "asked for it". Olweus (1978) identified a minority of victims who could be characterised by their provocative nature (in O'Moore, 1988, p. 17), but the number of "provocative victims" was very small and nowhere near the 44% described as provoking by the bullies in the Boulton and Underwood survey. The Hoover, Oliver and Hazler study (1992, p. 11) on the perceptions of why children were bullied cited "overweight", "facial appearance", "weak", "too short", "didn't fit in", "good grades" and "emotional" as motivations for bullying.

Victimisation and Gender

In the Rigby and Slee study (1991, p. 621) self reports of victimisation were compiled using the Victimisation Index, a list of four items indicating different types of victimisation: name-calling; ostracising; physical bullying; and ridiculing. There were no significant gender differences for name-calling, ostracising or ridiculing, but there was a greater incidence of physical bullying of boys. The findings of Hoover et al. (1992, p. 11) supported the

trend for males to experience more physical bullying than females. There was a significant between-gender difference for ridicule and teasing in the Hoover et al. (1992) study: girls received more verbal bullying than boys. Besag (1989, 11) noted a study by Elliot (1986) which found that, of 4000 children interviewed, eight percent of boys compared with two percent of girls were severely affected by bullying. Olweus (1993, p. 15) found that from grade two onwards, boys were the more bullied gender.

Conclusion

The question of why certain children are bullied and others are not can be investigated by isolating the factor or factors that differentiate bullied from non-bullied children. However, bully-victims (defined as children who are both bullied and bullying) cannot be investigated in the same study, because the heterogeneous nature of their characteristics would have a confounding effect on results, so they have been excluded from the present study. This study aims to investigate differences between bullied and non-bullied children in order to use the findings to help bullied children.

Recent Studies on Bullied and Non-bullied Children

Several studies undertaken in recent years claimed to have found significant relationships between certain constructs and a predisposition towards victimisation. Of all the constructs isolated in relation to the bullied child, the most prevalent was low self-concept. Hattie (1992, p. 36) stated that self-concept simply means "our perceptions of our self". He argued that self-concept was part of a system of cognitive appraisals involving emotions,

evaluations and values. While self-concept includes physical and emotional characteristics, the kernel is the individual's lasting experiential perceptions that symbolise him or her self (1992, p. 41). For the purposes of this study, the term "self-concept" is defined as a system of acquired beliefs about the personal self which affects the way in which evaluative feedback is interpreted.

Studies have shown that low self-concept was positively correlated with victimisation. O'Moore (1988, p. 17) cited the victims in Scandinavian studies as being characterised by low self-concept. In Australian studies, Slee and Rigby (1993, p. 371) discovered a positive correlation between low self-concept and victimisation; and Hoover and Hazler (1991, p. 214) posited that the victim's physical and behavioural characteristics, including low self-concept, may signal or elicit attacks by bullies.

Significant Studies Comparing Bullied and Non-bullied Children

Several studies that examined the relationship between personal characteristics, including low self-concept, and victimisation have been reported. Lowenstein (1978) compared component factors of physical, psychological and social characteristics of bullied and non-bullied children. The children were rated on a 1-5 scale for each variable by observers. The results indicated that a number of distinct physical characteristics and personality traits were present in children who were likely to be bullied, such as low levels of: physical robustness, physical attractiveness, ability to retaliate, self-control, flexible interests, social adeptness and cooperation.

Rubin et al. (1993) compared the psychological characteristics of withdrawn and average fifth-grade children, based on peer assessment, teacher assessment and self-perception tests for both groups. It was found that the withdrawn group was at risk of peer rejection and judged themselves to be less physically competent than the average group.

In a study of the physical and mental health problems of Western Australian children, Zubrick and Silburn (1993) studied four groups of children with regard to mental health morbidity and bully/victim status. Null (average), victim, bully and mixed (bully-victim) groups were compared on eight behaviours indicating mental health morbidity. Of the four groups, bully-victims had the greatest range of mental health problems, victims the second greatest, bullies the third greatest and average children the least. Aspects of home environment, school environment and internal factors, such as sex and intelligence were related to the mental health outcomes. The problem groups (bully, victim and bully-victim) were found to have problems relating to their parents and their teachers, to perform below average academically, and to more likely be boys. The trend showed that boys were twice as likely to exhibit troublesome behaviours, especially if they had trouble with their parents. Bullies, victims and bully-victims were almost twice as likely to have problems with their teachers as non-bullied children. Boys who had trouble with both parents and teachers were almost 25% more likely to exhibit troublesome behaviours than other children (Zubrick & Silburn 1993, p. 8). Zubrick and Silburn found that boys had the lowest self-concept in peer relationships and girls in self-appearance, but no explanation for these results was given.

Slee and Rigby (1993) examined the relationship between certain personality variables (using Eysenck's factors of introversion, psychoticism and neuroticism) and self-esteem variables (using Coopersmith's (1987) Self-esteem Inventory) and the tendency to bully and be bullied. They used grade five males identified as victims, bullies and "normal" students with 29 in each category, who had been selected and categorised by teachers according to given criteria, in order to compare the three groups on personality and self-esteem variables. They reported that the victims had significantly lower self-concept than bullies or "normal" children. The Slee and Rigby study is the closest to the present study in conceptual framework, testing and data analysis.

Summary

The studies by Lowenstein (1978), Rubin et al. (1993), Zubrick and Silburn (1993) and Slee and Rigby (1993) compared bullied and non-bullied children. The common findings were that bullied and non-bullied children differed significantly on one or more of the following factors:

- Self-concept scores were significantly different.
- Psychological characteristics of introversion, psychoticism, anxiety-depression, withdrawal and somatic problems were significantly different.
- Social deviancies in delinquency, boastfulness and non-cooperation were significantly different.

- Physical deviancies in attractiveness, dress, physical robustness and ability to retaliate were significantly different.

Impact of the Literature on this Study

The literature cited indicated that low self-concept was a salient correlate of victimisation. The argument was also expounded, in relation to Griffiths' model of the victimisation process, that low self-concept may be an early rather than a late step in victimisation. The aspects of self-concept to be considered as possibly related to victimisation in this study are: achievement, ability, classroom, peer, family, confidence and physical self-concepts. These have been defined by Hattie (1992, p. 83) as:

Achievement self-concept: the product of a person's actual academic achievement.

Ability self-concept: the extent to which an individual believes he or she is capable of achieving.

Classroom self-concept: confidence in classroom activities.

Peer self-concept: an individual's popularity and interaction with friends.

Family self-concept: an individual's perception of acceptance or non-acceptance by the family.

Confidence: emotional aspects of self-concept.

Physical self-concept: an individual's attitude toward physical self-appearance

The literature has led to certain expectations about each of these self-concept factors: The Zubrick and Silburn (1993) study of victims, bullies, bully-victims and average children showed that victims had below average academic competency ratings (as assessed by school principals). Neither Besag (1989) nor Olweus (1993), however, claimed that actual low academic performance was a characteristic unique to victims. In the absence of studies that show evidence of positive correlations between poor academic achievement/ability and victimisation, the researcher does not expect achievement self-concept and ability self-concept to be different for bullied and non-bullied children.

Classroom self-concept refers to confidence in classroom activities (Hattie, 1992, p. 83), and may therefore be related to overall confidence, a factor which O'Moore (1988, p. 18), Greenbaum (1989, p. 32) and Juul (1990, p. 6) found to be lower for bullied children. Classroom self-concept is therefore expected to be lower for bullied children.

Hoover and Hazler (1991, p. 214) stated that victims were not popular, and Boulton and Smith (in Boulton and Underwood, 1992, p. 81) found that there was a significant degree of association between victimisation and peer rejection. Thus peer self-concept is expected to be lower for bullied than for non-bullied children.

Family self-concept should not be lower for bullied children, because Olweus (in O'Moore, 1988, p. 18) and Juul (1990, p. 6) found that victims had a more positive relationship with their parents than "average" children. Confidence, on the other hand, is expected to be lower for bullied than for non-bullied children, as Greenbaum (1989), O'Moore (1988) and Juul (1990) found that victims had characteristics such as shyness, self-deprecation, timidity and anxiety - traits which indicate lack of confidence.

Although Olweus (1993) claimed that atypical appearance played little part in victimisation, there is evidence to the contrary from a variety of sources. Some of the highest-rating items perceived to motivate bullying in the Hoover et al. survey (1992) were physical weakness, overweight, short stature and aberrant facial appearance. Besag (1989, p. 74) found that a good physical appearance was one of the differences between popular non-victims and unpopular victims. O'Moore (1988, p. 22) cited teachers' comments on victims which related to victims having "an unusual appearance". Overall, then, the literature indicates that there may be a difference in physical self-concept between bullied and non-bullied children.

Olweus (1993, p. 15) found that from grade two onwards boys were the more bullied gender, a trend also noted by Rigby and Slee (1991, p. 621) and Hoover et al. (1992, p. 12). Therefore this study is expected to show that bullied boys have lower self-concept than bullied girls.

Conclusion

Bullies, victims and non-bullied children are the main interacting characters in the process of bullying. The literature has portrayed many ways in which the three protagonists have been compared and contrasted in order to dissect and analyse the anatomy of victimisation. Findings on victimisation studies have been integrated into theories, which form a basis for strategies to counteract bullying. The studies cited did not refer to the same populations as this study, and varied also in their use of terminology. These variations from the present study are referred to in Chapter Five.

While not exactly paralleling any of the above research, this study, like previous investigations, aims to distinguish possible differences between bullied and non-bullied children which may lead to a further understanding of victimisation and hence to further solutions to bullying problems. It hopes to do so by comparing bullied and non-bullied children on certain self-concept factors to see whether victims and non-victims are significantly different with regard to self-concept.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND DERIVATION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Introduction

The literature reviewed has made claims to a relationship between victimisation and certain victim characteristics. Such characteristics have included physical, psychological and social attributes, mental health traits, and self-concept levels (both global and factorial). Certain idiosyncratic characteristics in particular children appear to be related to victimisation. The following question must be asked before concluding that idiosyncratic characteristics in themselves are related to bullying behaviour. How can such a conclusion account for children with the same victim characteristics who are not bullied? Conversely, what about children with no apparent idiosyncracies who *are* bullied?

The indication is that certain children are bullied and not others. Many studies (for example, Lowenstein, 1978, and Rubin, 1993), have found correlates between reasons given by victims for being bullied and actual victimisation. Some of the reasons given related to “different” appearance or behaviour, as in the Hoover et al survey (1992). The difference between victimised and non-victimised children with ostensibly the same

characteristics may be in the child's self-perception of those characteristics. It may be, then, that it is a low self-concept of personal attributes which determines a child's vulnerability rather than the attributes themselves.

Broad Aims

The broad aim of the proposed study is to isolate particular self-concept factors which may distinguish bullied from non-bullied children. The literature to date has shown a positive correlation between victimisation and low self-concept. The aim of this study is to pinpoint the particular dimensions of self-concept which may be lower for bullied than for non-bullied children. If the outcomes of the study indicate that certain self-concept factors are lower for bullied children, teachers could target those factors and provide self-concept enhancement programs or strategies aimed at improving them.

Theoretical Framework

Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton (1976, p. 412) posited that self-concept is a hierarchical and multi-faceted construct. "Hierarchical" refers to the gradation of self-concept from individual experiences (the base of the hierarchy) to general self-concept (the apex of the hierarchy). General self-concept is divided into the dimensions of academic, social, emotional and physical self-concept which are subdivided into several second-order dimensions. The latter dimensions act as subscales from which specific measurements can be determined.

The Song and Hattie Self-concept model (1992), which is based on the Shavelson et al. model (Figure 3) will be used in this study because it, too, emphasises a hierarchical and multi-dimensional self-concept structure. The subscales of Song and Hattie's model relate to the factors to be investigated in this study.

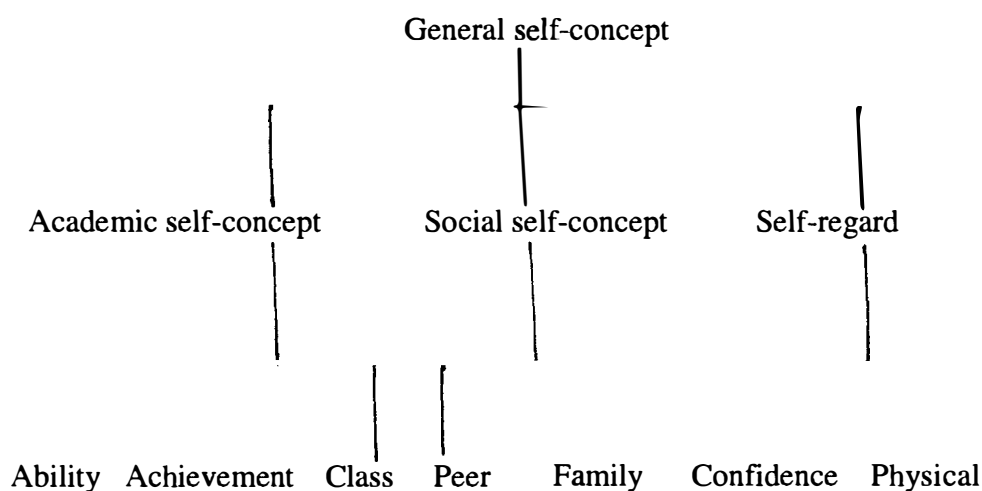


Figure 3. The Song and Hattie Model of Self-concept (after Hattie, 1992, p. 84)

Specific Research Objectives.

The study has two specific objectives. First, to compare bullied and non-bullied children on the self-concept factors of achievement self-concept, ability self-concept, classroom self-concept, peer self-concept, family self-concept, confidence and physical self-concept. Similar factors were examined by Slee and Rigby (1993) and Zubrick et al. (1993), who related self-concept to victimisation, so retaining these for the present study will make it possible to compare findings using similar criteria. If results show

differences between the two groups, those differences may indicate a relationship between specific self-concept variables and victimisation. The second objective is to determine whether a relationship exists between gender and self-concept. Such information is important because, in the first instance, an indication of specific self-concept differences between victims and non-victims may indicate the need to boost self-concept in a particular factor for a particular group, with the aim of reducing bullying. In the second instance, gender differences in self-concept may alert teachers to the greater needs of one or the other gender in a particular self-concept factor or factors, the improvement of which may move the group to non-victim status.

Research Questions

- (1) Does a relationship exist between being bullied and the seven subcategories of the Song and Hattie (1992) model of self-concept?
- (2) Are self-concept scores mediated by gender?

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

According to Gay (1992, p. 292) the current research could be described as an ex post facto design. It is not a true experimental design as the difference between the bullied and non-bullied groups was not determined by the researcher. Furthermore, self-concept features of both groups are already in place, and can only be studied in retrospect. The groups, bullied and non-bullied, cannot be randomly formed as they already exist in situ.

Control procedures included matching bullied and non-bullied groups to equate them on gender and age, as both gender and age may be related to performance on the dependent variable, and by matching the groups on these extraneous variables, there was more certainty that the results would not be confounded by age/gender inequities (Gay, 1994, p. 289). School bias was controlled for by using large primary and secondary government schools of similar socio-economic status, thus reducing the chance of student performance being affected by dissimilar school experiences.

The study comprises the groups (a) bullied, (b) non-bullied and (c) gender, with both genders being sampled. Definitions of dependent variables, based on the Song and Hattie subscales of achievement, ability, classroom, peer, family, confidence and physical self-concept (Hattie, 1992) were given in Chapter Three. The bullied sample met one or more of the following criteria

from Lowenstein (1978, p. 147): (1) The child complained of being bullied twice or more during the first half of 1995. (2) The child was observed by a teacher being bullied twice or more during the first half of 1995. The non-bullied sample was a group of children who had no known history of being bullied as judged by the teacher.

Sampling Procedure

So that the sample would be representative of years six to nine students in both city and country areas, the researcher approached twenty schools that fitted the categories of country primary and secondary and city primary and secondary (five in each category). Nine of these schools agreed to participate - four country primary and two country secondary and two city primary and one city secondary. Representative samples of bullied and non-bullied children were taken from these schools. Schooling bias was controlled for by studying children from similar schools so that the school experience was held reasonably constant. Large Western Australian primary and secondary schools which had a similar socio-economic status (defined as the salary of the primary earner in the family - the low cut-off point being \$7072 p.a., the allowance of Job Search recipients) were used in a further attempt to control for differing social backgrounds in the sample.

The sample contained 53 bullied children and 53 non-bullied children from years 6-9. There were 28 females and 25 males in each group. The sample comprised 20 year 6, 16 year 7, 9 year 8 and 8 year 9 students for each group. This age group represented the stage at which bullying has decreased and levelled out, as explained in Figure 1. The children from these grades were

more likely to be the long-term, chronic victims bullied through consecutive grades, as described by Olweus (1993, p. 27).

The bullied and non-bullied groups were formed from students who had been given parental consent to participate in the study. Fifty-three victims and one hundred and twenty non-victims (as designated by the teachers according to the defining criteria) were given permission to participate. The criteria for teacher selection of bullied children were based on the criteria of Lowenstein (1978) and Olweus (1993): children who reported or were observed being taunted, threatened, ostracised or physically attacked by one or more peers twice or more during the first half of 1995. The non-bullied group was defined as a group of children having no known history of being bullied. The limitations of relying on the teacher's knowledge of children's history of bullied or non-bullied status is discussed in the section titled Data Collection. All fifty-three victims were used, and the victims were matched with non-victims on a grade-for-grade, gender-for-gender basis within the same school in 89% of cases. The remaining 11% were seven grade eight victims who had no match for grade or status within their own school, and who had to be matched with seven grade nine non-victims from another school. The age difference would have had a minimal effect on results, for as Luria (Hattie, 1992, p. 131) indicated, from the age of eight or nine onwards the development of children's frontal lobes generates more abstract behaviour so both grade eight and grade nine children would be developing similar abstract cognition. Grades eight and nine children, therefore, being at a similar developmental stage, would be a suitable match. Neither would matching from a different school have had a major effect on results, given

that all the schools were chosen on the basis of their similarities in size, socio-economic status and secularity.

The procedure of equating the bullied and non-bullied groups on grade-for-grade and gender-for-gender ensured that the relationship between bullied status and the self-concept factors would not be confounded by age or gender, therefore making internal validity more certain. With approximately equal numbers of males and females in the two groups (ie bullied vs non-bullied), the relationship between gender and the self-concept variables could also be investigated. Generalisability is limited to large Perth and South West primary and secondary state schools' years six to nine population.

Research Procedure

Measurement Instrument

The measurement instrument was the Song and Hattie *About Myself* Self-concept Test (1992). It is a self-administered test and one which is easily able to be understood by upper-grade primary and lower secondary students. A further advantage is that this instrument is relatively simple to administer. The Song and Hattie self-concept Test uses a six-point Likert scale to test 35 items on the seven specific self-concept factors listed (Appendix 1). Each self-concept factor has five items to which it relates.

Self-concept tests are known to sometimes prompt responses that the subject thinks are socially desirable, rather than "true" responses (Hattie, 1992, p. 164). This has a confounding effect on results, and leads to problems

in interpreting the self-concept measures. A pilot study by Hattie (1992) to investigate the desirability of responses (where a particular response is more likely to be chosen than others) showed that 60 % of items were not affected by desirability of answers. That is, 27 items were absolutely pure, and the other 8 "are balanced by the four items that are inversely related to social desirability and the two items with bipolar distributions." (Hattie, 1992, p. 167). When tested, the Song and Hattie Self-concept Test proved to have satisfactory reliability, had small errors of measurement and yielded unifactorial scales. This instrument has been validated with Australian school students. Convergent and divergent validity were maximised by selecting unifactorial items (Hattie, 1992, p. 163).

This test was chosen because it was specifically designed for an adolescent population (Hattie, 1992, p. 162). Although, strictly speaking, adolescence does not generally include grade six children, Hattie's designation of adolescent populations was grades seven to eleven (the grades covered by the pilot study) and as grades six and seven are often taught together, being judged as very similar in cognitive and physical development, there is justification for including grade six as suitable subjects for the Song and Hattie test. An alpha level of $p \leq .001$ was selected as a cut-off point for significance for all tests, unless otherwise indicated, as only a strong relationship would be accepted as significant.

Data Collection

Data collection entailed making two separate trips to the nine schools which agreed to participate in the study. The first visit was used to give a

general talk on bullying to years six, seven, eight and nine classes selected by teachers as representative of those age groups in the school. The talk encompassed the history of bullying, indicators and effects of bullying, and countermeasures against it to a designated grade or grades. This was in part a measure to compensate the class teacher for the lesson time, as the talk acted as a substitute for the normal health or social studies lesson which the teacher would normally have given at that time. It also circumvented the Western Australian Teachers' Union ban on teacher time being spent on extracurricular activities, as the talk on bullying was deemed to be the teacher's normal class lesson.

In brief, the initial visit was designed to give students a basis for deciding whether or not to participate in the study. Consent forms were distributed at the end of the talk. When forms were returned, the teacher collected them and designated the student "bullied" or "non-bullied" according to the defining criteria described previously. These criteria were set out as written instructions for teachers to follow when allocating participating children to bullied and non-bullied categories. One limitation of the sampling procedure may have been the use of teachers to discriminate between bullied and non-bullied children. However, this procedure was thought to be beneficial because of the classroom teacher's intimate knowledge of the students. As the study progressed, it was found that teachers felt more comfortable substituting "victim" for "bullied" and "neutral" for "non-bullied". Other additions to the categories were "bully" and "bully-victim". Although the bully and bully-victim students were not used in the study, they were tested along with other participating students to lessen the Hawthorne effect, and needed to be differentiated from the experimental and control groups because

bullies were not being investigated and because the heterogeneous nature of bully-victim characteristics would have had a confounding effect on results.

On the second visit, the self-concept test was administered to all children who returned consent forms. The researcher numbered the tests according to the number of children in each grade tested. Each number corresponded to a category "bullied", "non-bullied" or "other" - the latter being bullies or bully-victims, listed by the class teacher for each child. All consenting students were given a copy of the Song and Hattie Self-concept Test (Appendix 1) and asked to indicate whether they were male or female. They were then asked to indicate the degree to which they felt each of the 35 statements applied to them, by circling a 1,2,3,4,5 or 6 on the Likert scale which is graduated from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (6). Students took between 10 and 20 minutes to complete the test. All students completed the test. The researcher collected the tests and later categorised them into bullied, non-bullied or other (the bullies and bully-victims) from the lists provided by the teachers. The tests of the "other" groups were not used in the study.

The victim sample ($n = 53$) was matched with a non-victim group on grade and gender ($n = 53$) randomly selected from each grade in each school where possible, from the 120 tests of the non-victims. This was done by randomly choosing the same number of tests for (a) non-bullied girls and (b) non-bullied boys as the number of tests for (a) bullied girls and (b) bullied boys for each participating grade within a particular school. As explained earlier, some victims had to be matched with older non-victims from a different school. The 53 bullied and the 53 non-bullied children's tests were

evaluated by the researcher in accordance with the test instructions (Appendix 2). Each of the 35 items was given a score from 1-6.

Results

Descriptive statistics for the mean scores on the seven self-concept subscales for the bullied and non-bullied group are shown in Table 1. The bullied group scored lower than the non-bullied group on all variables. (Hattie,1992). The lowest bullied group mean was in Physical self-concept, which was 14.62, compared with the non-bullied group mean of 24.23. Such a result, *prima facie*, appears to be significant, so further tests seemed warranted.

Table 1

Mean Performance of Bullied, Non-bullied and Combined Groups on the Song and Hattie Self-concept Test Subscales.

Variable	N=53 Bullied		N= 53 Non-bullied	
	\bar{X}	sd	\bar{X}	sd
Achievement	21.94	5.68	25.43	4.75
Ability	22.85	4.19	25.25	4.75
Classroom	20.17	4.92	24.04	3.62
Peer	19.09	5.02	24.89	3.56
Family	24.40	4.45	27.38	3.41
Confidence	22.40	3.78	25.66	2.99
Physical	14.62	4.18	24.23	3.46

The highest scores for both bullied and non-bullied groups were in family self-concept (means of 24.40 and 27.38 respectively). The lowest bullied group score was in physical self-concept ($\bar{X} = 14.62$) which compared with 24.23 for the non-bullied group. These means constituted the greatest difference between the two groups. Peer self-concept showed the next greatest difference between groups, with $\bar{X} = 19.09$ for the bullied group and $\bar{X} = 24.89$ for the non-bullied group. The smallest difference between group means was in ability self-concept, with $\bar{X} = 22.85$ for the bullied group and $\bar{X} = 25.25$ for the non-bullied group.

Table 2 provides the mean subscales for the combined bullied and non-bullied groups which compare favourably with the mean scores obtained by Song and Hattie in their pilot study (1992).

Table 2

Mean Performance of Song and Hattie's Grade Seven Sample Compared with Combined Bullied/Non-bullied Means from the present study.

Variable	Song and Hattie Pilot Study			Combined (N=106)	
	\bar{X}	sd	n	\bar{X}	sd
Achievement	24.94	4.52	1460	23.69	5.50
Ability	24.94	4.82	1504	24.05	4.61
Classroom	23.09	4.07	1486	22.10	4.72
Peer	23.38	4.51	1511	21.99	5.22
Family	27.05	4.05	1488	26.10	4.18
Confidence	21.44	3.87	1504	24.03	3.77
Physical	18.89	4.89	1498	19.42	6.15

Song and Hattie's grade seven sample's means (Table 2) were used for comparison with the present study's means for bullied, non-bullied and combined groups because grade seven was the most representative grade in terms of sample numbers. Table 2 shows that while the combined groups' means of the present study are fairly consistent with Song and Hattie's grade seven means, the bullied group means (Table 1) are lower in all variables and the non-bullied group means (Table 1) are slightly higher.

Anovas were undertaken to ascertain the significance of the means and standard deviations in Table 1. Scores on the seven self-concept subscales were analysed in separate 2 (group) X 2 (gender) ANOVA's (Table 3). An alpha level of $p \leq .001$ was used for all tests. The ANOVA's showed that there was a significant difference between bullied and non-bullied groups on five out of the seven Song and Hattie (1992) subscales (Table 3). Only family self-concept and ability self-concept were not significant.

Table 3

Factorial Analyses of Scores on the Seven Song and Hattie Self-concept

Subscales.

Variable	Source	df	MSE	F	p.
Achievement	Gr	1	309.22	11.37	0.001
	Ge	1	37.41	1.37	0.244
	Gr X Ge	1	39.41	1.45	0.231
	Within	102	27.19		
Ability	Gr	1	142.09	7.21	0.008
	Ge	1	22.46	1.14	0.288
	Gr X Ge		48.81	2.48	0.119
	Within	102	19.72		
Classroom	Gr	1	389.65	20.54	0.001*
	Ge	1	0.03	0.001	0.971
	Gr X Ge	1	6.10	0.32	0.572
	Within	102	18.97		
Peer	Gr	1	861.67	47.04	0.001*
	Ge	1	45.13	2.46	0.120
	Gr X Ge	1	54.12	2.95	0.089
	Within	102	18.32		
Family	Gr	1	168.03	10.33	0.002
	Ge	1	1.02	0.06	0.803
	Gr X Ge	1	5.16	0.32	0.574
	Within	102	16.27		
Confidence	Gr	1	260.56	24.56	0.001*
	Ge	1	0.80	0.08	0.785
	Gr X Ge	1	125.62	11.84	0.001
	Within	102	10.61		
Physical	Gr	1	2414.53	166.39	0.001*
	Ge	1	32.34	2.23	0.139
	Gr X Ge	1	15.29	1.05	0.307
	Within	102	14.51		

Note. Gr = bullied/non-bullied group. Ge = gender. $p \leq .001$

* These values were smaller than .001. SPSS for windows only produces p values to 3 decimal places, and showed these values as 0.000.

Gender was not significant for any of the self-concept subscales, however there was an *interaction* between group and gender for the confidence scores. This interaction is illustrated in Figure 4. To clarify this, two t-tests for independent samples, one for males and one for females, were carried out. A comparison of bullied and non-bullied male confidence means showed that there was no significant difference ($t = -.94$, $df\ 43.10$, $p = .351$). The difference between the confidence means for bullied and non-bullied females, however, was significant ($t = -6.82$, $df\ 53.34$, $p < .001$).

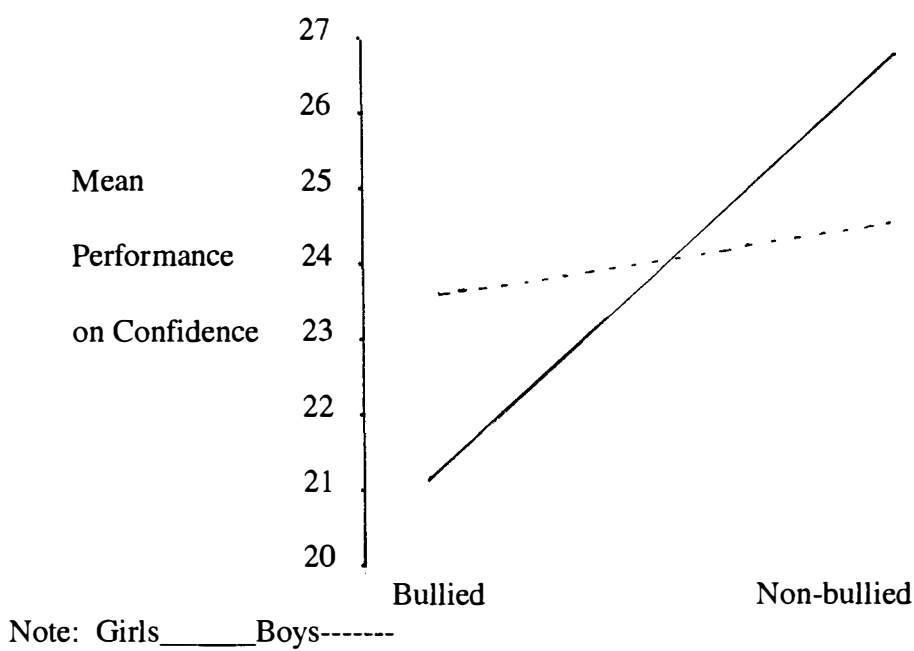


Figure 4. Bullied/non-bullied boys' and girls' group/gender interaction for confidence.

In an exploratory investigation, the seven dependent variables were separately correlated for the bullied and non-bullied groups in order to investigate whether or not the two groups had similar patterns of correlations. The results for the bullied and non-bullied groups are shown in Table 4 and 5 respectively.

Table 4

Correlations of Self-concept Variables of the Song and Hattie Self-concept Test for Bullied Group.

	Achievement	Classroom	Confidence	Family	Physical	Peer
Ability	.68***	.36**	.42**	.25	.05	.20
Achievement		.44**	.55***	.25	.23	.14
Classroom			.40**	.59***	.21	.45**
Confidence				.29	.17	.31*
Family					.22	.38**
Physical						.06

Note. p < .05 *

p < .01 **

p < .001 ***

Table 5

Correlations of Self-concept Variables of the Song and Hattie Self-concept
Test for Non-bullied Group.

	Achievement	Classroom	Confidence	Family	Physical	Peer
Ability	.84***	.57***	.69***	.43**	.34*	.38***
Achievement		.49***	.64***	.41**	.32*	.44**
Classroom			.49***	.55***	.40***	.54***
Confidence				.58***	.52***	.60***
Family					.48***	.60***
Physical						.42***

Note. $p < .05$ *

$p < .01$ **

$p < .001$ ***

The results for the bullied group showed positive low to moderate correlations in all variables. No high correlations were shown. The non-bullied group's results showed low to moderate correlations in all variables except for achievement / ability which were highly correlated ($r = .84$, $p < .001$). A comparison of the correlations for the bullied and non-bullied groups showed that the seven dependent variables were more highly correlated for the non-bullied group than for the bullied group.

Summary of Results

1. The non-bullied group scored significantly higher than the bullied group on five of the seven self-concept variables: achievement self-concept, classroom self-concept, peer self-concept, confidence and physical self-concept.
2. There were no significant differences for gender, but the interaction between group and gender on confidence was significant in that it was lower for bullied girls than for bullied boys and for both non-bullied boys and girls.
3. The self-concept variables were more highly correlated for the non-bullied group than for the bullied group. Only two variables were highly correlated - ability and achievement for the non-bullied group.

CHAPTER 5

GENERAL DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicated that significant differences existed between bullied and non-bullied children on five of the seven variables of the Song and Hattie Self-concept Test at an alpha level of $p \leq .001$. Achievement, classroom, peer, confidence and physical self-concept were significantly different for bullied and non-bullied children. Ability and family self-concept were not significantly different for the two groups. The results can be compared and contrasted with those of the Slee and Rigby study (1993), which found that although bullied children had lower general self-esteem than both bullies and "normal" children, the specific factors of social, home and school self-esteem were not significantly different for the three groups. Although Slee and Rigby measured self-esteem, not self-concept, that study can be compared to the present study, as the constructs of self-esteem and self-concept are similar in that self-esteem and self-concept both relate to an individual's acquired beliefs about the personal self.

Achievement, ability and family self concept were not expected to be significantly different for bullied and non-bullied children. The study showed that there were no significant group differences in family and ability self-concept. The Slee and Rigby study also found that home self-esteem (relating to family self-concept in this study) and school self-esteem (relating to ability

self-concept in this study) were not significantly different for the two groups. Achievement self-concept, however, (also relating to school self-esteem in the Slee and Rigby study) *was* significantly different for the two groups. Achievement self-concept was not expected to be different for victims and non-victims because Olweus (1993), Greenbaum (1987) and Besag (1989) indicated that *actual* academic achievement was not lower for victims than for "average" children. If victims have generally low self-concept, however, as was shown in this study, they may *feel* they are academically inadequate, even if actual academic results prove otherwise. Alternatively, the group differences on achievement self-concept may have depended on an *actual* high academic standard for the non-bullied group and a low one for the bullied group. The high correlation of achievement/ability for the non-bullied group, but not for the bullied group, may be explained by the possibility that, for the non-bullied group, the Song and Hattie (1992) self-concept test was measuring achievement self-concept and ability self-concept as one rather than two self-concept factors. On the other hand, the moderate correlation of achievement and ability for the bullied group points to the possibility that separate factors were being measured for that group.

Peer self-concept was expected to be lower for bullied children, because peer rejection is a correlate of victimisation. Peer self-concept was significantly lower for bullied children. This can be contrasted with the findings of the Slee and Rigby study which found that social self-esteem (relating to peer self-concept) was not significantly different for bullied and non-bullied children. The subjects in the Slee and Rigby study were all fifth graders, so a possible reason why peer self-concept was significantly lower in the present study is that children in grades six, seven, eight and nine have

been subjected to peer group rejection longer than grade five children so may have developed a much lower perception of their peers' accepting them as friends and equals. Zubrick and Silburn (1993) found that peer self-concept was lower for boys than for girls but a two-way analysis of variance in this study found no significant gender differences for peer self-concept.

The expectation for confidence in this study was that it would be lower for bullied children. As classroom self-concept relates to confidence, it was also expected to be lower for bullied children. The outcomes confirmed those expectations. Bullied children may have lower confidence in all fields of endeavour because of peer group ridicule of their attempts to achieve. Confidence is an important factor in this study, because it is the only variable in which an interaction with gender was significant. The literature cited led to the expectation that bullied boys would have lower self-concept in all variables than bullied girls. However, bullied girls had lower confidence than either bullied boys or both boys and girls of the non-bullied group. Confidence is a factor of the self-regard dimension which includes physical self-concept. The Zubrick and Silburn study (1993) found that the lowest self-concept for girls was in self-appearance. The low confidence finding for girls in the present study could well tie in with the Zubrick and Silburn finding that girls have lowest self-concept in self-appearance, because both confidence and physical self-concept relate to the self-regard dimension. Low confidence in bullied girls may be due to the strong media message that young women should look like the models in advertisements, and adolescent girls, who wish to emulate such models, may be led to be highly critical of their own appearance, especially if they suffer from peer rejection. The Western Australian Education Department's recently announced anti-sexual

harassment policy appears to be timely in view of the finding that bullied girls have lower confidence compared to bullied boys and non-bullied girls and boys. In view of the substantial group differences this study has revealed, however, a more general policy on bullying, rather than a policy covering only one aspect of victimisation, may have been more relevant to Western Australian schools.

The findings on physical self-concept in this study are noteworthy because this variable had the lowest mean for bullied children and because the means difference between groups on this variable was the greatest of all the self - concept variables. The reason for this marked difference may be related to the first step in the victimisation process - being perceived as different. Although perceived differences may be psychological and social as well as physical, the bulk of the cited literature indicated that physical differences most often motivated bullying. Children who display negative (low self-concept) reactions to bullies' comments on physical differences may continue to be victimised, unlike children with physical differences who show good self-concept on being bullied.

The findings on physical self-concept in this study can be compared to those of the Rubin et al. study (1993) which compared the characteristics of withdrawn, aggressive and average children and found that the withdrawn children were at risk of peer rejection and that, on a self-perception test, they rated themselves as less physically competent than average children. Rubin et al. (1993) also noted that those findings were supported by Hymel et al. (1993) and Asendorpf (1993). Another noteworthy effect reported by

Asendorpf (in Rubin et al., 1993, p. 531) was that the negative physical self-perceptions of incipient victims appeared to be accurate self-appraisals.

Olweus (1993, p. 30) also found that physical weakness in boys constituted a significant difference between bullied and non-bullied children. The results of Olweus's study were based on teacher assessments of external deviations, not on self-assessments. In the Lowenstein study (1978), physical attractiveness and self-assertion (teacher-rated) were found to be significantly lower for bullied than for non-bullied children. Although the low physical factor result for bullied children in the present study was self-perceived, not teacher-perceived, it affords a noteworthy comparison with Lowenstein's and Olweus's findings on physical factors in victims, being the variable with the greatest means difference between bullied and non-bullied children.

The most consistent and coincidental victim/non-victim difference in all the studies discussed appeared to be in the self-regard dimension of self-concept. Both confidence (in group/gender interaction) and physical self-concept (for group) were highly significant in this study. Significant differences for physical factors were also reported in the studies of Olweus (1993), Lowenstein (1978), Rubin et al. (1993), Hymel and Asendorpf (1993) and Zubrick and Silburn (1993). Whether the results portray self-perceptions or an external agent's appraisal of physical ability/attractiveness, they appear to indicate that malperceived physicality is a salient correlate of victimisation.

Summary of Discussion

1. The victims in this study were found to have low self-concept in achievement, classroom, peer, confidence and physical self-concept, compared to non-bullied children. A relationship was therefore inferred between those self-concept factors and victimisation.

2. The greatest group difference was in physical self-concept (24.23 for non-bullied and 14.62 for bullied). It was posited in Chapter Two that children may be first bullied in early grades due to a difference perceived by the bully. The difference may be psychological or physical. Malperceived physicality appears to be a salient victim/non-victim difference in this study. The difference in this case was self-perceived by the victim. A strong relationship is therefore inferred between low physical self-concept and victimisation.

3. Except for confidence in bullied girls, gender was not an important factor in the dynamics of bullying.

Implications of Results for Pedagogical Practice

The summary of results shows that bullied children have lower self-concept of academic achievement, classroom ability, peer acceptance, confidence and physical ability/appearance than non-bullied children. There appears to be a strong connection, therefore, between certain aspects of self-concept and victimisation. The literature noted that some children appear to be victimised because of psychological or physical differences from other

children. The bullied children in this study were measured on their self-concept differences from “ordinary” (non-bullied) children. It was posited in Chapter Two that a bully’s reaction to victim differences may be unconscious. The Jungian theory, in particular, the “collective unconscious” in which ancient archetypes are retrieved and made congruous with present experiences, was used as a possible explanation for bullying behaviour: the strong driving the weak from the tribe or pack. It was further posited that role models of overbearing teachers or parents may have predisposed some children to adopt a rejecting attitude towards “different” peers. Because low-self-concept appears to be a correlate of victimisation, which involves both bullies and victims, the implications are twofold, involving strategies for both victims and bullies.

The first strategy concerns victims. It may be the case that enhancing self-concept may lead to victims demonstrating less vulnerability thus becoming less a target for bullying behaviour. However, self-concept enhancement programs do not always have the desired effect (Berlach, Selby and Hogan, 1995). Perhaps combining the following strategies for individual victims with group interactionist intervention programs based on a whole school approach (discussed later) would produce more desired results. Individual self-concept strategies could include the following.

To strengthen the academic self-concept factors of achievement and classroom self-concept, teachers should ensure that a victim's academic activities are commensurate with ability, so that the child is able to experience success and see self-improvement. Classroom self-concept is related to confidence in classroom activities so making sure that the bullied child is an

accepted participant in group activities in class will enhance confidence as well as peer self-concept.

The strengthening of both confidence and peer self-concept may also involve the direct teaching of retaliatory / assertiveness / confidence skills. Lowenstein (1978) found that one of the differences between bullied and non-bullied children was the lack of ability of victims to show assertiveness within the peer group. Retaliatory skills would involve simple formula retorts by the victim to a bully's teasing or name calling, for example, if a bully verbally attacked an actual physical disability, like lack of coordination, the victim could be taught the stock answer: "That's my problem. Your problem is that you can't accept my problem." If a physical deviancy was criticised, big ears for example, the stock answer might be, "So? I can hear better than you." If a child was excluded from a group the teacher could devise a quick role play, picking "teams" including the victim and non-bullying children but excluding the bullies, thus showing the bullies how it feels to be ostracised. Where physical bullying occurred, the Managing Student Behaviour (MSB) policy, a set of contingency plans for dealing with student breaches of behaviour, would need to be enforced.

The enhancement of physical self-concept, which had the lowest mean for the bullied group, could be achieved on both an individual and a class basis. Individual enhancement would involve the simple expedients of admiring a victim's new haircut or hairdo, neat uniform or smiling, happy demeanor. Classwide strategies could include instruction in good health and appearance, involving skin care (vitamin rich foods, careful washing and sun-

blocks); healthy diet (balance, and fat-free foods); and sensible exercise (school sports, cycling excursions and calisthenics).

The second implication for practical teaching arising from the discussion of results concerns the bullies' as well as the victims' whole school environment. It was argued in Chapter Two that bullies may persist in acting on bullying archetypes where bullying role-models exist. If the whole school environment could reflect non-bullying attitudes bullying may decrease, giving victims the opportunity to develop good self-concept. Such an approach to creating a non-bullying atmosphere in schools must encompass the whole school provenance: teachers, bullies, victims and "normal" children. The range could even be extended to include parents, police, politicians and community workers. Such a phalanx might provide a social shelter under which attitudes might be developed to protect individual rights, ensuring an atmosphere of safety where self-confidence might flourish and self-concept might be boosted.

The system-wide approach to countering victimisation utilises (1) school and community members; (2) prevention and intervention strategies to provide the widest network of expertise, focusing on school, class and group strategies to ameliorate victimisation in schools (Griffiths, 1994, p.6). The whole school approach generates behaviour management policies, a pastoral care system, a school ethos, in-service courses, a peer-support program, teacher training in intervention strategies and better playground supervision. Whole class strategies include class meetings that focus on victimisation issues, peer tutoring and cooperative versus competitive approaches to classroom practice. Small group approaches include intensive work with

students who need assertiveness training and self-esteem work (victims) and pro-social skills and problem-solving skills (bullies) (Griffiths, 1994, pp. 5-7).

The suggested amelioration strategies based on the findings of this study are for the most part, well within the class teacher's capacity, and apart from some structuring in the whole-school approach, do not involve a great expenditure of time and money. The self-concept strategies advocated for victims are for the most part non-structured and on-going and could be easily accommodated within the whole-school approach.

Wider Implications of the Study

While the preceding suggestions for boosting self-concept in bullied children are within the scope of the classroom teacher and within the range of normal school activities, a wider spectrum of strategies aimed at improving self-concept and alleviating victimisation can be considered. In an interview on bullying (Bryant, 1993, p.12), Rigby, who has conducted most of the major studies on victimisation in Australia, stated that changing schools may be an option for a chronically bullied child who had not responded to within-school strategies to reverse victimisation. Some schools, he believed, offered kinder environments and had less bullying than other schools. Such an option as changing schools would be decided by a parent.

Another anti-bullying strategy which some parents have resorted to concerns eliminating the perceived difference which the literature indicated may be an early step in bullying. An impressive portion of the literature cited

showed that many of the perceived differences in victims commented on by bullies were physical differences. The results of this study found that the bullied group had the lowest self-concept on the physical factor. Cosmetic surgery has been resorted to in some cases where the physical difference in a victim has been the focal point of victimisation. Marozas and May (1988, p.242) described surgical procedures that were applied to Down Syndrome children to modify their facial characteristics. The emphasis was on normalisation, not beautification of facial features. Reports claimed that recipients of the surgery were no longer teased by other children. Some concerns cited by Marozas and May were the risks involved in surgery and the necessity to change attitudes rather than make individuals conform to attitudes.

Suggestions for Further Study.

This study found that low self-concept in bullied children was significant in five of the seven self-concept factors representing global self-concept. achievement, classroom, peer, confidence and physical self-concept were lower for bullied than for non-bullied children. The trend to ever-decreasing bullying from lower to upper grades may be due to the ability of some victims to develop good self-concept of a difference perceived and criticised by a bully in early grades. The ability to display good self-concept when a difference is criticised may distinguish a long-term victim from a short-term one.

It would be useful to know how this divergence from bullied to non-bullied status occurs in younger children. The indication that fewer and fewer

children are bullied as progression through the grades takes place, suggests that some children display good self-concept (the alleged shield to bullying) from very early grades, and that others develop good self-concept in middle grades (and so are eliminated as targets for bullying). An investigation of children who were victimised in lower grades but not in middle or upper grades might reveal more clearly how the change from bullied to non-bullied status occurs.

Another aspect of the study which may bear further investigation is the physical self-concept factor. Physical self-concept had the lowest mean of all the variables for the bullied group. This finding may tie in with the weight of evidence cited in the literature that many of the perceived differences that appear to elicit attacks by bullies are physical differences. Asendorpf (in Rubin, 1993, p. 531) reported that the negative physical self-perceptions of peer-rejected children in their study appeared to be accurate self-appraisals. How, then, do some children with marked physical differences escape being bullied? This study has concluded that the difference between being bullied or not bullied in cases where physical differences are commented on may reside in a low or high concept reaction to the comments. However, more detailed studies of bullied and non-bullied children with physical deviancies may reveal other factors inherent in the process of victimisation.

Conclusion

This study showed that significant differences existed between bullied and non-bullied children in certain aspects of self-concept. While no causal connection between low self-concept and victimisation can be claimed the

results indicated that a significant relationship existed between victimisation and low self-concept. The implied strategies for countering victimisation were (1) to apply self-concept enhancing strategies to victims of bullying and (2) to provide a protective school environment which might generate confidence and help boost the self-concept of victims.

In conclusion, the reader should note that while the study showed significant differences between bullied and non-bullied children in achievement self-concept, classroom self-concept, peer self-concept, confidence and physical self-concept, interpretations of the findings will need considerable care because of the quasi-experimental nature of the design and the concomitant lack of manipulation and control.

This study has shown that a relationship does exist between bullying and self-concept. Further, it made suggestions regarding amelioration strategies. Finally, it addressed the role that the teacher needs to play in the eradication of this incipient behaviour.

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Grade_____ Male Female

ABOUT MYSELF

Circle one number (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) for each question that best describes you most of the time.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	
1. Persons of my age group enjoy my company.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I am an attractive person.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I have confidence in myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I am a cheerful person.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I am sure of myself in school situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I am proud of my ability in academic work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I am just as nice as I should be.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I am happy with the school work I do.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I wish I had been born into another family.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I feel good about my academic ability.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. I would change many things about myself if I could.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I think that I have the ability to get good grades in school work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. My looks bother me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. I feel my family trusts me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. My friends have confidence in me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. I feel left out of things in class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I am loved by my family.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. I am popular with others of my own age.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. I am proud of my school reports.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. I feel that I am trustworthy.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. I get along well with other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. I think my ability is sufficient to cope with school work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. I am satisfied with my school work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. My family is disappointed in me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. I am an important person to my friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. I am proud of my school work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. I think that I am capable of getting the results I would like to obtain in school work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. I have respect for myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. I feel unwanted at home.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. In the kinds of things we do in school, I feel I am as good as the other people in my class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. Most of my teachers do not understand me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. I would like to change my physical appearance.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. I feel worthless in class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. I feel good about my school work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. I think I am good at all times.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Song and Hattie test

(Please acknowledge via: Hattie, J. (1992). Self-concept. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum (Available from Aston Books, 162-168 Parramatta, Stanmore NSW 2048 FAX 02 550 3860)

Scoring

Recode the following items so that 1=6 2=5 3=4 4=3 5=2 6=1: 9,11,13,16,24,29,31,32,33.

Scale scores

Academic self-concept

Achievement self-concept	8	19	23	26	34
Ability self-concept	6	10	12	22	27
Classroom self-concept	5	16	30	31	33

Social self-concept

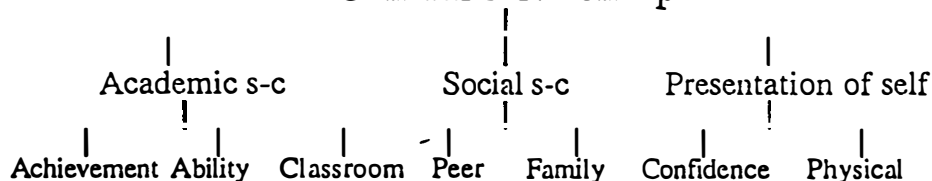
Peer self-concept	1	15	18	21	25
Family self-concept	9	14	17	24	29

Presentation of self

Confidence self-concept	3	4	20	28	35
Physical self-concept	2	7	11	13	32

The model

General self-concept



Means and Standard Deviations of the 35 Items Over All Samples

	<u>Grade 7</u>			<u>Grade 9</u>			<u>Grade 11</u>			<u>Total</u>		
	Mn	sd	n	Mn	sd	n	Mn	sd	n	Mn	sd	n
<u>Academic</u>												
Class	23.09	4.52	1486	21.71	4.11	503	21.61	3.58	2540	22.01	3.95	4529
Achievement	24.94	4.82	1460	21.12	5.53	495	17.33	5.21	2517	19.78	6.07	4472
Ability	24.94	4.07	1504	23.21	4.55	505	20.04	4.91	2542	21.65	5.11	4551
<u>Social</u>												
Peer	23.38	4.51	1511	22.86	3.94	505	21.79	3.61	2524	22.26	3.95	4540
Family	27.05	4.05	1488	25.61	4.45	501	24.09	4.59	2526	24.99	4.62	4515
<u>Presentation</u>												
Confidence	21.44	3.87	1504	20.77	3.26	505	20.93	3.30	2525	21.03	3.48	4534
Physical	18.89	4.89	1498	17.66	4.72	496	18.50	4.06	2516	18.51	4.38	4510