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A Comparison of Self-Concepts of Children Placed in a Pull-Out,
Resource Center Versus an In-Class Support Model

by
Stephanie A. Scafario

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division
of Rowan University
April 23, 1997

Approved by Professor _____
Professor

Date Approved April 23, 1997

ABSTRACT

Stephanie A. Scafario
A Comparison of Self-Concepts of Children Placed in
a Pull-Out, Resource Center Versus an In-Class
Support Model

1997

Dr. Stanley Urban
Learning Disabilities Graduate Program

Since inclusion is becoming a popular practice in many schools, its effects on children with learning disabilities must be considered. A child's self-concept is an important factor which often influences his success in academic, social, and emotional domains. Therefore, the effect that placement in a full day, in-class support classroom has on students with learning disabilities was investigated. A sample of 28 students with the classifications of perceptually impaired or neurologically impaired from grades 3, 4, and 5 participated in the study. Two groups were studied. One group received special education services through in-class support classrooms, while the other group received services through pull-out, resource center programs. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was administered. *T* tests were conducted to determine if any differences found were statistically significant.

The results indicated that the mean global self-concept score for the third grade in-class support students was significantly higher than the mean score for the third grade resource center students. There was no statistically significant difference between the two placement groups when examining fourth and fifth grade mean scores. Also, when the three grade levels were combined and the two placements were compared, there was no significant difference between the mean global self-concept scores.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Stephanie A. Scafario

A Comparison of Self-Concepts of Children Placed in
a Pull-Out, Resource Center Versus an In-Class
Support Model

1997

Dr. Stanley Urban

Learning Disabilities Graduate Program

This study was completed to compare and analyze the effects of placement in an in-class support model versus a resource center model on the self-concepts of students with learning disabilities. When the mean global self-concept scores were compared, there was no statistically significant difference between the two placement groups.

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Chapter I

THE PROBLEM

Background

Inclusion and mainstreaming are trends in education that are gaining popularity. The inclusion of special education students into the mainstream of regular education classes has had a major impact on the special and general education programs across the nation. The current movement towards inclusion began in 1975 with the passage of Public Law 94-142. Although the actual words "inclusion" or "mainstreaming" were not mentioned in the law, the concept began with the terminology of "least restrictive environment." PL 94-142 stipulates that "no child, regardless of disability can be denied an appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment" (Stainback, Stainback, & Forest, 1989). In other words, the preferred placement is the least segregated setting in which a handicapped child can continue to learn.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1990) further advanced the education of special education students in the mainstream by stating that "to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities...are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children

with disabilities from the regular environment occurs only when the nature and severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be attained satisfactorily."

The in-class support classroom has become considered as part of the supplementary aids and services used to enable special education students to be educated in the mainstream with their regular education peers. It is also considered the least restrictive environment for many learning disabled children. In this type of classroom, a regular education and a special education teacher work collaboratively to teach all students using strategies and materials to meet all their needs.

Research Question

Do children with learning disabilities who participate in full day, in-class support classrooms express more positive self-concepts than children with learning disabilities who are placed in pull-out, resource center programs?

Need For The Study

Since inclusion has been and is being implemented in so many schools throughout the country, it seems logical to question its effectiveness for students with learning disabilities. Many studies have been completed to evaluate the academic outcomes of placement in pull-out, resource center programs as compared to placement in inclusive, in-class support classrooms. However, fewer studies have considered the effects both placements have on the self-concept of learning disabled children. This area should be

addressed in order to further evaluate the in-class support program as a placement option for learning disabled students.

Value Of The Study

Decisions concerning placement in special education programs are often difficult and time consuming. Many considerations need to be addressed. Educational and physical needs play important roles in the decision making process. However, the effect that a program will have on a student's self-concept is also very important. Research on the effects that placement in the in-class support and resource-center programs have on the self-concept of children with learning disabilities would be useful when considering future placements for these children.

Limitations

This study is restricted to a limited number of third, fourth, and fifth grade learning disabled students in one public school system. The participants were not randomly selected. The selection was made on the basis of their placements in special education programs and thus is an ex post facto study.

Placement in a program will not be the only factor influencing a child's self-concept. Other social and environmental factors, such as family, teacher, and peer relationships, as well as academic ability, may influence a student's self-concept.

The participants may have difficulty understanding and/or completing the instrument used to measure their self-concepts. In addition, they may not be completely

open in evaluating their perceptions of themselves. These factors could prevent a reliable and valid measure of the self-concepts of children with learning disabilities.

Definitions

In-Class Support. A program of instruction where regular and special education teachers are collaboratively responsible for daily planning and implementing the strategies, methods, and materials to address the learning problems of students with learning disabilities who take part in the regular education classroom on a full-time basis. The regular education curriculum is followed with modifications made as necessary.

Inclusion. When all students, regardless of their disabilities, are educated in regular education classrooms with their age appropriate peers on a full-time basis. They receive support from special education and regular education teachers.

Learning Disability. A generic term referring to a heterogeneous group of disorders that are most evident as problems with the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. For the purpose of this study, Perceptually Impaired (defined below) and Neurologically Impaired (defined below) children will fall into this category.

Mainstreaming. Students with disabilities spend all or part of the day in an age appropriate regular education classroom. The part of the day these children spend in regular education depends on their ability level and needs.

Perceptually Impaired. A specific learning disability manifested by a severe discrepancy between the pupil's current achievement and intellectual ability in one or more of the following areas: basic reading skills, reading comprehension, oral expression, listening comprehension, mathematic computation, mathematic reasoning, and written expression.

Neurologically Impaired. A specific impairment or dysfunction of the nervous system or traumatic brain injury which adversely affects the education of a pupil. An evaluation by a physician trained in neurodevelopmental assessment is required.

Regular Education Teacher. A classroom teacher who holds a certificate for the grade level taught.

Resource Center. A program in which learning disabled students are pulled out of the regular education classroom for instruction provided by a special education teacher in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics.

Self-Concept. The perception that one has of oneself, either overall or in relation to a particular setting as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (Piers, 1984).

Special Education Teacher. A teacher holding the New Jersey Department of Education certification as "Teacher of the Handicapped."

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Self-Concept: Definitions and Importance

Self-concept may be generally defined as one's view of oneself, either overall or in relation to a specific setting (Bender, 1995). Muller (1978) refers to self-concept as "an individual's repertoire of self-descriptive behaviors." He argues that self-concept has three components; self-knowledge, or self-descriptive behaviors, self-esteem, or self-valuations, and self-ideal, or qualities that one desires to achieve.

According to Krieg (1994), a child's interaction with the environment determines his self-concept. Parents and educators, he argues, have the strongest influence on the child's self-concept. This is because the expectations and attitudes that significant others hold have a close correlation with the child's view of himself (Krieg, 1994). Parents and educators can have a positive impact on a child's self-concept by setting realistic expectations for the child.

A good self-concept enables children to see that they are their own best resource and enables them to take risks, both of which are valuable to academic life.

Self-Concept: Models and Implications

Currently, there are four different models or ways to look at the construct of self-concept. Each model is complete with its own definition, theory, and educational implications. The oldest model is the Nomothetic Model, which views self-concept as "a unidimensional, overarching construct in which a global positive or negative view of oneself pervasively affects one's behavior in a wide variety of settings" (Strein, 1993). Self-concept is seen as global, rather than divided among domains. Proponents of this model would argue that "changes in global self-concept would have generalized effects on behavior in a wide variety of domains, including academic achievement and performance" (Strein, 1993). Proponents would also argue that a success in one area, resulting in an increase in one's global self-concept, would lead to positive behavior in another area (Strein, 1993). In other words, according to this model, achieving success in a basketball game would strengthen one's global self-concept and as a result one would perform better academically in the classroom. However, this model has little support from empirical research.

A second model, the Hierarchical Model, sees self-concept as multidimensional. This model has a solid research base. Proponents of this model, Shavelson and Bolos (1982), describe self-concept as a pyramid with global self-concept at the top level, intermediate self-concepts at the middle level, and specific self-concepts at the bottom level. Unlike the Nomothetic Model, this model calls for domain-specific intervention (Strein, 1993). These theorists feel that in order to improve self-concept and ability in a certain domain, such as reading, intervention should be focused on that area.

The Taxonomic Model is much like the Hierarchical Model. Its proponents define self-concept as "a multifaceted construct in which academic self-concept is simply one of any number of components, each of which could be associated with behavior in a specific domain (Strein, 1993). This model also has a supportive research base.

Implications for practice in education are the same as those from the Hierarchical Model.

The fourth and final model is the Compensatory Model. This model is unique in that its focus is on students with special needs. Like the previous two models, the Compensatory Model is multifaceted. However, it calls for "compensatory relationships" between the facets (Winne, Woodlands, & Wong, 1982). In other words, a low self-concept in one facet, such as academic achievement, is compensated for by an increased self-concept in another facet, such as athletic ability. Theoretical research to support this model is limited; therefore, its implications are unclear.

The Hierarchical Model has the strongest research base, therefore it will be further considered. As previously mentioned, this model's proponents see self-concept as multidimensional and argue that in order to improve self-concept in a certain domain, that domain should be addressed through intervention. Traditionally, research has found that students with learning disabilities have lower self-concepts than their non disabled peers (Bender, 1995). According to the Hierarchical Model, in order to improve the academic self-concepts of these students, intervention should be focused on their academic self-concept. One way that some educators have begun this intervention is through placing students with learning disabilities in supported regular education classrooms. It is argued that this type of placement removes the stigma of being placed in a special class or

being pulled out of the regular classroom for a resource program. At the same time, it provides the support needed to allow the students to experience the academic success which may in turn improve their academic self-concept.

Frame of Reference Effects on Self-Concept

Research supports the idea that academic self-concept is influenced by frame of reference effects. Strein (1993) argues that academic self-concept is one's perception of one's relative competence. Marsh and Parker (1984) refer to this as the Big-Fish-Little-Pond-Effect (BFLPE), in which "students form their academic self-concepts by comparing their academic performance against other students in their own classroom or school building, rather than against some broader reference point, such as community-wide or national standards." This theory leads to obvious implications for educational practices. The BFLPE would suggest that when children with learning disabilities are mainstreamed and placed in a class with general education students, they would have lower academic self-concepts than if they were placed in a homogeneous class with other special education students. This has been confirmed by research studies (Renick & Harter, 1989; Strang, Smith, & Roger, 1978) that found academic self-concepts of mainstreamed students with educational disabilities were lower when their frame of reference was the regular education class, and higher when other special education students were their frame of reference. Hence, these researchers would argue that placement in the regular classroom would be detrimental to the academic self-concepts of students with educational disabilities. However, before that conclusion

can be drawn, further research should be considered and conducted to determine whether the academic self-concepts of these students would increase in a mainstreamed setting in which all of their educational needs were addressed.

Self-Concepts of Students with Learning Disabilities

Often students with learning disabilities become frustrated academically. As a result, they may act disruptively and develop negative feelings about themselves. Unlike general education students who learn and develop positive attitudes about the things they are able to do, students with learning disabilities often learn and focus on the things that they cannot do, resulting in poor self-concepts (Haring, McCormick, & Haring, 1994). Research has shown that young students with learning disabilities have lower self-concepts than other students (Bender, 1995). The negative achievement-related beliefs that these children develop often create problems in addition to the learning disability (Licht, 1984). Therefore, it is important to study how educational practices and placements may affect the learning disabled students' self-concepts and find ways in which educators can provide intervention to improve their self-concepts.

In-Class Support

When placing students with mild academic handicaps, such as learning disabilities, there are different program options to consider. PL 94-142 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) require children with special needs to be placed in the least segregated setting in which they can learn and to be educated in the

mainstream as much as possible with the support of supplementary aids and services. As a result of these mandates, the In-class Support Model was developed in New Jersey. It is a means of educating students with educational disabilities in regular education classes. Regular and special education teachers work collaboratively to plan and implement lessons using specific strategies to help serve the needs of the special education students in the regular class (DiMeo, 1992). The regular education curriculum for the grade or subject is used. However, special education teachers may make modifications or use special methods and materials to help the special education students meet their educational goals. At the elementary level, eight special education students may participate in the regular education class when the special education teacher is present for each instructional period that is taught (DiMeo, 1992).

Special education students in this type of classroom receive the instruction and support that they need to experience academic success in the regular education classroom. The stigma of being pulled out of or separated from the regular class is removed. As a result, some educators feel that the children's self-concepts may be positively influenced.

Other states have developed similar models to address the needs of children with mild academic handicaps in the regular education setting. The Class Within A Class (CWC) Model, developed by Floyd Hudson (1990), calls for the collaboration of regular and special education teachers and involves shared instructional responsibilities, as well as, enhanced curriculum components. The Team Approach to Mastery (TAM) Model was developed and implemented in the Christiana School District of Newark, Delaware in 1975 (Bear & Proctor, 1990). Like the previously mentioned models, regular and

special education teachers collaboratively instruct all students in the same classroom and the regular curriculum is used. Research has been completed to determine the effects this type of placement has on the self-concepts of students with educational disabilities and will be discussed further.

Effects of Educational Placements on Self-Concept

Some research suggests that an increase in self-concept may result in an increase in academic achievement (Shavelson & Bohus, 1982). According to Wylie (1968) learning to succeed results in a positive view of self. Since the school environment emphasizes the importance of academic achievements, one would believe that students' views of their academic success strongly influences their self-concepts (Langdon, 1993). Because of this relationship, it is important to consider how educational placements will influence students' self-concepts. The educational placement that will help increase the self-concepts of children with academic disabilities should be an important consideration. Several studies involving the effects of special education placement on this type of student will be reviewed.

Calhoun and Elliott (1977) completed a three year longitudinal study to measure the self-concepts of educable mentally retarded (EMR) students in inclusive and self-contained classes. Fifty EMR students were randomly assigned to either third grade self-contained, special education or full-time, regular education classes. Similar methods and materials were used in both settings. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was administered. The children in the regular education class were found to have better

self-concepts, as indicated by the scale, than the students in special education classes. They also were found to have higher achievement scores, suggesting the positive relationship between academic achievement and self-concept. The authors indicated that they believe a factor related to placement, rather than the teachers or curriculum lead to their findings because both groups were taught by special education teachers and in both placements, level and pacing were appropriate for the needs of the students. Therefore, they argue, students in the regular class placement may have felt a greater sense of accomplishment which resulted in an increase in their self-concepts. One limitation of this study is that it was limited to third grade students. Students from other grade levels should be included.

Bear, Clever, and Proctor conducted research on self-perceptions of children with learning disabilities in integrated classes. They looked at the areas of scholastic competence, behavioral conduct, and global self-worth (Bear, Clever, & Proctor, 1991). The subjects included nonhandicapped students in integrated and nonintegrated classrooms, as well as, learning disabled students in integrated classrooms. For the purpose of this thesis, only the learning disabled students will be discussed.

Fifty-two children with learning disabilities in third grade TAM classrooms were rated by their teachers using the Teacher-Child Rating Scale. The Self-Perception Profile for Children was also given in each classroom. According to Bear, Clever, and Proctor (1991), teacher rating indicated "deficiencies in learning and social behaviors among children in the learning disabled integrated group." Results from the SSP-C Scales indicated that the learning disabled students had poor self-perceptions of scholastic

competence, behavioral conduct, and global self-worth. A possible reason suggested by the authors is that their deficiencies are more evident when they are placed in a class with nonhandicapped peers. Their finding support the BFLPE which argues that when special education students are mainstreamed and use the regular education students in their class as a frame of reference, their self-concept suffers.

This study was limited in that only fifty-two students were included and the subjects were from one grade level. Self-perceptions of learning disabled students in other grades may differ. Further research with more subjects from various grade levels should be done. Also, the self-perceptions of students with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms should be compared to students with learning disabilities in other placements.

The importance of the reference group on a child's self-concept was also considered by Silon and Harter (1985). They measured the self-concepts of 126 educable mentally handicapped (EMH) students who were either mainstreamed, partially mainstreamed, or self-contained. After their self-concepts were measured, they were interviewed and asked who they compared themselves with when making self-evaluations. No differences were found among the groups' self-concepts. However, the data from the interviews suggested that the mainstreamed EMH students compared themselves to other mainstreamed EMH students, while the self-contained students compared themselves to other self-contained students.

Meece and Wang (1982) conducted a study to compare the social attitudes and behaviors of students with mild academic handicaps randomly assigned to either regular

classes all day or to regular classes half the day and special reading and math classes the rest of the day. The students in the regular classes all day were part of an innovative and individualized program. These students were found to have higher self-esteem and peer competence and received higher peer acceptance ratings than the students who were only partially integrated. The findings of this study may indicate that the methods of instruction used in the classroom are as important as the placement.

Hudson and Klamm (1989) studied the self-concepts of students with learning disabilities in grades three through six using the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. The study included thirty-seven students participating in a CWC program and twenty-eight students who received special education services through self-contained classrooms. They found no significant differences in the self-concept scores. This study was limited in that it had a small sample size.

Langdon (1993) also studied the effect of participation in a CWC program on the self-concepts of one hundred forty-eight male students from four groups; special education students in CWC programs, special education students in resource programs, regular education students in CWC programs, and regular education students in traditional programs. The special education students were identified as learning disabled or educable mentally handicapped. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was administered to the boys in the four groups. The results indicated that there were no significant differences in self-concepts among any of the groups studied. However, a relatively large percentage of both groups of CWC students scored in the upper quartile. The fact that there was no statistically significant difference in the scores is noteworthy

because as previously mentioned, special education students tend to have lower self-concepts than their regular education peers. A limitation of this study is that only boys were included in the sample. The results may have differed if girls had been included.

The findings from the studies reviewed are mixed. Some students with mild academic handicaps, when placed in an integrated setting, achieved higher self-concepts than their peers in special education settings. However, other studies indicated that placement had no effect on self-concept. The methods of instruction and modifications used may be factors that influenced the results. Another factor that may affect the self-concepts of these children is who they identify as their reference group when making self-evaluations. Further research should be conducted to determine the effect that New Jersey's in-class support model has on the self-concepts of students with learning disabilities.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

This study will examine the effects of educational placement on the self-concepts of 28 students with learning disabilities. The students are placed in resource center and in-class support programs. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale will be administered to the participants. The mean scores will be analyzed to determine if there is a significant difference between groups.

Sample

The participants in this study are 28 students in the third, fourth, and fifth grades from two different schools, School A and School B, in School District X. The sample was selected based on convenience and accessibility. It includes special education students identified as Perceptually Impaired and Neurologically Impaired who participate in in-class support or resource center programs. The total sample was made up of 10 third graders, 10 fourth graders, and 8 fifth graders divided evenly between each placement group.

The students in the two placement groups are not appreciably different. Students were placed in the setting that would best meet their educational needs in their neighborhood schools. School A has in-class support programs in third and fourth grades, while School B has an in-class support program for fifth grade only. Therefore, many of School B's third and fourth grade students requiring special education services participate in resource center programs.

A brief educational history of the students in the sample will be discussed. This is the first year that the 5 third grade students have participated in an in-class support program. In second grade they were pulled out of the regular classroom for instruction in the resource center. This is the second year that 4 of the fourth grade students have participated in an in-class support program. Last year, 1 student participated in a resource center program. This is the third year that 4 of the fifth grade students have been in an in-class support program. The resource center group is made up of 5 third grade students, 5 fourth grade students, and 4 fifth grade students who participated in resource center programs last year.

Measures

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was selected as the measure of self-concept. It is a self-report instrument for children in grades 3 through 12, with a reading level of at least third grade (Piers, 1996). However, younger children or children with lower reading levels may have the scale read to them. The instrument consists 80

statements to which the student responds "yes" or "no." A global score of 0 to 80 may be earned. Higher scores indicated a more positive self-concept.

Piers (1996) ensured content validity by defining the universe of self-concept as the areas in which children reported qualities about themselves which they liked or disliked. Convergent validity coefficients based on correlations with other self-concept measures ranged from .32 to .85 (Piers, 1996). Reliability coefficients reported by Piers (1996) ranged from .78 to .93, with four month stability coefficients of .71 to .77.

Norms were only presented for global scores. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, only the global score will be considered.

Design

This study is designed to see if special education students who are placed in in-class support classrooms have higher self-concepts than special education students who are placed in pull-out, resource center programs. In approaching this problem, it was decided to use a posttest design. In order to have a sample size that permits a better degree of power in data analysis, the grade levels will be combined. The independent variable of placement will be analyzed with the dependent variable of self-concept.

Informed consent (see Appendix B) was obtained from the parents/guardians of the students prior to their participation in the study. Early in January, the scale will be administered to all of the participants in small groups. Before the administration of the scale, the examiner will explain its purpose. The scale will be read to the students in

order to allow for low reading levels. The testing session should take 20 to 30 minutes. The posttests will be scored and the results recorded.

Analysis

The research question asked: Do children with learning disabilities who participate in full-day, in-class support classrooms express more positive self-concepts than children with learning disabilities who are placed in pull-out resource center programs? In order to analyze the differences in the global self-concept scores, a *t*-test will be conducted. This will ascertain whether there are any significant differences between the mean self-concept scores of the groups. The results will be analyzed and discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

Introduction

Issues concerning inclusion of students with learning disabilities in regular education classrooms have received much attention throughout the country. Some of these issues include the effects that this type of placement has on children's self-concepts, academic achievement, and social skills. This study asked whether there were differences in the mean self-concept scores between learning disabled students in pull-out, resource center programs and full day, in-class support programs. The following analyses consider the significance of the differences.

Results

The research question was analyzed in terms of the Piers-Harris global self-concept score. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics and Table 2 summarizes the analysis of the differences of the mean global self-concept scores for the 28 cases studied.

A *t*-test for each grade level and the total group was completed to determine whether the differences between the in-class support and resource center groups' mean

scores were statistically significant. Results of this analysis indicated that only in third grade did the mean global self-concept score on the Piers-Harris differ significantly in favor of the in-class support classroom placement. The differences found between the grades four and five, as well as the total group, were not statistically significant. The large standard deviations of the scores, as shown in Table 1, may contribute to the lack of significance. It should be noted that the third grade resource center group is the only group that had a mean self-concept global score below the average range (between the 31st and the 70th percentiles), according to the norms provided in the Piers-Harris manual (Piers, 1996).

Summary

This study examined the effects of a full day, in-class support program on the self-concepts of students with learning disabilities. A sample of 28 elementary school students in grades 3, 4, and 5 from School A and School B in School District X were given the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. A *t*-test was conducted to ascertain whether the differences in the groups' mean global self-concept scores are statistically significant. Results indicated that the mean score for the third grade, in-class support students was significantly higher than the mean score for the third grade resource center students. There was no significant difference found for the fourth or fifth grade placements. Also, when the three grade levels were combined and mean global scores for each placement were compared, the results indicated no significant differences between the groups.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Piers-Harris Global Scores
(N = 28)

<u>Placement</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>N</u>
In-Class Support	3	64.80	12.62	46-76	5
	4	60.40	18.56	29-74	5
	5	57.50	9.54	52-64	4
	Group Total	61.14	13.09	29-76	14
Resource Center	3	35.2	15.77	14-50	5
	4	63.6	8.68	51-74	5
	5	56.5	13.92	44-73	4
	Group Total	51.43	17.57	14-74	14

Table 2

Analysis of Significance of Differences: Piers-Harris Global Score
by Grade and Placement
(95% Confidence Interval)

<u>Grade</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>t Ratio</u>	<u>Critical t</u>
3	8	3.280	1.860
4	8	-0.350	1.860
5	6	.120	1.943
Group Total	26	1.674	1.706

Chapter V

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This study was conducted to determine the effects that placement in two types of special education programs has on the self-concepts of students with learning disabilities. The placements were inclusive classrooms and pull-out, resource center programs. The findings and conclusions will be discussed.

Summary and Conclusions

Since inclusion is becoming a popular practice in many schools, its effects on children with learning disabilities must be considered. A child's self-concept is an important factor which often influences his success in academic, social, and emotional domains. Therefore, the effect that placement in a full day, in-class support classroom has on students with learning disabilities was investigated. A sample of 28 students with the classifications of perceptually impaired or neurologically impaired from grades 3, 4, and 5 participated in the study. Two groups were studied. One group received special education services through in-class support classrooms, while the other group received

services through pull-out, resource center programs. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was administered.

The results indicated that the mean global self-concept score for the third grade in-class support students was significantly higher than the mean score for the third grade resource center students. There was no statistically significant difference between the two placement groups when examining fourth and fifth grade mean scores. Also, when the three grade levels are combined and the two placements are compared, there is no significant difference between the mean global self-concepts scores.

Discussion and Implications

The results of this study did not support the expected hypothesis that students receiving special education services through in-class support classrooms would have significantly higher self-concept scores than students receiving special education services through resource center programs. Instead, the results indicated that only the third grade sample of students who take part in an in-class support classroom had a significantly higher mean global self-concept score than their resource center counterparts.

Although the expected hypothesis was not supported, a positive trend was noted. The mean global self-concept scores for each group of the students receiving special education services through the in-class support model was in the average range. This means that their self-concept ratings are comparable to regular education students. Therefore, contrary to what some would argue, it does not appear that placement in the regular classroom has an adverse effect on the self-concepts of students with learning disabilities.

According to the findings of this study, it appears that an inclusive placement would not be detrimental to a child's self-concept. Furthermore, it is felt that this type of setting should be considered when deciding on the best placement for a learning disabled child.

Implications for Further Study

A previously mentioned limitation of this study was the small sample size. Students from only one public school system were studied. Using larger samples in each group, as well as including a broader range of characteristics, such as a wider age and grade range, social status, academic status, and SES level may be helpful.

This study focused only on special education students. It would also be of interest to compare the mean global self-concept scores of the students with learning disabilities in both placements to the mean scores of general education students in both traditional and inclusive classrooms. This would allow researchers to examine differences and similarities among the groups.

Further research should focus on other benefits special education students may receive by taking part in an inclusive program. For example, the academic achievements of students in the two placement groups could be examined. Research on the impact that placement has on students' achievement levels, study skills, and applications of learning strategies would be interesting.

The satisfaction ratings of teachers, parents, and students involved in each type of placement should also be examined. These factors could influence the educational programs. They should therefore be considered and controlled for in future studies.

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APPENDIX A

REQUEST TO COMPLETE STUDY

October 3, 1996

Jane Doe
Director of Special Services
Street
Town, NJ 08000

Dear Mrs. Doe,

I am writing to request permission to do a research study for my thesis project. I would like to compare the effects that placement in team teaching classrooms and resource center programs have on the classified student's self concepts. If granted permission, this January I would give a self concept evaluation scale to the classified students in third, fourth and fifth grades who participate in team teaching and resource center programs. The evaluations could be completed in group sessions and would take no longer than thirty minutes. All information gathered would be strictly confidential and used only for the purpose of this study.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions, please contact me at School X.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Scafario

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

November 22, 1996

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Stephanie Scafario. I am a teacher at School X and a graduate student at Rowan College. This year, for my thesis project, I would like to study the effects of different placements on students' self-concepts. I am writing to request permission to give your child a brief self-concept assessment sometime in January. No names will be used in the project and results will be strictly confidential.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at School X, 555-1212. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Scafario

Please sign and return this portion as soon as possible.

I, _____, grant my permission for my child, _____, to be given a self-concept assessment.

I, _____, do not grant permission for my child, _____, to be given a self-concept assessment.

