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**Brookover W B, Thomas S & Paterson A.** Self-concept of ability and school achievement. *Sociol. Educ.* 37:271-8, 1964.

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This paper reports the first phase of a longitudinal research program testing the hypothesis that students' school achievement as measured by teacher grades is affected and limited by the students' self-concept of their ability to learn and, further, that the students' self-concept of ability is a function of their perception of the evaluations and expectations that others—parents, teachers, and students—hold for them. [The *SSCI*® indicates that this paper has been cited in over 175 publications since 1966.]

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The research for this paper was based on data from a class of over 1,000 students in a medium-sized school system and demonstrated that a high self-concept of academic ability, as measured by an eight-item scale, is a necessary but not sufficient factor in school achievement.

The self-concept of ability scale developed for this research has been used in many (at last count over 200) subsequent studies of student self-concept. In addition, elementary school and post high-school levels of the self-concept scale have been developed. The total longitudinal study of the school class—grades 7

through 12—is summarized in three reports by me available in the ERIC files as ED 002946, ED 003294, and ED 010796.

While the "subject" students were in the ninth grade, we undertook three experiments designed to change the self-concepts of three samples of students—a classroom teacher experiment, a counselor experiment, and a parent experiment. In the latter we worked with both experimental and control groups of parents. During the trial period a member of the control group, with whom we had avoided any discussion of their children's self-concept of ability, heard about some self-concept research and tried to inject this topic into the discussion. We were able to deflect his interest, and the overall study results indicated that the experimental parents made significant changes in their children's self-concept and achievement. The incident, however, illustrates the difficulty of maintaining control of experiments with human subjects.

Several colleagues worked with me on this research and coauthored the reports: Ann Paterson, Shailer Thomas, Jean LaPere, Don Hamachek, Edsel Erickson, and Lee Joiner. Several other graduate students obtained data for their doctoral dissertations from the study.

This study was a major part of my research career in social and social-psychological factors affecting school learning. It preceded and contributed to extensive subsequent research concerned with school social systems and school climate effects on student achievement.<sup>1,2</sup> Both the self-concept and, later, school-effects research have provided some of the foundation for recent efforts to develop more effective schools.

1. Brookover W, Beady C, Flood P, Schweitzer J & Wisenbaker J. *School social system and student achievement: schools can make a difference*. New York: Praeger, 1979. 337 p. (Cited 70 times.) (Available under the title of *Schools can make a difference*. East Lansing, MI: Urban Affairs Programs, Michigan State University.)
2. Lynch M, Norem-Hebeisen A & Gergen K J, eds. *Self-concept: advances in theory and research*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Press, 1981. 367 p.