Preschoolers' Self-Concepts: Are they Accurate?

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Abstract

The present study examined the accuracy of young children's self-concepts through determining

if young children's perceptions of themselves agree with observers' perceptions of their

behavior. The study included seventy-five 3 ½ to 5 year old children who visited a research lab

near The Ohio State University with their parents. During this visit, the child completed the

video-assisted Child Self-View Questionnaire (Eder, 1990) with a researcher, which measures a

child's views of their self-concept on nine dimensions. After completing this questionnaire,

children and their parents completed two videotaped activities together. The first consisted of

drawing and labeling a family portrait, and the second required the cooperative building of a

Lincoln log house (toy building set). These video episodes were coded for dimensions of child

behavior: persistence, compliance, negative affect, positive affect, activity level and

distractibility. The coded behaviors were then compared to the child's responses on the Child

Self-View Questionnaire. Analysis indicates that some degree of match between children's self-

concepts and observers' perceptions of their behavior exists. Specifically and most consistently

across tasks, when observers perceive children as higher in activity level and distractibility,

children view themselves as more alienated and aggressive. A significant relationship also exists

between a child's views of their stress reaction (negative emotionality) and observers' ratings of

persistence (negatively related) and negative affect (positively related). A positive trend has also

been found between a child's view of their own social closeness and the observers' views of the

child's positive affect. The results of this study provide valuable insight into the inner workings

of a young child's mind and help emphasize the importance of seeing and treating young

children as competent perceivers of their own psychological characteristics.

Definition of Self Concept

Interest in self-concept has been prevalent since the time of Greek Philosophy (Harter, 1998). "The self-concept has been described as one's representation of one's own personality," (Eder, 1990, p. 849), taking into consideration that individual differences must therefore exist (Eder, 1990). According to Kagen, Moore and Bredekamp (1995), the self-concept can be viewed as "the cornerstone of both social and emotional development" (p. 18). The notion of self-concept is not only applicable to adults, but also to youth. In regard to children, self-concept can be discussed in relation to children's awareness of their own values, worth and talent (Harter, 1998).

William James saw one's self-concept as comprised of two parts, the I self and the me self (Harter, 1998). The I self can be thought of as "the knower," (p. 554) and the me self as "an empirical aggregate of things objectively known about the self" (p. 554). The me self develops to become what is commonly known as the self-concept. This self-concept is thought to be made up of three distinct and hierarchical parts, the least important part of the hierarchy being that of the material self which focuses on the "bodily self as well as one's possessions" (p. 554). The second part of the hierarchy is that of the social self, or "characteristics recognized by others" (p. 554). The third tier, and most important in regard to self-concept, is that of the spiritual self. The spiritual self is comprised of "one's thoughts, dispositions, [and] moral judgments" (p. 554). These three tiers come together to create a system of conflicts and harmonies, all resulting in a complete self-concept.

Research on Self-Concept in Children

When discussing self-concept and its development in young children, it is important to examine past research. Though relatively few resources are available on children and their self-

concepts (Brown, Mangelsdorf, Agathen, & Ho, 2004), philosophies about the topic have evolved and developed. When delving into the research, two very different perspectives arise. On one hand there are those who believe in the more traditional view, which is that young children do not possess highly differentiated self-concepts (Harter & Pike, 1984). On the other hand there are the more progressive theorists who believe that children as young as three years old are able to retain a consciousness of self (Eder & Mangelsdorf, 1997). Many of these discrepancies may result from the inconsistency in the existing methods of studying children's self-concepts, along with the fact that it is very difficult to develop accurate assessments of self-concept for youth (Brown et al., 2004).

In the past, scholars have focused on adolescents and adults for most of their research, feeling that studying self-concept in young children would be useless, due to the fact that young children were deemed unable to accurately portray themselves. However, research by Livesley and Bromley (1973) revealed that children less than seven years of age are able to construct views of selves, although these views often focus on physical appearances. Livesley and Bromley's idea that body image was the central feature of a child's self-concept was contradicted by a study completed by Keller, Ford and Meacham (1978). In this study, forty-eight 4 and 5 year olds were tested in a longitudinal design to discover whether or not physical traits or activities determined a child's self-concept. The study discovered that actions, rather then the previously accepted idea of physical traits, determined young children's self-concepts. However, this study still maintained that external characteristics are mainly focused on in young children's view of self and that "major changes in self-definition do not occur until the child begins elementary school" (p. 489).

Eder (1989) challenged the previous claim when she investigated the connections that memory has with developing self-concepts and how this relates to the development of self-concepts as one ages. In her study Eder asked 12 male and 12 female subjects included in each of the age levels of 3 ½, 5 ½, and 7 ½, forty-eight questions about daily behavior and internal characteristics. These questions all fell into the categories of general behavior ("Tell me what you usually have done in School"), general trait ("Tell me how you usually have been in school"), specific behavior ("Tell me what you did in school today") or specific trait ("Tell me how you were in school today") and were dictated to the child by a blue hand puppet. The study reported that the frequency of specific memories, as opposed to general memories, increases with age, and that "by 3 ½ years of age, children have a rudimentary understanding of the internal states and emotions of themselves and others" (p. 1226).

Continuing with her research of young children, in 1990 Eder completed a study focusing on internal traits (e.g., aggression, control, well-being, stress reaction), which sparked the idea that self-concepts actually develop earlier then previously thought. This study examined 61 three-and-a-half year olds, 60 five-and-a-half year olds and 59 seven-and-a-half year olds, all of whom were enrolled in private schools in a large urban area. Each child was interviewed with 50 general, open-ended questions. These questions were developed from Eder's previous research (1987, 1989) and designed to encourage the description of behaviors and activities rather than using adjectives. The interview took place individually and was administered by two male or female puppets, depending on the sex of the child. The data from the questions were analyzed in order to determine if the children possessed stable self-concepts.   Through her study Eder (1990) determined that children as young as 3 ½ years old have similar methods of organizing self-information and that they have individualistic, primarily stable, psychological self-concepts.

To further confirm and expand on the results of Eder's study, Marsh and Craven (1991), Eccles, Wigfield, Harold and Blumfeld (1993) and Ladd (1990, 1996) developed the theory that "even kindergarten-age children hold more differentiated concepts of themselves then previously thought" (Measelle, Ablow, Cowan, & Cowan, 1998, p. 1557). This conclusion resulted partly from a longitudinal study (Measelle et al., 1998) of 97-two parent families. Information was collected on children's self-concepts through the Berkley Puppet Interview. This video was used to assess a child's academic competence, achievement motivation, social competence, peer acceptance, depression-anxiety and aggression hostility through pairs of opposing statements assessing both the positive and negative ends of the spectrums. This study indicated that "during preschool, kindergarten, and first grade, children produced internally consistent responses" (p. 1570), thus indicating that a somewhat consistent representation of self-concept is possible in 3-5 year-olds.

As more and more research in the area of young children's self-concept is completed, it appears as though the controversy surrounding the issue is waning. Instead of two controversial camps, one believing that young children do not possess the ability to determine their own self-concepts and the other hypothesizing the opposite, current research in the area indicates that young children do have stable, consistent, psychological self-concepts.

<div align="center">Self-Other Agreement</div>

Given new evidence demonstrating that preschool aged children possess stable and differentiated self-concepts, an important issue is the extent to which children's self-concepts are accurate. In other words, do children's perceptions of themselves agree with others' perceptions of them? Although little research on young children has addressed this, research on older children and adults can provide insight into this topic.

One way of judging the accuracy of a person's perception of their personality or self-concept is by comparing their perception to that of another person. For example, an individual's perception could be compared to the view of someone who knows them well (e.g., a teacher). In 1988, Marsh completed eight studies on this topic. These studies focused on student-teacher agreement within the primary school grades. Through these studies it was demonstrated that outside observers most likely can infer self-concepts with moderate accuracy. In another study, addressing a similar area of interest, Marsh and Byrne (1993) completed a study where 151 Australian university students completed a personality questionnaire and then had a person who knew them well also complete the same questions, following the same instructions. The study also involved 941 Canadian university students who completed the same questionnaire and then had a companion complete the same set of questions from the target person's perspective. The study's results "unambiguously demonstrate that significant others are able to accurately infer multiple self-concepts of a person whom they know well" (p. 55). Also, this study showed significant self-other agreement surrounding self-concepts between the students and their teachers.

Along with comparing a person's perceptions of themselves to someone they know, accuracy can also be judged by comparing an individual's perception of him/herself to that of someone who does not know them well. This can be conceptualized thorough the idea of zero acquaintance. Zero acquaintance is a term used to describe a situation in which the judge of another's self-concept has no contact with the subject other then a brief meeting, a videotaped observance, a photograph, watching a short behavioral episode or listening to a concise voice recording (Funder & Colvin, 1997). In Funder and Colvin (1988) the agreement between self-ratings and the ratings of a judge who had viewed the subject for five minutes on a videotape

were compared. In support of this type of observation it was found that the self-other agreement was five times as high as would be expected from chance alone. However, it is important to note that although agreement existed, this does not necessarily indicate accuracy; or, in other words, agreement can exist which does not describe accurate information, but, it is assumed, according to the null hypothesis, that if agreement does not exist the information cannot possibly be accurate (Funder & Colvin, 1997).

Besides knowledge of the person being judged, another important factor that may affect accuracy is how observable the traits being judged are. This type of factor was investigated by Funder (1980), Funder and Colvin (1988) and Funder and Dobroth (1987). During these studies self-other agreement was analyzed in attempt to determine what items, if any, led to higher/lower agreement. All three of the studies concluded that "more observable traits yield higher self-other agreement" (Funder & Colvin, 1997).

The Present Study

In my study I examined the accuracy of young children's self-concepts and thus hoped to add to the ever growing, always debated, wealth of information about self-concepts. Through this study I hoped to discover how accurate young children's views of themselves actually are. Specifically, I worked to determine how much children's perceptions of themselves agree with an observers' perceptions of their behavior in areas of positive affect, negative affect, compliance, distractibility, persistence and activity level. In this study, accuracy was measured by computing correlations between the preschoolers' CSVQ responses and observers' ratings of children's behavior. Thus, the higher the correlation between the child's self-concept and observed behavior, the greater the accuracy of the child's self-concept.

I predicted, based on the previous research described above, that significant but moderate agreement will be exhibited between a child's self-concept and observers' ratings of the child's behavior. For the purposes of this study, moderate agreement is indicated by correlations ranging from .30 to .50 (Cohen, 1988). I also expected that more self-other agreement would be found for the more easily observable characteristics (e.g., activity level or harm-avoidance, persistence or achievement) than for less readily observable characteristics (e.g., positive affect or well-being and negative affect or alienation).

A secondary question also asked by this study was whether or not a child's behavior is consistent across tasks. Specifically, in this study children's behavior was observed in two contexts: a drawing task and a building task. It was hypothesized that the children's behaviors would be moderately consistent across the tasks (indicated by significant correlations ranging from .30 to .50), thus demonstrating the stability of preschoolers' personalities.

<div align="center">Method</div>

Participants

The present study sample contained 75 families, all of whom participated in a larger study, "The Parents and Preschoolers Study," a study on family relationships and child development. Each family consisted of a mother, father and a 3 ½ -5 year old child. Although many families included more than three members, the other members did not participate. The family members did not have to be related biologically, but the mother and father did have to co-reside with the child and the majority of the parents who participated were married.

In order to recruit families for the study, flyers were distributed at local preschools, ads were placed in magazines and newspapers, and participating families were asked to suggest other possible participants.

Of the 75 families that participated in the study, 79.20% of the children were identified as White, 1.30% were identified as Hispanic, 6.50% were identified as Black, 1.30% were identified as Asian, and the remaining 11.70% were identified as mixed race. Of this sample, 35 of the preschoolers were female and 42 of them were male. At the time of the lab visit, the children ranged from 3.10 years of age to 5.30 years of age with an average of 4.16 years of age (SD = .50). 59.70% of the children were first-born, 28.60% were second-born, 9.10% were third-born, 1.30% were fourth-born and 1.30% were fifth-born.

The mothers participating in this study ranged from 25.57 to 56.17 years of age, and were, on average, 36.36 years of age (SD = 5.25). 88.3% of the mothers identified as White, 1.30% Hispanic, 5.20% Black, 2.60% Asian, and the remaining 2.60% identified as mixed race. The education level of the participating mothers ranged from some college to a Ph.D., the average level being a college degree. The fathers in the sample ranged from 26.58 to 56.71 years of age, and were, on average, 37.45 years of age (SD = 5.83). Of the fathers, 89.50% identified as White, 5.30% as Hispanic, 3.90% as Black, and 1.30% as mixed race. The education levels of the participating fathers ranged from a high school degree to a Ph.D., the average level being a college degree. The yearly income of the families ranged from less then 10,000 to over 100,000 with an average of approximately 70,000.

Procedure

Each family arrived at the lab after the completion of several mailed questionnaires. The mailed-home questionnaires included surveys about family relationships and demographic information. When the families arrived at the lab the entire visit took approximately 1 ½ hours. The parents were first directed to a smaller room where they filled out questionnaires about their

child. At the same time, the child was in a larger room where they watched a puppet video, culminating in the completion of a questionnaire with a researcher.

After the video and questionnaire segments of the study, the family was brought together in the larger room to complete two different tasks. The two tasks were carefully selected to allow for observation of the children in diverse situations. The first task allowed for observation of a more sedentary activity, whereas the second allowed for observation of a more active activity. Through the combination of the activities a global view of the child was able to be observed. The first activity involved the families drawing a picture of their family together, and labeling the family members. This task took approximately 10 minutes to complete. The second objective was for the family to collaborate on building a house together out of Lincoln logs (toy building set). The family was again given approximately 10 minutes to achieve this goal. Both of the tasks were videotaped for later observation. Upon the completion of the study the family was given a 30 dollar gift certificate to either Toys-R-Us or Target to thank them for participating in the study.

Measures

Child Self-View Questionnaire (CSVQ). The CSVQ (see Appendix A), consists of 62 forced-choice statements considered appropriate for children 3 ½ - 7 years of age. It was administered to the child through a video consisting of puppets (blue or pink in correspondence with the child's gender) and a human researcher who asked for the child's response to questions found on the CSVQ questionnaire (the video was described previously when Eder (1990) was discussed). In each video the two puppets make contrasting statements, and then the onscreen researcher asks the child to choose the statement that describes them best. For instance, one puppet states "I like doing hard puzzles" and the other responds "I don't like doing hard

puzzles." These statements are then followed by the onscreen researcher asking the child, "What about you? Do you like doing hard puzzles or do you not like to do hard puzzles?" A researcher then recorded the child's response.

The child's responses to the CSVQ were evaluated in regard to nine dimensions of the child's self-concept (see Table 1 for description of each dimension as well as a corresponding example CSVQ question). These nine dimensions are: *achievement*, *aggression*, *alienation*, *harm-avoidance*, *social closeness*, *social potency*, *stress reaction*, *traditionalism* and *well being*. A summary score was created for each child on each dimension.

Child Behavior Coding. The video episodes, both the building and the drawing, were coded by a team of two researchers. The coders were trained to use the "Teaching Tasks: Child Behavior Scales - Egeland and Sroufe Revised" (see Appendix B) in order to rate the observed behavior of the child in regard to *persistence, positive affect, negative affect, compliance, distractibility* and *activity level*. The coders were assigned to the videos at random, overlapping on two per week. The coders were unaware of the children's CSVQ responses. Coders rated each quality of the child's behavior on a 5 point scale (1 = *very low* and 5 = *very high*).

The persistence scale was used to measure how task-oriented the child was (1 being extremely avoidant of the task and 5 representing a child who remained involved in the task the entire session). The scale of compliance referred to the child's willingness to collaborate with the parents on the task. At the low end of this continuum was a 1 which represented children who rejected the majority of the parents' suggestions and at the high end, a 5, were the children who actively oriented to and followed most of the parents' suggestions - although some autonomy was still allowed.

The ratings of positive affect were made in relation to how positive the child's global affect appeared. At the very low end, 1, were children who had no positive emotions displayed, whereas a child given a 5 rating was displaying positive affect virtually the entire session (e.g., smiling, laughing). Along the same lines as positive affect, negative affect represented the child's global negative affect. A 1 represented a child with no expression of negative affect, whereas a 5 described a child who frequently expressed some form of negativity (e.g., frowning, whining).

The activity level scale measured the child's overall activity during the session. A child rated a 1 did not display any unordinary activity other then what was to be expected for a child their age, whereas a child with a 5 rating displayed excessive activity (e.g., running around the room, jumping on a chair). The final rating scale used in this study was that of distractibility. This was used to indicate the degree to which the child remained attentive to the task. A child receiving a 1 rating remained very focused on the task at hand, whereas a child with a 5 rating shifted attention at even the slightest external stimulation, and often for no reason at all.

After the videos were rated according to the above scales, the researchers compared the overlapping episodes' results for accuracy. If the coders disagreed by one point on more then three scales then they were required to watch the video again. The same was required for episodes with any ratings that were off by more then one point. When the re-watching took place, the coders collaborated and agreed on single whole numbers to represent the rated dimensions. If the requirements were met then the video was not re-watched and the results were recorded, taking an average of the data.

The reliability of the coding team was calculated to assure accuracy. Agreement within one scale point ranged from 86 -100% (mean = 98%). Gamma statistics were also used to

measure the reliability between the two coders (e.g., the degree to which there was correspondence between the rank ordering of children by the coders). The gamma statistics were acceptable and ranged from .47 to 1.00 (mean = .84).

Results

Analysis Plan

Descriptive statistics for all study variables are presented in Table 2. In order to address the purposes of this study, several analyses were run. Correlations were computed between the child's self-concept, as determined by the CSVQ, and the observers' perceptions of the child's behavior. The consistency of the child's behaviors across tasks (e.g., drawing and building) was also examined using correlations.

Agreement between Child's Self-Concept and Observers' Perceptions - Drawing Task

In order to investigate the main question of this study, about the level of agreement between a child's CSVQ responses (self-concept) and observers' perceptions of the child, correlations were computed by comparing the results of the child's CSVQ with the observers' coding of child behaviors from the drawing task (see Table 3).

Significant correlations were found between the observers' perceptions of activity level and distractibility and the child's perceived level of aggression. When children reported higher levels of aggression, the observers saw them as higher on the scales of activity level, $r = .26, p < .01$, and distractibility, $r = .31, p < .01$. It was also found that when children saw themselves as higher in alienation, observers viewed them as higher in activity level, $r = .33, p < .01$. Additional significant correlations emerged between a child's view of their stress reaction and the observers' ratings of persistence and negative affect. As a child's view of their stress reaction increased (meaning they felt they were more emotionally negative), observers'

perceptions of the child's persistence decreased, $r = -.26, p < .05$. It was also found that as the child's stress reaction increased, so did the observers' ratings of negative affect, $r = .30, p < .05$.

Along with the above mentioned findings, several trends were evident in the results as well. As a child's ratings of stress reaction increased, the observers' perceptions of compliance decreased, $r = -.22, p < .10$. Also in regard to stress reaction, trends suggest that as a child's view of stress reaction increases, so do the observers' ratings of activity level, $r = .22, p < .10$, and distractibility, $r = .21, p < .10$. Overall, these results show several correlations between a child's perception of himself and the observers' views of the child's behavior in the drawing task.

Agreement between Child's Self-Concept and Observers' Perceptions – Building Task

Similarly, correlations were also computed between the children's CSVQ responses (self-concept) and observers' perceptions of the children's behavior during the building task (see Table 4). Overall, there were fewer significant correlations between the children's CSVQ responses and their behavior in the building task.

Corresponding to the results of the drawing task, a significant correlation was found between the child's perceptions of alienation and the observers' views of activity level. As the child's perceptions of alienation increased, so did the observers' perceptions of activity level, $r = .28, p < .05$. It was also found that as the child's views of alienation increased so did the observers' perceptions of distractibility, $r = .29, p < .05$. In this task, a trend was also discovered between the child's views of social closeness and the observers' ratings of positive affect. It was found that as a child's perception of social closeness increased, so did the observers' ratings of positive affect, $r = .23, p < .10$.

Several other trends were found between the child's perceptions of aggression and the observers' ratings of persistence, activity level and distractibility. As a child's view of their aggression increased, the observers' perceptions of persistence decreased, *r* = -*.22, p < .10.* Conversely, as a child's views of aggression rose, so did the observers' perception of activity level, *r* = *.24, p < .10,* and distractibility, *r* = *.24, p < .10.*

Across the two tasks (drawing and building), the most consistent correlations were found between a child's perception of aggression and the observers' ratings of activity level and distractibility, as well as between the child's perceptions of alienation and the observers' ratings of activity level. These correlations were modest to moderate in strength.

Child's Behavior Consistency across Drawing and Building Tasks

In order to investigate the secondary question of this study, about the stability of children's behavior across these two tasks (drawing and building), correlations were computed to look at the consistency of the child's behavior across the tasks (Table 5). These correlations were calculated by comparing the levels of persistence, compliance, positive affect, negative affect, activity level and distractibility, as reported by the observers, across tasks. It was found that all of the corresponding correlations were significant, ranging from *r* = *.26* to *r* = *.49, p <* *.05.* This indicates that children do indeed demonstrate modest to moderate consistency in their behaviors across the tasks.

<center>Discussion</center>

Overall, this study suggests that children as young as 3 ½ years old may be able to accurately describe their own self-concepts. As expected, significant associations of modest to moderate strength were found between many of the observers' ratings and the preschoolers' answers on the CSVQ, indicating that young children may hold accurate self-concepts.

Specifically, the most consistent significant associations were observed across tasks between higher observer ratings of activity level and distractibility and higher child's ratings of aggression, as well as higher observer ratings of activity level and higher child's ratings of alienation. This is somewhat consistent with the original hypothesis that more self-other agreement would be found for the more easily observable characteristics (e.g., activity level). These promising results demonstrate that children most likely possess the ability to comprehend their own self-concepts and portray them to others. Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that behavior of young children remains consistent across contexts.

Taken as a whole, this study indicates that children, who were previously thought to lack the ability to differentiate their self-concepts (Harter & Pike, 1984), were indicated, through self-other agreement, to have the mental capacity to grasp and express their own self-concepts. In other words, young children do know who they are and are able to tell other people about their true personalities. This means that although young children's ideas and words are often cast aside and disregarded, their thoughts and feelings are valid and should be looked upon as such. It was previously thought that young children could only portray views of themselves based on physical appearance (Livesley & Bromley, 1973) or external characteristics (Keller, Ford, Meacham, 1978). However, this study has shown that a global psychological self-awareness can be possessed by young children.

This validity was further established through the exhibited correlations across the tasks of drawing and building. There was modest to moderate consistency in observed behaviors across the tasks, indicating that children's behavior remains relatively consistent despite the situation. This further supports the notion that children have stable personalities. The uniformity across the tasks indicates that the personality being expressed by the children is global, rather then task-

specific. These results, combined with the agreement between children and the observers, suggest that children have consistent personalities and that children can accurately perceive their personalities. Therefore, the results demonstrate that young children can understand themselves as a whole.

Furthermore, the demonstration of consistency between the children's responses on the CSVQ scales and the observers' perceptions validates the use of the CSVQ measure, created by Eder (1990). Since the children's responses have been found to be consistent with the observers' coding, this indicates that the CSVQ scale does indeed accurately measure a child's view of their self-concept. Similarly, the Berkley Puppet Interview (Measelle et al., 1998) has also been demonstrated to be valid on the same terms.

This study has further added to and expanded the field of research surrounding young children's self-concepts. The results have contradicted traditional views that young children are unable to understand their own self-concepts (Harter & Pike, 1984) and supported the idea that young children do indeed have the ability to understand their self-concepts. The conclusions of this study take the results of Eder (1990), which suggested that 3 ½ old children have individualistic, primarily stable, psychological self-concepts, one step further by demonstrating that young children are able to express accurate self-concepts. The conclusions of this study also expand on Marsh and Craven (1991), Eccles et al. (1993) and Ladd (1990, 1996) which suggested that young children hold stable self-concepts. This study furthered this past research by suggesting that along with being stable, children's views of self-concept accurately describe their behavior.

One key strength of this study is the successful use of observational and survey data. Many past studies have used solely the survey data (e.g., CSVQ) to analyze children's

representations of self-concept. Although this previous research allowed us to obtain a picture of

how the child views themselves, this research never engaged the question of whether or not

children's views were accurate. However, the present study was able to tackle that question

through the incorporation of observation and coding. This combination of methods allowed for a

truly unique analysis of children's self-concepts, as well as the means to discover if the child-

reported data was valid.

Another key strength of this study was its ability to validate the CSVQ as a measure of

assessment for young children's self-concepts. This survey method has been used many times

across the years to interpret and draw conclusions about a young child's self-concept. This

study, for the first time, provided evidence that the scale actually measures a child's view of their

self-concept.

Despite the many strengths of this study, some weaknesses should also be noted. One of

the main weaknesses was the small sample size of the study. With only 75 children being

included, statistical power (ability to detect significant correlations) is low. Luckily, the study

this sample was drawn from is ongoing, and these questions will be re-examined in the future

with a sample of over 100 families. Moreover, the lack of ethnic diversity (most children/parents

were White) and marital diversity (this sample consisted of only children from two-parent

families), makes generalization to larger society difficult. Additionally, most of the participating

families were reasonably wealthy and contained parents who were well educated.

Another potential weakness is the fact that the observational tasks took place in a

laboratory setting. This may have made the participants uncomfortable, and it is possible that

children behaved differently in the lab then they normally would. Also, young children had to

answer the CSVQ questions directly to a researcher, possibly making the more positive

responses easier to choose. Another possible limitation was that the coders were both White, college education, middle class individuals. Their background could have created some biases which affected how they viewed the children's behavior. Finally, since the results of this study relied on correlations between measures obtained at one point in time, conclusions about the development of children's self-concepts cannot be drawn.

In the future, much more research needs to be done in the field of young children's self-concepts. A longitudinal study, following the same methods of this study, would reveal if young children do achieve more accuracy in describing their self-concepts over time. A larger and more diverse sample would also be helpful for increasing statistical power and generalizing the results to the entire population of children.

In general, the results of this study provide valuable insight into the inner workings of a young child's mind and help emphasize the importance of seeing and treating young children as competent perceivers of their own psychological characteristics. If children are thought of as having an accurate view of self, then their words will be thought to hold more meaning. This holds important implications for professionals dealing with young children as well as those engaged in parenting. When children are thought of as expressing valid ideas, then their thoughts and feelings will be taken into greater consideration. For instance, in the field of teaching, if a young child expresses a problem or issue that they are concerned about, it is often pushed aside and ignored as coming from a young child who knows nothing. However, the results of this study indicate that children's thoughts and ideas, especially about themselves, are valid. This means that teachers and parents alike should listen to what young children say and take their words into consideration. Perhaps if teachers listen more carefully and trust the words of young children, they will be able to find ways in which to reach them. These ways may

perpetuate their learning, thus leading them to future success they never would have achieved otherwise. Children are *not* to be seen and *not* heard, they need to have a voice, and according to this study, that voice is valid.

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Table 1. Explanation of the Nine Dimensions of the CSVQ

Dimension	Definition	High Statement	Low Statement	Corresponding CSVQ Questions
Achievement	Works hard; enjoys demanding activities; is a perfectionist	I like hard work.	I like to do work that's not very hard.	1, 21, 31
Aggression	Will hurt others; is physically assertive; tries to frighten others	Sometimes I like to tease people by saying mean things to them.	I don't like to tease people.	2, 12, 22, 32, 42
Alienation	Believes others wish him/her harm; feels unlucky; feels left out and alone	People always say mean things to me.	People don't usually say mean things to me.	3, 23, 43
Harm-Avoidance	Avoids possibility of physical danger; seeks physical safety	I don't climb things that are high.	I climb really high things.	14, 24, 34
Social Closeness	Friendship dimensions: seeks intimacy; loves people; helps.	It's more fun to do things with other people then by myself.	It's more fun to do things by myself then with other people.	6, 16, 26, 36
Social Potency	Leadership dimension: likes to stand out, influence people, be the center of attention	I like to have people look at me.	I don't like to have people look at me.	17, 27, 47
Stress Reaction	Is upset, scared, angry	I get mad a little.	I get mad a lot.	8, 18, 38
Traditionalism	Authority dimension: cares about manners; being polite	I usually do what Mommy or the teacher says.	Sometimes I don't do what Mommy or the teacher says.	9, 19, 29, 39, 49
Well-Being	Happiness dimension: is joyful; is content; degree of comfort; shows silliness, enthusiasm	I really like myself.	Sometimes, I just don't like myself.	10, 20, 30, 40

- Table based on Eder (1990)

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Study Variables

	M	SD	Range
Child's CSVQ			
Achievement	1.03	.91	0-3
Aggression	1.03	1.13	0-4
Alienation	.69	.83	0-3
Harm Avoidance	1.75	.95	0-3
Social Closeness	3.06	.87	0-4
Social Potency	2.07	.89	0-3
Stress Reaction	1.34	.92	0-3
Traditionalism	3.73	1.08	2-5
Well Being	3.23	.89	1-4
Observers' Ratings of Child behavior: Drawing			
Persistence	4.10	1.18	1-5
Compliance	3.73	1.26	1-5
Positive Affect	3.10	.87	1-5
Negative Affect	2.27	.98	1-5
Activity Level	2.51	1.13	1-5
Distractibility	2.09	1.15	1-5
Observers' Ratings of Child behavior: Building			
Persistence	4.32	.95	1-5
Compliance	4.10	1.04	1-5
Positive Affect	2.60	.90	1-5
Negative Affect	2.03	.81	1-4
Activity Level	2.49	1.06	1-5
Distractibility	1.99	1.03	1-5

Table 3. Child's CSVQ and Observers' Perceptions – Drawing Task

Child's CSVQ	Observations of Child Behavior: Drawing Task					
	Persistence	Compliance	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Activity Level	Distractibility
Achievement	-.04	.08	-.04	-.16	.18	.04
Aggression	-.18	-.19	.13	.03	.26**	.31**
Alienation	-.09	-.08	.03	-.04	.33**	.15
Harm avoidance	.07	.05	-.07	.01	-.16	-.02
Social Closeness	-.04	-.05	-.08	-.08	-.02	.05
Social Potency	.15	.13	.10	-.03	-.04	-.04
Stress reaction	-.26*	-.22[+]	.05	.30*	.22[+]	.21[+]
Traditionalism	.04	.07	.03	.14	-.13	-.08
Well-being	-.03	.01	.07	.04	-.07	.01

[+]$p < .10$ *$p < .05$ **$p < .01$

Table 4. Child's CSVQ and Observers' Perceptions – Building Task

	Observations of Child Behavior: Building Task					
Child's CSVQ						
	Persistence	Compliance	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Activity Level	Distractibility
Achievement	-.10	-.07	-.06	.15	.17	.12
Aggression	-.22[+]	-.20	-.06	.05	.24[+]	.24[+]
Alienation	-.19	-.11	-.05	-.16	.28*	.29*
Harm avoidance	.14	.01	-.08	.11	-.06	-.07
Social Closeness	.01	-.11	.23[+]	-.09	.19	.05
Social Potency	-.05	-.08	.06	.06	-.05	-.03
Stress reaction	-.13	-.18	.06	.17	.15	.08
Traditionalism	-.05	-.04	.10	.09	-.16	-.00
Well-being	.05	-.01	.16	.12	-.17	-.11

[+]$p < .10$ *$p < .05$ **$p < .01$

Table 5. Consistency of Child's Behavior across Drawing and Building Tasks

	Drawing Task					
	Persistence	Compliance	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Activity Level	Distractibility
Building Task						
Persistence	**.36****	.26*	.55**	-.21	-.42**	-.28*
Compliance	.47**	**.49****	.21	-.39**	-.33**	-.45**
Positive Affect	.16	.20	**.40****	-.12	-.06	-.20
Negative Affect	-.26*	-.35**	-.27**	**.35****	.02	.32**
Activity Level	-.22	-.17	-.01	-.01	**.39****	.11
Distractibility	-.29*	-.23*	-.03	.11	.40**	**.26***

*p < .05 **p < .01

Appendix A

<u>CSVQ</u>

1.   A: I mostly do things that are hard.
      B: I mostly do things that are easy.

2.   A: When I get angry, I feel like being quiet.
      B: When I'm angry, I feel like hitting someone.

3.   A: I don't ever feel that people want bad things to happen to me.
      B: I sometimes feel that people want bad things to happen to me.
      RE: switched order
      SHORT PAUSE

4.   B: I don't climb up on things that are high.
      A: I climb really high things.
      RE: switched order

5.   A: I like meeting new people.
      B: I don't like meeting new people.

6.   A: I like to play by myself.
      B: I like to play with my friends.

7.   A: I like to do what my friends tell me to do.
      B: I like to tell my friends what to do.
      SHORT PAUSE

8.   A: I get scared a lot.
      B: I get scared a little.
      LONG PAUSE

9.   B: I sometimes do things that I'm not supposed to do.
      A: I never do things that I'm not supposed to do.
      RE: switched order
      SHORT PAUSE

10.   A: I am usually happy.
      B: I am not usually very happy.
      SHORT PAUSE

11.   (MUST BE READ)
      A: I don't care about doing a really good job on everything.
      B: I care about doing a really good job on everything.

12.   B: Sometimes it's fun to scare people.
       A: It's not fun to scare people.

13.   B: I know that people care what happens to me.
       A: I sometimes think that no one cares what happens to me.
       RE: switched order
       SHORT PAUSE

14.   A: I think it would be really fun to go down a slide head-first.
       B: I don't think it would be fun at all to go down a slide head-first.
       SHORT PAUSE

15.   B: I don't get upset around strangers.
       A: I get upset around strangers.
       RE: switched order
       LONG PAUSE

16.   A: I have a best friend.
       B: I don't have a best friend.
       VERY LONG PAUSE

17.   B: I pick the game to play.
       A: Other people pick the game to play.
       LONG PAUSE

18.   B: I get mad a little.
       A: I get mad a lot.

19.   A: I usually do what Mommy or the teacher says.
       B: Sometimes I don't do what Mommy or the teacher says.
       SHORT PAUSE

20.   A: When I'm happy, I feel OK.
       B: When I'm happy, I feel good all over.

21.   B: I don't like it when other kids do things better than me.
       A: I don't usually care when other kids do better than me.
       RE: switched order

22.   B: I don't ever try to push in front of people in line.
       A: I sometimes try to push in front of people in line.
       RE: switched order

23. A: When my friends come over to my house they play with my **toys** and not with me.
     B: When my friends visit they come to play with **me** and not my toys.
     RE: switched order

24. A: I don't think that it would be fun at all to hang upside-down on a jungle-gym.
     B: I think that it would be really fun to hang upside-down on a jungle-gym.
     RE: switched order

25. A: When new people come to my house I show them my toys.
     B: When new people come to my house, I run to mom and dad.
     SHORT PAUSE

26. B: It's more fun to do things with other people than by myself.
     A: It's more fun to do things by myself than with other people.
     RE: switched order
     LONG PAUSE

27. B: I don't like to have people look at me.
     A: I like to have people look at me.
     RE: switched order
     LONG PAUSE

28. A: Some days everything makes me grouchy.
     B: I hardly ever get grouchy.
     VERY LONG PAUSE

29. A: Sometimes I get in trouble for being bad.
     B: I never get in trouble for being bad.

30. B: I really like myself.
     A: Sometimes, I just don't like myself.

31. B: I like to do work that's not very hard.
     A: I like hard work.
     RE: switched order
     VERY LONG PAUSE

32. A: Sometimes I like to tease people by saying mean things to them.
     B: I don't like to tease people.

33.   A: Nobody wants to be around me.
        B: People want to be around me.
        RE: switched order

34.   B: When I hear lightening and thunder, I go look at it out the window.
        A: When I hear lightening and thunder, I would never run to look out the window.

35.   B: I don't share toys with kids I don't know.
        A: I share toys with kids I don't know.
        RE: switched order
        SHORT PAUSE

36.   B: I am happiest when I'm around other people.
        A: I am happiest when I'm by myself.
        RE: switched order

37.   A: I am the leader in "follow the leader."
        B: Other people are the leader in "follow the leader."

38.   A: If something scary happens at night, I still fall asleep.
        B: When I am scared, I have trouble falling asleep.

45.   B: I would play with a group of kids I didn't know.
        A: I would never play with a group of kids I didn't know.
        SHORT PAUSE

39.   B: Sometimes I do naughty things.
        A: I never do naughty things.

40.   B: I always feel great when I wake up in the morning.
        A: I usually don't feel that "great" when I wake up in the morning.
        SHORT PAUSE

41.   A: I usually keep working on a puzzle, even if I am very tired.
        B: I usually stop working on a puzzle if I am very tired.
        SHORT PAUSE

42.   A: I don't like to watch other people fight.
        B: I like to watch people fight.
        RE: switched order
        SHORT PAUSE

43.   B: People always say mean things to me.
        A: People don't usually say mean things to me.
        SHORT PAUSE

44.   B: When I am scared, I run away.
        A: When I am scared, I stand up to what scares me.

46.   A: When I am sad, I go play in my room by myself.
        B: When I am sad, I go find someone to play with.
        LONG PAUSE

47.   A: I don't like to show things at "show and tell" at school.
        B: I like to show things in "show and tell" at school.
        RE: switched order

48.   B: A lot of things make me upset.
        A: It is hard for me to get upset.
        LONG PAUSE

49.   B: I am a good girl/boy.
        A: I am not a good girl/boy.

50.   A: I laugh a lot.
        B: I don't laugh a lot.
        LONG PAUSE

51.   A: I try hard in school.
        B: I don't try hard in school.

52.   A: People like me.
        B: People don't like me.
        LONG PAUSE

53.   B: I like to look at scary things on TV.
        A: When I see something scary on TV, I cover my face.
        LONG PAUSE

54.   A: I would play with a new kid in my school.
        B: I would not play with a new kid in my school.
        SHORT PAUSE

55.   A: I like to boss people around.
        B: I don't like to boss people around.

56. A: I am grumpy a little of the time.
     B: I am grumpy a lot of the time.

57. B: I hardly ever get sad.
     A: I get sad a lot.
     RE: switched order

58. B: Easy puzzles are fun.
     A: Hard puzzles are fun.
     SHORT PAUSE

59. A: It's not fun to ride in a fast car.
     B: It's fun to ride in a fast car.
     RE: switched order
     SHORT PAUSE

61. A: I don't cry when I get upset.
     B: I cry when I get upset.
     RE: switched order

62. B: I feel good inside.
     A: I don't feel that good inside.

60. B: It really bothers me when strangers look at me.
     A: It doesn't bother me when strangers look at me.

Appendix B

Teaching Tasks: Child Behavior Scales - Egeland & Sroufe Revised

Child Persistence: This is a measure of the extent to which the child actually was task oriented in the session. At the low extreme, the child shows no effort on any tasks, refuses to become involved in the tasks and either flees or spends his/her time in off-task activities, or is involved only to the extent that parent enforces his/her attention to her directions and responds to her questions about the task. At the high end, the child is actively engaged in the task and attempts solutions either directly on his/her own or through parent's mediating suggestions (regardless of how good the child or parent's skills on the task really are). The child may be sober or playful, compliant or not to the parent's directions as long as he/she shows motivation toward solving the task. Although the child's degree of task motivation may depend greatly on the parent's efforts to keep the child on task, the observer should consider this rating to reflect the child's problem-solving regardless of the degree to which parent was instrumental on creating persistence.

1. Very low: Child actively tries to avoid the task. S/he seems to want no part in this task and spends as little time as s/he can get away with doing the task at all.

2. Low: Child is engaged somewhat in the task but efforts are mixed and s/he has no long periods of concentrated problem-solving. The child might respond to task-related questions but doesn't invest any effort in this or any of his/her own energies to it.

3. Moderate: Child sustains some long periods of task oriented efforts, but clearly loses interest when task reaches some difficulty level. His/her persistence eventually wanes, however, on portions of the task and s/he begins to treat them in a task-avoidant fashion with superficial answers that show lack of concentration or disinterest.

4. High: Child persists across most of the session in trying to solve the problems. S/he loses interest or concentration only sporadically within an overall pattern of effort on the task (2 instances of stopped task behavior)

5. Very high: Child is persistent virtually throughout the session. S/he displays very little if any diversionary tactics requiring special effort by the parent to engage him/her at the tasks. S/he works at each task with an apparent goal of getting correct solutions for each part of the tasks until the puzzle is finished.

Note: A child who is on task much of the time because of constant efforts by the parent to return the child to the tasks should not get a score of 5, even though the child worked at all the tasks.

Compliance: Child complies with parent's task directions: This scale measures the degree to which the child shows willingness to listen to parent's suggestions in the setting and to comply with parent's requests in a reasonable manner. At the high end, a child matches his/her behavior to the parental directions in a detailed fashion. (e.g.,, if parent asks the child to try and use a certain piece, the child uses that piece). The child also is attentive to parent

and may focus his/her activity around parent's directions to the extent that she/he provides direction. At the low end of the scale, the child actively refuses to comply with parental directions throughout most of the session. The child may do so by overt denial of parent's demands and pulling away from the parent or leaving the table, rejecting parent's physical efforts to help solve the task, and acting contrary to parent's suggestions. At intermediate scale points, the child show a mixture of compliant and rejecting response to parent's plans, acts as though incognizant of parent's suggestions either because the child is involved in his/her own schedule of activity or the parent gives few directions with which to comply.

1. <u>Very Low:</u> Child rejects virtually all directions of parent during the session. Early in session and continuing throughout, the child refuses to obey parent. Commands and suggestions may be followed at initial steps but are regularly sequenced with refusals to comply. In effect, the child does nothing demanded of him/her.

2. <u>Low:</u> Child shows strong tendency toward noncompliance but it is mixed with a few efforts to follow suggestions and directions given by parent. There are major, but isolated, episodes of noncompliance during the session, or tendencies toward noncompliance throughout, that make the interaction difficult and strained. Noncompliance is more sporadic and probably patterned to frustrating and difficult moments of the session compared to the above level.

3. <u>Moderate:</u> The child seems not to be strongly invested in noncompliance and basically compiles eventually to most directives. There seems to be some purposeful noncompliance, however, that produces momentary difficulties between parent and child. The child basically seems compliant toward parent's demands and willing to work in collaboration with him/her, but the child's own schedule of activities sometimes leads to noncompliance.

4. <u>High:</u> Child complies with virtually all major directions of parent, e.g.,, staying on task or returning to task efforts at parent's direction, accepting parent's ideas on how to do the task. Child may not comply with lesser details with regularity; however, e.g.,, parent's suggestions about placing a particular piece sometimes would go unheeded. Child does not seem invested in rejecting parent's directions, and episodes of noncompliance are brief and followed by behavior indicating acceptance of parent's leadership. Child may be briefly noncompliant when frustrated or bored, but recovers quickly.

5. <u>Very Low:</u> Child actively orients toward parent's directions in the session and complies to all major task instructions plus most details about specific behaviors on the tasks, e.g.,, using the particular piece parent suggests, giving answers to parent's questions about the form and color or pieces on the puzzle task. Thus, the child molds his/her behavior into a collaborative effort with parent on the tasks, heeding suggestions with a compliance that suggests a basic trust in parent's advice and direction and acceptance of parent's authority as a guide in this situation. The child may disagree with some ideas and argue for other approaches to problem details, but these behaviors reflect autonomy within a compliant orientation rather than intentional noncompliance.

Positive Affect: This rating scale addresses the child's expressions of global positive affect. These feelings are expressed by a display of smiling, laughing, verbalizations (e.g., positive tone of voice, squeals of delight), or delight in response to the task. Such expressions occur outside of (or in addition to) affection displayed specifically toward the parent.

1. Very Low: No expressions of positive affect displayed. Child expresses neutral or negative affect and makes no attempt to share positive feelings, whether in response to his/her own actions or the parent's actions. Child does not smile or laugh. (Nothing at all)

2. Low: Child may be generally neutral but expresses positive feelings only once or twice during the session

3. Moderate: Child is generally contented and expresses positive emotions (more then 1 or 2 times)

4. High: Child expresses positive affect although not to the degree that a child with a 5 rating does. The child smiles and is generally in an upbeat and happy mood. S/he is enjoying the interaction (half time- more happy then neutral)

5. Very High: Child's expressions of some form of positive affect (smiles, squalls, laughter) is present throughout almost all of the session. Clearly, child is thoroughly enjoying the interaction.

Note: Consider whether they are drawing or building

Negative Affect: This rating scale addresses the child's expression of global negative affect. Negativity can arise from a number of factors, including irritability, a bad day, a cold, or fatigue as well as emotional hostility and anger. Negativity may be expressed by fussing, pouting, crying, yelling, throwing toys, banging toys, pushing toys away, turning away, shrieking, whining, refusals, etc. Such expressions occur outside of (or in addition to) negativity displayed specifically toward the parent.

1. Very Low: No expressions of negative affect. Child expresses neutral or positive affect throughout the session. (nothing negative)

2. Low: Negative feelings are expressed once or twice during the session (negative anything at least once)

3. Moderate: Child expresses negative emotions on several occasions or during one significant period, but these are rather isolated episodes separated by periods in which the child displays more positive affect (more then 1 or 2 times).

4. High: Child expresses some form of negative affect approximately half of the time.

5. Very High: Child frequently expresses some form of negative affect (e.g., frowning, use of negative gestures, active crying, hitting, kicking, or temper tantrum) throughout the session. The degree of anger here seems so strong that the child cannot disguise it in subtle ways for very long.

Note: Make sure negative statement is actually said in a negative feeling, do it in general- not related to task, be careful when judging sad facial expressions- make sadness and boredness be accompanied by speech reason qualifying the emotion

Activity Level: This is a measure of the child's overall activity level during the session. At the high end, the child displays a tendency to run around the room, jump around, bounce on furniture, etc. The child has difficulty remaining seated, and often fidgets and manipulates toys in a rough manner (e.g., throwing them around, banging on them, etc.). At the low end, the child does not display an unusual amount of activity, given their age and the task requirements. The child does not have difficulty remaining seated for the duration of the task.

1. Very Low: Child does not display excessive activity, outside of what would be expected given his/her age. Child sits quietly for almost all of the session, and instances of higher activity are very short in duration and mild in nature (e.g., fidgeting slightly, getting up and sitting right back down).

2. Low: Child sits or stands quietly for most of the session, but may display a few instances of higher activity level (e.g., fidgeting, getting up and walking around the room briefly). These instances are short in duration and moderate in nature (e.g., no wild horseplay is displayed).

3. Moderate: Child displays evidence of moderate activity level throughout the session, or one brief instance of higher activity level. Moderate activity level may include fidgeting or playing a little rough with toys, while higher activity level includes jumping or bouncing around the room (moderate bouncing and fidgeting in place).

4. High: Child has several periods of excessive activity, including jumping around, running around the room, not remaining seated, etc. These activities are mixed, however, with periods of low activity during which the child is sitting down and attending to task (any periods of staying still).

5. Very High: Child displays excessive activity throughout most of the session, with very few or no periods of quiet, task-focused behavior (constantly in motion- unusual)

Note: Don't include standing up if it's to see something better, do look at fidgeting, look at *How* they walk around the room

Distractibility: This scale reflects the degree to which the child maintains attention to the task. At the low end, the child remains focused on the task and is actively engaged in the task throughout the session. At the high end, the child's attention frequently and easily shifts

away from the task, and the child's attention frequently and easily shifts away from the task, and the child is minimally engaged in the task.

1. Very Low: Child remains focused on the task at hand (i.e. pays attention to his/her parent's actions and/or verbalizations, or explores puzzle) and resists external distraction (e.g., sibling interference, other activities going on in room), Child remains engaged in interaction throughout the task. Still is ok to look around once or twice, as long as it is not prolonged. (Coloring and building on task)

2. Low: Child may be momentarily distracted by external distraction, but returns quickly to the task at hand with little or no encouragement or prodding needed from parent. Child is engaged in interaction for extended periods of time (working with materials, but can get caught up in own agenda)

3. Moderate: Child may be momentarily distracted by external distraction and needs parental intervention to return to the task. Child does appear engaged in interaction for some periods of time (contributing to task most of time- but sometimes doing other things)

4. High: Child's attention shifts away from the task or from one stimulus to another, and it is difficult to engage the child in an extended interaction. Any prolonged engagement relies heavily on the parent's ability to keep the child's attention. Child may try to distract from the task by making unrelated verbalizations (e.g., asking non-relevant questions, talking excessively).

5. Very High: Child's attention shifts at the slightest external stimulation or for no apparent reason and it is almost impossible to keep him/her engaged for more than short periods of time. Child frequently tries to distract attention from the task by making unrelated verbalizations (hardly drawing or building)

Note: Don't discount what's going on and the task, drawing pets and houses are ok, has to be really, really off task to strongly effect score, as long as building part of ranch they are ok, playing with horses is ok