The Domain Specific Nature of Children's Self-Perceptions of Competence: An Exploratory Paradigm for Understanding the Social Construction of Self-Knowledge in Children

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ABSTRACT

In recent years we have witnessed a burgeoning interest in the role socializing agents' play in the development of children's self-perceptions of competence. Outlined extensively by Harter (1981, 1982, 1985), the basic assumption underlying this work is that the self-concept is a multidimensional construct reflecting cognitive representations of individuals' socialization experiences across achievement contexts. These multiple dimensions are subsumed under the guise of self-perceptions and are thought to reflect distinct cognitive structures within the phenomenological world of the child. To date, however, the majority of research stemming from Harter's original theoretical conceptualizations has been limited to examining the impact of socializing agents' expectations on children's self-perceptions of academic competence. The differential contributions made by socializing agents to the prediction of children's self-perceptions of competence across achievement domains, however, has not been assessed. In the present study, an attempt was made to fill this research gap.

In accordance with the recognition of the multidimensional nature of perceived competence, the purposes of this study were: (1) to compare the contributions made by different socializing agents' expectations to the prediction of children's self-perceived academic, social, behavioral and athletic competence; (2) to
assess the extent to which socializers' expectations contribute differentially to children's perceived competence when examined in conjunction with additional variables instrumental in the development of self-concept in children; (3) to extend Harter's (1981) original conceptualization of the self by testing a uniform perceived competence model across achievement domains; and (4) to identify the primary references children utilize to define themselves. Data were collected from 87 fourth and fifth grade children. The children completed questionnaires that assessed their self-perceived academic, social, behavioral and athletic competence. Teachers' and parents' actual expectations, children's perceptions of these expectations and children's academic and social performance were also measured. Four stepwise hierarchical regression analyses were conducted (i.e., one for self-perceived academic, social, behavioral and athletic competence, respectively) to identify those variables which best predict children's domain-specific self-perceptions. Results revealed that: (a) the relative contributions made by socializers' expectations to the prediction of children's perceived competence across achievement contexts vary as a function of the domain assessed; (b) children's perceptions of significant others' expectations and performance factors also play a significant role in the prediction of domain-specific perceived competence; and (c) the social references children utilize when making self-evaluations can be conceptualized within a
domain and context specific framework. Issues related to the development of self-concept theory, empirical research and counselling practices are discussed in relation to the acquisition of self-knowledge in children.
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As this thesis attempts to argue, any individual project engages and resonates with life from its intellectual surroundings and intimate relations. Therefore, I can only take partial credit in the inception, gestation and completion of this work, as it is the product of many individuals' ideas, criticisms, and encouragement.

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An acceptance of intersubjectivity helps us to come to terms with our vulnerability to and dependence on others, our commitment to and responsibility for others. Unlike communalism, it recognizes and allows a real difference between self and other. But unlike individualism, it does not turn that difference into a divisive barrier. Intersubjectivity suggests a relation between self and other that is based on fragility and need rather than on suspicion or suppression.


*Childhood is an invention, a social construct*


The individual begins by understanding and feeling everything through himself herself. . . . It is only through contact with the judgements and expectations of others that this anomie will gradually yield.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my late brother Ian who gave this work the life and/or self it has acquired.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade numerous studies have been conducted concerning the nature and origins of children's self-perceptions of competence. Outlined extensively by Harter (1981, 1982, 1985), the theoretical framework underlying this work is that the self-concept is a multidimensional construct reflecting cognitive representations of individuals' socialization experiences across achievement contexts (Harter, 1981, 1982, 1985). These dimensions are subsumed under the guise of self-perceptions and are thought to reflect distinct cognitive structures within the phenomenological world of the individual (Harter, 1982).

Despite the recent development of Harter's (1982, 1982, 1985) theoretical model and its applications across contexts, few studies have attempted: (1) to utilize Harter's (1981) original framework in understanding the nature and origins of self-concept development across achievement domains; and/or (2) compare and contrast domain-specific socialization influences on children's perceived competence across achievement contexts.

In an attempt to rectify this omission, this thesis represents an extension of the original work conducted by Harter (1981, 1982) and others (Eccles, 1983; Horn, 1985; Phillips, 1982, 1987) in two ways. First, it extrapolates from and extends Harter's (1981, 1982) original perceived competence model, which identifies as its theoretical
derivatives, significant others' expectations and children's performance success, by assessing the empirical significance of an additional cognitive construct known as children's perceptions of significant others' expectations (Eccles, 1983). Second, it relieves one shortcoming of research in this area by examining the contributions made by these variables to the prediction of children's self-perceptions of competence across achievement domains. The role of parents' and teachers' expectations, children's perceptions of these expectations and performance factors in shaping children's self-perceptions of competence is the particular focus. A review of the relevant literature follows.

Literature Review: Perceived Competence

The construct "perceived competence" has become pivotal in the evolution of self-perception theory and theories of social-cognitive development (see Harter, 1985 for a brief review). Harter (1982) defines "perceived competence" as a combination of two appraisals: (a) the subjective appraisal of one's own abilities across a spectrum of achievement domains; and (b) a global self-worth appraisal independent of any particular skill domain. The basic assumption underlying this definition is that children, without relinquishing an appraisal of their general self-worth, can and do differentiate among facets of themselves when making self-assessments (Cauce, 1986). This assumption delineates the hierarchically ordered self-assessment processes children engage in, whereby general self-worth is deemed a

The convergence of this construct across theories of child development and empirical research on its vicissitudes have led to an increased interest in understanding the nature and origins of children's self-perceptions. As a consequence, a small body of literature has developed in the past decade identifying various factors found to be related to children's self-perceptions. For example, classroom climates and experiences (Pintrich & Blumenfeld, 1985), I.Q. (Nicholls, 1978), past performance (Harter, 1982), peer comparisons (Ruble, Boggiano, Feldman & Loebl, 1980), children's perceived control over successes and failures (Harter & Connell, 1984), and children's achievement efforts (Dweck & Elliot, 1983; Eccles, Midgley & Adler, 1984; Phillips, 1984) have all been related to children's self-judgements.

The initial studies by Harter (1982) and more recent validation studies by Cauce (1986) and others (Phillips, 1984, 1987; Shavelson & Bolus, 1986; Stigler, Smith & Mao, 1987) clearly demonstrate that one can reliably assess self-perceived competence in children over the age of eight
across class and culture. Moreover, it seems that there are significant individual differences in how children regard themselves, despite their actual competence levels. Phillips (1984), for example, identified a group of children who have acquired negative self-perceptions of competence, despite objective assessments suggesting otherwise. In a more recent study, Connell and Ilardi (1987) reported that among children who have acquired erroneous and dysfunctional inferences regarding their abilities, there may also be a group comprised of children who overestimate their level of competence. Contrary to earlier arguments supported by Harter (1982) and Phillips (1984) that feature overrating children as highly motivated and self-confident, the findings from the Connell and Ilardi (1987) study indicate that when the level of perceived competence is controlled, overestimation of ability is more likely to be related to an anxiety based regulation of achievement behavior than self-confidence. Such positive self-distortion, Connell and Ilardi (1987) argue, is a defense mechanism used by overrating children to mask self-disparaging perceptions of themselves. Indeed, inaccurate self-perceptions may have important implications for children's psychosocial adjustment and achievement orientations across contexts (Harter, 1982, 1983; Horn, 1985; Lewinsohn, Mischel, Chaplain & Barton, 1980; Phillips, 1984, 1987). For example, the studies by Harter (1982, 1983) and Phillips (1984, 1987) indicate that children who underrate their
academic competence are low in self-esteem, have little motivation and choose less challenging tasks than their actual abilities would predict. Such individuals, Harter (1982, 1985) argues, are more likely to avoid potentially rewarding experiences. Moreover, by approaching tasks with excessive self-doubt, children may focus only on personal inadequacies generating anxiety that creates internal obstacles to effective achievement outcomes (Bandura, 1977; Harter, 1985).

Despite ample empirical verification of the behavioral consequences of children's self-perceptions, little attention has been directed towards examining the role of various socializing influences in the development of children's self-percepts. The few empirical studies attempting to explicate such influences have focused on the effects of marital discord/status (Long, Forehand, Fauber, & Brody, 1987) on children's perceived cognitive and social competence, parents' perceptions of task difficulty (Ladd & Price, 1986) on children's perceived academic competence, and coaches performance feedback in relation to children's self-appraisals of physical competence (Horn, 1985).

The Role of Significant Others in Influencing Children's Perceived Competence

In an effort to rectify this omission, more recent investigations have focused on the role parents' and teachers' expectations and ability appraisals play in shaping children's self-perceptions (Eccles, 1983; Entwisle
& Hayduk, 1982; Parsons, Adler, & Kaczala, 1982; Phillips, 1984, 1987; Stevenson & Newman, 1986). For example, Eccles (1983) has suggested that children's estimates of their math abilities stem from parental expectations for future math performance rather than children's actual math achievement or teacher expectations. Likewise, Thomas (1985, as cited in Phillips, 1987) has reported that assumptions parents make about their children's math capabilities supercede variables such as classroom climate in predicting children's self-perceptions of competence. In a recent study by Phillips (1987), support was provided for a predictive relation between parents' perceptions of their children's abilities and children's perceived competence. In this study children's collective perceptions of academic competence and their perceptions of parents' judgements were more directly influenced by their parents' perceptions of their ability than by their own achievement history. Entwisle and Hayduk (1982) provided evidence of a relationship between parents' performance expectations and children's achievement expectations; teachers' expectations were not significantly related to children's achievement attitudes. Stevenson and Newman (1986) found that teacher ratings of children's academic abilities were not salient when predicting elementary school girls' attitudes regarding math and reading achievement. Rather, the critical variable in predicting children's attitudes regarding math and reading was the mother's achievement expectations for their
In contrast, Weinstein, Brattesani, Weinstein and Marshall (1982) found that children who were aware of and attended to teacher expectations in an observational situation were more likely to develop teacher-congruent ability perceptions. Connell and Ilardi (1987) provided evidence of a relationship between children's self-evaluations of competence and teacher expectations; however, their findings suggested children were more likely to develop teacher-congruent ability perceptions when they received low ratings by teachers on self-system variables such as coping strategies, motivational orientation and self-regulatory style (i.e., reasons stated by children for doing well on schoolwork). In a review article, Rosenholtz and Simpson (1984) provide evidence for a relation between teacher expectations and children's perceptions of academic ability. In that article children were said to process ability information conveyed by their teachers when the social organization in which those evaluations were made were deemed important by children. Similarly, Weinstein, Marshall, Sharp and Botkin (1987) have provided evidence of a relationship between teachers' expectations and children's self-appraisals of ability in the academic domain. Of interest in this study is that even very young children manifested self-evaluations that reflected an awareness of their teachers' expectations.
The significance of these findings leads to three important conclusions: (1) developmental theorizing has underestimated the salience of significant others' performance expectations when examining children's self-assessments of ability; (2) there is ample evidence supporting the centrality of an expectancy construct although, for the most part, this construct has been limited to the prediction of math, reading or academic self-perceptions; and (3) evidence that parents' and teachers' expectations function to influence children's self-evaluative processes have been obtained, although not uniformly across studies. In some studies teacher expectations was the critical variable in predicting children's self-views. Conversely, other investigations suggested parents' expectations are more important.

The lack of convergent findings across studies highlights two problems in the child development literature. First, evaluations of children's self-perceived competence have not yet been examined outside the parameters of more than one socializing agent's expectations across skill domains. For example, Phillips (1987) examined the effects of parents' expectations on children's cognitive competence, but neglected other important socializing agents' influences. Eccles (1983) considered both parents and teachers expectations but only related expectations to self-perceptions of math competence/achievement. Similarly, Stevenson and Newman (1986) investigated the effects of both
parents' and teachers' expectations on children's self-ratings of ability and achievement attitudes, but restricted their predictions to the academic domain (i.e., math and reading self-ratings and attitudes). Since recent theorizing has emphasized domain-specific self-evaluative patterns in children and research has more definitively clarified the role of socializers' expectations in contributing to such self-evaluative patterns, it seems reasonable to assume that parents' and teachers' expectations influence children's self-appraisals differentially across skill domains. The differential contributions made by expectancy socializers to the prediction of children's domain-specific self-perceptions, however, remain largely undocumented. In an effort to fill this research gap, the present study sought to compare and contrast the domain specific contributions made by parents' and teachers' expectations to the prediction of children's self-perceptions of competence across achievement domains.

A second problem that contributes to the inconsistent findings is that investigators have proceeded autonomously in search of the developmental origins of children's self-perceptions. Thus, while recent research has provided support for the notion that socializers' expectations are one of the primary mechanisms guiding children's self-perceptions, the majority of these studies fail to examine the contributions of other salient variables involved in predicting self-perceived competence in children. Thus, in
light of recent evidence concerning the central role assigned to past performance (Harter, 1982) and children's perceptions of significant others' expectations in predicting self-perceived competence (Eccles, 1983), these variables were also included for examination in the present study. Relevant literature pertaining to these secondary variables is reviewed below.

**The Role Children's Perceptions of Significant Others' Expectations Play in Influencing Children's Perceived Competence**

In addition to the research documenting the importance of socializers' expectations in shaping children's self-perceptions of competence, recent research has suggested that children's perceptions of socializers' expectations also influence children's self-views. While this literature is sparse, the basic presupposition underlying work in this area is that children's development, particularly the development of self-percepts, is strongly influenced by capacities used by children to interpret expectations that authorities such as significant others impose on children (Eccles, 1983). Since how socializers treat children is "presumably determined in part by what parents expect and/or believe about their children" (Miller, 1988, p., 259), then examining the extent to which children's interpretations of these expectations/beliefs predict children's perceived competence is an interesting research question in and of itself.
In support of this view, Poffenberger and Norton (1959) found a positive significant relationship between children's perceived parental expectations and children's self-perceptions of competence. Kaminski, Erikson and Ross (1977) found a parallel relationship between children's perceptions of parents' expectations and children's self-perceptions of competence. Likewise, Ladd and Price (1986) found a predictive relationship between children's perceptions of parental beliefs and children's self-perceptions of academic and social competence. Parallel findings have been found elsewhere (Calsyn & Kenny, 1977; Eccles, 1983). For example, Eccles (1983) demonstrated a causal link between children's perceptions of parents' expectations and children's self-assessments of math ability. In this study, path analysis revealed that children's perceptions of parents expectations were causally linked to children's self-concept of math ability. Phillips (1987) also provided support of a causal link between children's perceptions of parents' beliefs and children's self-perceptions of academic competence.

Although Eccles (1983) work and related studies have provided insights regarding the relation between children's perceptions of significant others' expectations and children's perceived competence, their primary foci has been the prediction of children's self-perceived academic and/or math competence from children's perceptions of parents' expectations; perceptions of teachers' expectations has not
been a primary concern. In other words, the parent-nonparent comparison across achievement domains has not been of central concern. Given the plausibility that socializers' expectations make differential contributions to the prediction of perceived competence, a natural extension of this hypothesis is that children's perceptions of parents' and teachers' expectations will also contribute differentially to perceived competence across achievement domains. If support is found for this suggestion it further clarifies that children do make distinctions between socializers' expectations when making self-assessments. Of additional interest is whether children's perceptions of others' expectations contributes significantly to the prediction of perceived competence across achievement domains above and beyond variance accounted for by performance. These assumptions were also tested in the present study.

Performance and Its Relation to Perceived Competence

The relation between actual performance and children's self-perceptions of competence has been reported in several studies. A summary of this research suggests that the formulation of self-perceptions depends upon proof of attained mastery of skills in particular social contexts (Stipek & Mac Iver, 1989). Thus, a secondary purpose of the present study was to assess the validity of these findings when examining children's perceived competence across achievement domains. Academic and social competence were
included as performance measures so that their predictive powers could be measured. In light of numerous reviews available on this topic (e.g., Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1984; Stipek & Mac Iver, 1989), this section summarizes only those reviews and studies particularly relevant to the present study.

A vast body of literature has documented the role actual competence plays in children's developing self-perceptions (see for example, Bandura, 1977; Harter, 1982; Phillips, 1987). The initial work in this area concentrated primarily on the relationship between intellectual ability and children's self-perceptions of academic competence. The assumption underlying these investigations is that competence is based on children's authentic accomplishments. These accomplishments, it is argued, serve as a basis for formulating their self-perceptions (Bandura, 1977).

In a comprehensive review of the literature, Stipek and Mac Iver (1989) reported that educational research has amply documented that young children describe assessments of ability in terms of their past performance. For example, in an interview study carried out by Stipek and Tannett (1984), general smartness in conjunction with grades were most commonly used by children to describe indicators of self-perceptions of global and academic competence. Weinstein and Middlestadt (1979) also provided support for a relationship between academic performance and children's self-perceptions of academic competence. Their conclusions
suggested that competency feedback serves as one element in the formation of children's self-perceptions. Nicholls (1978, 1979) found a relationship between children's self-perceptions of ability and academic performance; however self-ratings of ability were not related to grades until children reached the fourth and fifth grade. Harter (1982) found a relationship between children's standardized achievement scores and children's self-perceptions of cognitive competence across the third, fourth, fifth and sixth grade. The correlations were .28, .32, .50, and .55, respectively demonstrating a progressive increase in the magnitude of the relationships. Harter (1982) was also able to demonstrate a relationship between children's perceived academic competence and sociometric status. In a study examining children's interest in pursuing math as an academic subject, Parsons et al. (1982) found a strong predictive relationship between academic performance and children's self-concept of math ability. For example, students with a successful academic history were more likely to maintain a strong math self-concept. Conversely, students with a poor academic history maintained lower self-perceptions of math competence. Several other studies corroborate these results suggesting that failing grades attenuate young children's ability judgements, future expectations and vocational choices (Eccles, 1983; Harter, 1982; Spence, 1983).
In contrast to younger children, there is a large body of literature that suggests that middle and upper elementary school children rely heavily on grades and related performance factors such as sociometric status to evaluate their ability (see Asher & Hymel, 1981; Ausebel, Schiff & Glasser, 1952, Blumenfeld, Pintrich & Hamilton, 1986). Blumenfeld et al. (1986) found that the percentage of children referring to grades when asked "how do you know when someone is smart?" increased exponentially (2nd grade = 15.2 % vs 6th grade = 38.6 %) from second to sixth grade. Moreover, Mac Iver (1988) found a relationship between the degree of variability in self-perceptions of math ability and the degree of variability in report card grades in classrooms. In further support of this relationship, Mac Iver (1987) found that in classrooms where academic assessments were frequent, sixth grade children having difficulty attaining grades according to standardized achievement levels "were less likely to believe that they were mastering their assignments or outperforming others then when grades were given infrequently" (Stipek & Mac Iver, 1989, p. 527). Marsch et al. (1985) found that indicators of math achievement and verbal competence were highly correlated with actual reading and math self-concept, even though the two self-concept scales were not correlated. Horn (1985) demonstrated a predictive relationship between athletic ability and four self-perceived competence domains: physical, general, social and athletic competence. Horn
(1985) concluded that students' assigned ability ranking significantly predicted changes in students' self-perceptions of competence. However, additional stepwise regression analyses demonstrated that evaluative feedback provided by teachers contributed to the regression equation over and above that which was provided by the performance measure. Similar results were found by both Eccles (1983) and Phillips (1984, 1987); in both studies academic performance was strongly related to children's self-perceptions of competence. However, of particular interest is socializers' expectations for children's success in math contributed over and above the contributions made by achievement factors.

In general, the studies reviewed support the importance of performance factors when assessing children's self-perceptions of competence. The relation, however, between actual competence and self-perceptions of competence across achievement domains has received little direct examination. In fact the only study assessing the predictive relationship between performance (athletic competence) and children's self-perceptions of competence across achievement domains failed to use standard measures of performance such as grades (academic competence) and sociometric status (social competence) in their assessment (Horn, 1985). In light of the strong relation between performance and perceived competence, performance measures thought to differentially predict perceived competence and which have been found to be
critical variables in the prediction of perceived competence were used as predictors in the present study. Based on the work of Eccles (1983), Harter (1982, 1985) and Phillips (1984, 1987), two separate research questions were considered salient: (1) Do performance factors contribute differentially to the prediction of children's self-perceptions of competence across achievement domains; and (2) If so, to what degree do performance factors contribute to this prediction when examined in conjunction with other variables thought to be instrumental in the development of children's self-perceptions. It should be noted that these questions serve as logical extensions of the empirical findings reported in both the developmental and educational psychology literature.

Theoretical Framework

On the basis of Harter's (1981, 1982) initial work in this area and the related research reviewed (e.g., Horn, 1985), a framework for examining the contributions made by socializers' expectations, children's perceptions of these expectations and performance factors to the prediction of children's perceived competence across achievement domains is available. According to this framework, the expectations significant others convey, children's interpretations of these expectations and performance factors all play some part in the gestation and development of children's self-perceptions of competence. Thus, it is assumed that these information sources are used by children as criteria for
evaluating their own competence. While this assumption cannot be tested directly, the direct examination of the relative contributions made by the identified variables across achievement domains nevertheless assists in assessing the validity of this conjecture.

Purposes of The Study

In keeping with the recognition of the multidimensional nature of perceived competence, the purposes of this investigation were to test, through floating and stepwise regression analysis, the significance of the variables identified in predicting children's perceived competence across achievement domains. A second purpose was to determine to what extent socializers' expectations contribute to children's self-perceived competence when examined in combination with children's perceptions of others' expectations and performance. A third purpose was to compare and contrast the contributions made by these variables to the prediction of perceived competence across achievement domains. To achieve this end, a uniform perceived competence model (see Figure 1) was developed and tested across four achievement domains. Building primarily on the work of Eccles (1983) and Harter (1981, 1982), this model assessed the contributions made by parents' and teachers' expectations, children's perceptions of these expectations and past academic performance to the prediction of children's self-perceived competence across academic, social, behavioral conduct and athletic domains,
respectively. The purposes of developing and testing this model were twofold: (1) to explore the potency and salience of contextual and cognitive variables in influencing children's domain-specific self-perceptions; and (2) to assess the statistical fit of a uniform perceived competence model across four achievement domains.

**Research Questions: Exploratory Component**

Based on recent empirical findings reviewed, the following research questions were addressed:

(1) Do the contributions made by parents and teachers' expectations to the prediction of children's perceived competence vary as function of the achievement domain assessed?;

(2) Do parents' and teachers' expectations contribute significantly to the prediction of self-perceived competence over and above the contributions made by academic performance and sociometric status?;

(3) Do the contributions made by academic performance, sociometric status and children's perceptions of parents' and teachers' expectations to the prediction of children's perceived competence vary as a function of the domain assessed?;

(4) Which variable or combination of variables best predict children's self-perceived competence across achievement domains?
Hypotheses: Empirical And Theoretical Component

Stepwise Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Based on the original work conducted by Harter (1981, 1983, 1985) and Eccles (1983), the following hypotheses were tested:

(1) It is predicted that the statistical fit of the model will vary as a function of the domain being assessed.

(2) It is predicted that both socializers' expectations and children's perceptions of these expectations will contribute significantly to the prediction of perceived competence across achievement domains over and above the variance accounted for by performance factors.

In sum, accurate self-appraisals and positive self-esteem are essential for effective functioning and reducing possible marginalization in the family and school. Thus, the key in understanding how children acquire self-knowledge is one that involves understanding how self "knowledge gets off the ground, so to speak" (Butterworth, 1982, p.29).

In the present study, an indirect examination of the dialectic between children's self-knowledge and their socialization influences taps the degree to which acculturation predicts children's self-views. This is a necessary step if we are to more accurately define how children construct a relation between themselves "and social objects [e.g., parents, teachers, performance] of knowledge" (Butterworth, 1982, p.3). Apple and King (1978) summarize this concern for children by stating that:
the negotiations of [self] meaning is a critical phase in the socialization of the child. The meanings of objects and events are not intrinsic to them, but are formed through social interaction. (p.90)

Therefore, to understand the social construction of self-perceptions it is necessary to study them in relation to their development in particular contexts. As Apple and King (1978) state:

Each concept, role, and object is a social creation bound to the situation in which it was produced. The abstraction of these meanings and the generalizations and insights drawn from them may apply to other contexts, but the researcher's initial descriptions, understandings and interpretations require that social phenomenon be encountered where they are produced. (p. 90)

In light of this evidence, it is hoped through this investigation that a more comprehensive framework is offered regarding how children's self-knowledge is acquired and how it, in turn, functions to guide and organize children's psychosocial development.
Figure 1

General Perceived Competence Model: Predicting Domain-Specific Perceived Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>SOCIAL</td>
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PREDETERMINED ORDER OF ENTRY: LEVEL ONE

LEVEL TWO

SOCIALIZERS' EXPECTATIONS

PARENTS  TEACHERS

CHILDREN'S SELF PERCEPTIONS OF COMPETENCE

ACADEMIC  SOCIAL  BEHAVIORAL  ATHLETIC

LEVEL THREE

CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIALIZERS EXPECTATIONS

PARENTS  TEACHERS
CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

This chapter provides a description of the original research program the present study extends from and its corresponding subject sample. It also describes in detail the independent and dependent variables utilized and the methods and procedures for data collection. A brief description of the subsequent data analysis is also included.

Overall Description of the Research Program

This study was part of a larger research program at the University of Western Ontario (The Development of Competence in Children) conducted between 1986 and 1987 at three elementary schools in London, Ontario, Canada.

Subjects. The subjects for this study consisted of 140 fourth and fifth grade students, their parents and teachers, who were recruited from three schools in London, Ontario. The children were selected from six classrooms in two rural schools and one suburban school serving primarily lower to middle class populations. Consent forms were given to every child in all classrooms and were returned by 78% of the children. The 80 girls and 60 boys who made up the total sample ranged from 9 to 12 years old with a mean age of 10.2 years. The cohort of fourth and fifth grade children came from a limited range of family backgrounds, and data on the parents' socioeconomic status show the majority of these students to be from lower to lower-middle class family
dwellings; 84% of the subjects fell between the income range of $20,000 - 40,000, 8% fell slightly above this range and 8% fell slightly below this range.

Considerable disparities were apparent in parents' educational level, ranging from parents who did not complete high-school to a small proportion of parents who had obtained graduate degrees. Consequently, descriptive statistics of parents' educational levels are not provided.

**Measures of the Independent Variable**

1. **Parent and Teacher Expectancies for Children's Future Performance:** Twelve items from the questionnaire entitled "Self-Perception Profile for Children" (Harter, 1985; for a list of these items see Appendix A) were used to assess parents' and teachers' expectancies for their children's and/or students' future competence in academic (see Appendix A for items numbered 1, 5, and 9 corresponding to socializers' academic expectations), social (see Appendix A for items numbered 1, 6, and 10 corresponding to socializers' social expectations), behavioral (see Appendix A for items numbered 4, 8, and 12 corresponding to socializers' expectations for children's behavioral conduct) and athletic domains (see Appendix A for items 3, 7, and 11 for items corresponding to socializers' athletic expectations). The items were revised and the instructions were altered to emphasize parents' and teachers' expectations for their children's and/or students' future school achievement, social competence, behavioral conduct
and athletic performance. To obtain converging assessments of parental expectancies, both parents were requested to complete these questionnaires.

2. Assessments of Children's Perceptions of Parent and Teacher Expectations: Children's perceptions of parent and teacher expectancies were measured using 12 items of a revised version of the Self-Perception Profile for Children (Harter, 1985) assessing children's perceptions of their parents' and teachers' expectations for their future performance in (i.e., next year) academic (see Appendix B items numbered 1, 5, and 9), social (see Appendix B items numbered 2, 6, and 10), behavioral (see Appendix B for items numbered 4, 8, and 12) and athletic (see Appendix B for items numbered 3, 7, and 11) situations (see Appendix B for a list of these items).

Performance Variables

Multiple performance measures were assessed to determine children's social and academic competence. These performance measures included:

3. Sociometric Status: Social competence was assessed using sociometric procedures described by McConnel and Odem (1986). The use of sociometric procedures in determining measures of social competence have been documented by McConnel and Odem (1986) and Asher and Hymel (1981). Methodological and empirical justification for employing sociometric status as a performance measure is based on evidence suggesting that popularity ratings are highly
correlated with social competence assessed using observational methods (for an extensive review on the relationship between sociometric status and social competence, see McConnel and Odem (1986) and Asher and Hymel (1981).

The peer nomination procedure was used in the present study as a measure of sociometric status. Children were asked to nominate three same sex classmates whom they enjoy being with most at school and then to rate each same sex classmate, using a 5-point scale, in terms of how much they enjoy being with each person at school: a (1) response indicates "I don't like to" and a (5) response indicates "I like to a lot". The number of positive nominations received by each child (i.e., liking scores) was standardized within sex and classroom, as was the number of "1's" received by each child on the rating scale (disliking scores). Social preference scores, which served as the final social competence scores were derived by subtracting standardized disliking scores from standardized liking scores, and restandardizing the composite scores. McConnel and Odem (1986) have shown that the test-retest reliability of social preference scores derived in this manner is .80. Since the validity and reliability of peer assessment procedures has been reviewed elsewhere (see McConnel & Odem, 1986), it is not necessary to report extensively on the psychometric properties here.

4. Academic Competence: Past grades were used as a
measure of academic competence. They were obtained from children's previous Christmas report cards and the students' school records. Grade point average was measured on a nine-point Likert type scale anchored at the extremes with a grade of "A" being equal to 9 and a "D" grade being equal to 1. An overall measure of past performance was created by averaging the student's grade points across math, science, social studies, and language arts (from results of a preliminary analysis it was found that these scores were highly correlated, r > .60). The mean of the four scores was then used as an estimate of academic competence. Analyses were conducted on the 87 children whose parents returned questionnaires.

Measures of the Dependent Variable

5. Assessment of Perceived Competence: Twenty-four items from the Self-Perception Profile for Children (Harter, 1985) were used to assess children's perceptions of their actual academic, social, behavioral and athletic competence (see Appendix C for a complete description of the Self Perception Profile for Children). This scale was designed to tap six domains related to a child's perceived competence. For the purposes of this study, only those items referring to children's self-perceived academic, social, behavioral, and athletic competence were used.

The academic domain refers to children's perceptions of their scholastic ability. The six items within this subscale refer to doing well on schoolwork, figuring out
answers, remembering material, working quickly, feeling smart, and feeling good about schoolwork (see Appendix C for items numbered 1, 7, 13, 19, 25, and 31 corresponding to self-perceived academic competence).

The social acceptance subscale taps the degree to which children feel accepted or rejected by their peers (i.e., popularity). These six items refer to the ability to make friends, having a lot of friends, doing things with a lot of kids, perceiving that most kids like them, wishing they had more friends, and perceiving whether or not they feel popular (see Appendix C for items numbered 2, 8, 14, 20, 26, and 32 corresponding to children's self-perceived social competence).

The behavioral conduct scale taps the degree to which children feel confident regarding the ways they behave. These items tap the degree to which children feel they behave well, do the right things, do things they know they shouldn't do, act the way they are supposed to, and act in ways to avoid getting in trouble (see Appendix C for items numbered 5, 11, 17, 23, 29, and 35 corresponding to children's self-perceived behavioral conduct).

The athletic subscale assesses the degree to which children feel competent about their athletic abilities. These six items refer to kids wanting to play outdoors, doing well at sports, wishing they could be better at sports, doing well at any new sports activity, being better than other kids their age at sports, watching instead of
playing sports, and doing well at outdoor games (see Appendix C for items numbered 3, 9, 15, 21, 27 & 33 corresponding to children's self-perceived athletic competence).

**Psychometric Properties Of The Self-Perception Profile For Children**

Harter (1985) has shown, based on normative data collected for third through eighth grade children in Colorado, that the average internal consistency reliability is .82, .80, .74, and .76 for the academic, social, behavioral conduct and athletic subscales respectively. Test-retest reliability data collected in an earlier sample (see Harter, 1982) of third through eighth grade pupils administered the original unrevised version of the Perceived Competence Scale for Children is available for two of the four subscales utilized in the present study. From a sample of 208 Colorado children retested after 3 months, and 810 students from a New York sample retested after nine months, test-retest reliabilities were .78 and .75 for the academic and social subscales respectively. Reliability coefficients for the remaining scales utilized, in addition to the reliability coefficients of the subscales of the SPPC used for the present sample, are reported in Chapter 3.

**Format Structure of Questionnaires**

A "structured alternative format" was designed by Harter (1982) and was utilized in the questionnaires for the present study. Each of the items presents two descriptions
of children – one of capable children and one relatively incapable children. Each description has two possible response choices: "really true for me" and "sort of true for me". The respondent's task is to choose the best answer for each question (an example is presented in Appendix C). This structured alternative format is intended to decrease the amount of socially desirable responses of subjects (Harter, 1982).

Scoring

Each item was scored from 1 to 4, where a score of 1 indicated, for example, low parent and teacher expectations for their children, low perceived competence, or low perceptions of others' expectations. A score of 4 indicated, for example, high teacher and parent expectations, high self-perceived competence, or a high perception of others' expectations. Scores on items within a domain were summed and then averaged to produce summary scores on the following variables: teachers' and parents' expectations for children's future success in academic, social, behavioral and athletic contexts, children's perceptions of teachers' and parents' expectations for them in the academic, social, behavioral, and athletic domains, and children's self-perceived academic, social, behavioral and athletic competence.

Procedure

Children's Measures. The full battery of questionnaires, including the sociometric assessment, was
administered to children in one 45-minute session. The questionnaires were administered in groups ranging from 15-26 children. For each questionnaire administered, the instructions and individual items were read aloud to children and they were given adequate time to respond (for details of instructions see Appendix D). Report card grades for all participating children were collected from the children's files with parental permission.

Teacher and Parent Measures. Teachers filled out their questionnaires at the same time that the children's measures were administered. Parent questionnaires were mailed out a few days after the distribution of the measures administered to children and teachers. A separate questionnaire was provided for each parent, and they were requested to fill them out separately.

Data Analyses

The data analyses proceeded in four phases. Descriptive and psychometric analyses comprised phase one. Descriptive analyses were performed on the academic, social, athletic and behavioral conduct subscales for each questionnaire utilized. To provide reliability estimates for the questionnaires utilized, Hoyt's estimate of internal consistency was used as the index of reliability.

In phase two, four correlational matrices (i.e., one for the academic, social, behavioral and athletic domains respectively) were produced to examine the relationships between the predictor variables and the criterion variables,
as well the interrelationships between the predictor variables.

In phase three, two sets of four exploratory regression models were tested in order to clarify the extent to which variability in the predictor variables could be accounted for by variability in children's perceived competence across academic, social, behavioral conduct and athletic domains.

Phase four, that of forced stepwise hierarchical regression analyses, integrated statistical information from previous analyses (i.e., phase 1 & 2) and past research to test the predictive validity of the uniform perceived competence model developed. Following this development, a final set of four forced stepwise hierarchical regression analyses were tested across academic, social, behavioral conduct, and athletic domains. A more detailed description and recapitulation of these analyses are provided in Chapter 3.
CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

The results addressed the prediction of self-perceived competence in fourth and fifth grade children across academic, social, athletic and behavioral competence domains, using parents' and teachers' expectations, children's perceptions of parents' and teachers' expectations, academic performance and sociometric status as predictor variables. The primary aim of this analysis was to explicate the role these variables play in influencing children's self-perceptions of competence, particularly the extent to which socializers' expectations predict children's self-perceptions of competence across achievement domains. A secondary aim was to test the investigator's uniform perceived competence model across achievement domains.

Restatement of General Research Questions

The subsequent analyses addressed the following general research questions:

(1) Do the contributions made by parents and teachers' expectations to the prediction of children's perceived competence vary as function of the achievement domain assessed?;

(2) Do parents' and teachers' expectations contribute significantly to the prediction of self-perceived competence over and above the contributions made by academic performance and sociometric status?;
(3) Do the contributions made by academic performance, sociometric status and children's perceptions of parents' and teachers' expectations to the prediction of children's perceived competence vary as a function of the domain assessed?

(4) Which variable or combination of variables best predict children's self-perceived competence across achievement domains?

To address these questions and to provide necessary descriptive and psychometric information, the data analyses proceeded in four phases: (1) descriptive and psychometric analyses; (2) correlational analyses; (3) exploratory regression analyses; and (4) forced stepwise hierarchical regression analyses.

Part 1: Descriptive and Psychometric Analyses

For the present study, only the academic, social, athletic and behavioral conduct subscales from each questionnaire were utilized. Aggregate scores for each subscale were derived by obtaining subjects' mean scores across the relevant items. Mean scores across all subscales and their standard deviations are presented in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4. The means and standard deviations for academic performance and sociometric status can be seen in Table 5.

Gender and Grade Differences in Perceived Competence. The subscale means and standard deviations for the dependent variables, presented by grade and gender, can be seen in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4. The results revealed that the
subjects' means on all four subscales were between 2.7 and 3.2.
Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of the Independent and Dependent Measures for the Academic Domain

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Note
Value range for all tabled variables is 1-4
1 Cppacad = children's perceptions of parents' academic expectations
2 Cptacad = children's perceptions of teachers' academic expectations
3 Tex = teachers' academic expectations
4 Mex = mothers' academic expectations
5 Fex = fathers' academic expectations
6 Spacad = children's self-perceived academic competence.
Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of the Independent and Dependent Measures for the Social Domain

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Note
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1 Cppsoc = children's perceptions of parents' social expectations
2 Cptsoc = children's perceptions of teachers' social expectations
3 Tex = teachers' social expectations
4 Mex = mothers' social expectations
5 Fex = fathers' social expectations
6 Spsocial = children's self-perceived social competence.
Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of the Independent and Dependent Measures for the Behavioral Conduct Domain

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Note
Value range for all tabled variables is 1-4

1 Cppbehav = children's perceptions of parents' behavioral expectations
2 Cptbehav = children's perceptions of teachers' behavioral expectations
3 Tex = teachers' behavioral expectations
4 Mex = mothers' behavioral expectations
5 Fex = fathers' behavioral expectations
6 Spbehav = children's self-perceptions of behavioral competence.
Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of the Independent and Dependent Measures for the Athletic Domain

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Note
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1 Cppathl = children's perceptions of parents' athletic expectations
2 Cptathl = children's perceptions of teachers' athletic expectations
3 Tex = teachers' athletic expectations
4 Mex = mothers' athletic expectations
5 Fex = father's athletic expectations
6 Spathl = children's self-perceptions of athletic competence.
### Table 5

**Means and Standard Deviations for the Performance Variables: Academic Performance and Sociometric Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
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<tbody>
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**Note**
Value range for Academic Performance is 1-9
Value range for Sociometric Status is -.001 - + .099.
Gender differences. Multivariate statistics documenting the presence of gender differences across children's self-perceived academic, social, behavioral and athletic competence are presented in Table 6. Consistent with previous findings (Harter, 1982), females rate themselves lower than their male counterparts on three of the four subscales: academic, social and athletic. As can be seen in Table 5, several of the descriptive findings are noteworthy: a) boys see themselves as more academically competent than girls \((F = (1,136) = 4.01, p < .05)\), despite boys actual lower actual academic competence (boys: \(x_\bar{} = 6.8\), girls: \(x_\bar{} = 7.1\)). Gender differences also favour males in the social domain (boys: \(x_\bar{} = 3.05\); girls: \(x_\bar{} = 2.93\)). While this difference is not significant, of interest is that girls were rated as more socially competent by their peers than boys (boys: \(x_\bar{} = .001\), girls: \(x_\bar{} = .052\)). Boys also perceived themselves as significantly more competent in the athletic domain \((F = (1,136) = 15.56, p < .0001)\) than girls. Girls, however, perceived themselves to be more behaviorally competent than their male counterparts.
Table 6

Multivariate Analysis of Variance Test For

Gender Differences for Self-Perceived Academic,
Social, Behavioral and Athletic Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variate</th>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>P</th>
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<td>4 Spathl</td>
<td>SS 7.38</td>
<td>15.56</td>
<td>1,136</td>
<td>.0001</td>
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</table>

Note
1 Spacad = self-perceived academic competence
2 Spsocial = self-perceived social competence
3 Spbehav = self-perceived behavioral conduct
4 Spathl = self-perceived athletic competence.
Grade differences. No significant grade differences emerged for self-perceived competence across the four achievement domains.

Psychometric Properties for the Independent Variables. Subscale reliability analyses were calculated for the predictor variables employed in this study. In the absence of a dichotomous measure, the average inter-item correlations were computed for each academic, social, athletic, and behavioral conduct subscale. Hoyt's estimate of reliability was used an index of internal consistency. Table 7 outlines the scale properties for the independent measures utilized in the present study. The subscale measures are children's perceptions of teachers' expectations, children's perceptions of parents' expectations, teachers' expectations, mothers' expectations and fathers' expectations. As revealed by the reliability coefficients, internal consistencies for all independent measures were satisfactory (m = .79).

Psychometric Properties for the Dependent Variable: The Self-Perception Profile for Children. As can be seen in Table 7, the reliability coefficients of the four subscales taken from the Self-Perception Profile for Children (Harter, 1985) are quite satisfactory. The values for the academic, social, behavioral conduct, and athletic domains are respectively, .78, .83, .81, and .76. Corresponding values in Harter's (1985) American sample were .80, .80, .84, .75., for the academic, social, athletic, and behavioral conduct
subscale, respectively.
### Table 7

**Inter-item Reliability Coefficients for the Independent and Dependent Measures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
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<th>Social</th>
<th>Athletic</th>
<th>Behavioral Conduct</th>
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<tr>
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<td>.76</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Note**

1 Cpp = children's perceptions of parents' expectations  
2 Cpt = children's perceptions of teachers' expectations  
3 Tex = teachers' expectations  
4 Mex = mothers' expectations  
5 Fex = fathers' expectations  
6 Spc = self-perceived competence
Part 2: Main Analyses

In conducting the main analyses, results bearing on the correlational analyses were addressed before attending to the substantive research questions and hypotheses. This enabled a preliminary inspection of the relations between the predictor variables, in addition to the relations between the predictor and criterion variables. This step also provided a foundation for assessing the suitability of the data for subsequent analyses.

Probability Levels

Before proceeding with the main analyses and in keeping with the statistical design of the present study, it was decided that committing a Type II error would have more serious consequences than committing a Type I error. Since selecting a very small $p$ level would decrease the chances of a Type II error, a probability level of .05 was preselected as the test of significance for the correlation coefficients and $F$ values. However, whether or not the correlation coefficients and $F$ values achieved significance at the $p < .05$ level or the $p < .001$ levels is presented in all relevant Tables.

Correlational Analyses

Correlational analyses were conducted to assess the relations between the predictor variables identified and the four criterion measures, in addition to the interrelationships among the predictor variables. The correlation matrices between child, teacher, and parental
variables are presented in Tables 8, 9, 10, and 11 for the academic, social, behavioral conduct and athletic subscales.

**Academic Domain.** A consistent pattern of mainly significant relationships were found between the independent variables identified and children's self-perceived academic competence (see Table 8). Inspection of the correlations revealed that: (a) children's perceptions of teachers' academic expectations ($r = .81, p < .05$) and children's perceptions of parents' academic expectations ($r = .65, p < .05$) were most strongly related to children's self-perceptions of academic competence; (b) mothers' ($r = .38, p < .05$) and fathers' expectations ($r = .20, p < .05$) were moderately related to children's self-perceived academic competence; (c) children's sociometric status was not significantly related to children's self-perceived academic competence; (d) academic performance was significantly related to children's self-perceptions of academic competence ($r = .51, p < .05$).

**Relationships Among Predictor Variables: Academic Domain.** Correlational analyses revealed a strong positive relation between children's perceptions of parents' expectations and children's perceptions of teachers' expectations. A strong positive correlation was also found between academic performance and actual teacher expectations. However, with the exception of these two findings, a pattern of generally significant but moderate correlations were observed between the predictor variables.
(see Table 8). The pattern of correlations suggested a substantial degree of independence among the predictor variables.

**Self-Perceived Social Competence.** The intercorrelations indicated generally low to moderate relations between the independent variables and self-perceived social competence (see Table 9). In the social domain, a) children's perceptions of others' expectations (teachers' and parents' expectations) were strongly related to children's self-perceptions of competence, with children's perceptions of teachers' social expectations bearing the strongest relationship to children's self-perceived social competence \( (r = .69, p < .05) \); (b) mothers' expectations were significantly but only moderately related to children's self-perceived social competence \( (r = .27, p < .05) \); (c) fathers' social expectations were significantly but only moderately related to children's self-perceived social competence \( (r = .38, p < .05) \); (d) teachers' expectations were positively related to children's self-perceived competence \( (r = .41, p < .05) \); and (e) children's sociometric status was positively related to children's self-perceived social competence \( (r = .40, p < .05) \).

**Relationships Among Predictor Variables: Social Domain.** Examination of the correlational matrix for the social domain indicated generally low to moderate relations between the predictor variables. Consistent with the academic domain, the magnitude of the correlation coefficients
reflect a satisfactory degree of independence among the predictor variables.

**Self-Perceived Behavioral Competence.** The results of the correlational analyses for the behavioral conduct domain are presented in Table 10. These results are comparable to those found in the previous achievement domains examined. In the behavioral conduct domain, the following results were noted: a) children's perceptions of parents' expectations were significantly related to children's self-perceptions of behavioral conduct \( r = .55, p < .05 \); b) children's perceptions of teachers' behavioral expectations were significantly related to children's self-perceptions of social competence \( r = .56, p < .05 \); c) teachers' behavioral expectations were significantly correlated with children's self-perceived behavioral competence \( r = .24, p < .05 \); (d) fathers' behavioral expectations were significantly related to children's self-perceived behavioral competence \( r = .30, p < .05 \); (e) mothers' behavioral expectations were significantly but only moderately related to children's self-perceived behavioral competence \( r = .30, p < .05 \); (f) children's sociometric status did not correlate significantly with children's self-perceptions of behavioral competence; and (g) academic performance was significantly related to children's self-perceived behavioral competence \( r = .30, p < .05 \).

**Relationships Among Predictor Variables: Behavioral Conduct Domain.** Consistent with previous domains examined,
a strong positive correlation was found between children's perceptions of teachers' behavioral expectations and children's perceptions of parents' behavioral expectations. The remaining intercorrelations were significant but only moderate in magnitude, again suggesting acceptable degrees of independence between the predictor variables.

**Self-Perceived Athletic Competence.** The matrix of correlations between the independent and criterion variables, and the relations among the predictor variables are presented in Table 11 for the athletic domain. An examination of the correlations revealed that: (a) as demonstrated in the academic, social and behavioral conduct domains, children's perceptions of parents' expectations were significantly related to children's self-perceptions of athletic competence ($r = .68, p < .05$); (b) children's perceptions of teachers' expectations were significantly related to self-perceived athletic competence ($r = .71, p < .05$); (c) mothers' athletic expectations were moderately related to children's self-perceived athletic competence ($r = .35, p < .05$); (d) fathers' actual athletic expectations were related to children's self-perceived athletic competence ($r = .28, p < .05$); (e) teachers' athletic expectations were related to children's self-perceived athletic competence ($r = .39, p < .05$); (f) academic performance was not significantly related to children's self-perceived athletic competence; (g) children's
sociometric status was significantly related to children's self-perceptions of athletic competence \( (r = .21, p < .05) \).

**Relationships Between the Predictor Variables: Athletic Domain.** The intercorrelations between the predictor variables are presented in Table 11. Clearly, the pattern of relations between the predictor variables are congruent with the correlational analyses of previous domains.
Table 8

Correlation Matrix - Academic Domain

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</table>

Note
1. Spacad = self-perceived academic competence
2. Sms = sociometric status
3. Cppacad = children's perceptions of parents' academic expectations
4. Texacad = teachers' academic expectations
5. Mexacad = mothers' academic expectations
6. Fexacad = fathers' academic expectations
7. Cptacad = children's perceptions of teachers' academic expectations
8. Acadperf = academic performance
N = 87
*p < .05
**p < .001.
Table 9

Correlation Matrix - Social Domain

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Note
1 Spsocial = self-perceived social competence
2 Cppsoc = children's perceptions of parents' expectations
3 Sms = sociometric status
4 Texsoc = teachers' social expectations
5 Mexsoc = mothers' social expectations
6 Fexsoc = fathers' social expectations
7 Cptsoc = children's perceptions of teachers' social expectations
8 Acadperf = academic performance
N = 87
*p < .05
**p < .001.
Table 10

Correlation Matrix - Behavioral Conduct

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Note
1 Spbehav = self-perceived behavioral conduct
2 Cppbehav = children's perceptions of behavioral conduct
3 Sms = sociometric status
4 Texbehav = teachers' behavioral expectations
5 Mexbehav = mothers' behavioral expectations
6 Fexbehav = fathers' behavioral expectations
7 Cptbehav = children's perceptions of teachers' behavioral expectations
8 Acadperf = academic performance

N = 87

*p < .05

**p < .001.
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</tbody>
</table>

Note:
1 Spathl = self-perceived athletic competence
2 Sms = sociometric status
3 Cpathl = children's perceptions of parents' athletic expectations
4 Texathl = teachers' athletic expectations
5 Mexathl = mothers' athletic expectations
6 Fexathl = fathers' athletic expectations
7 Cptathl = children's perceptions of teachers' athletic expectations
8 Acadperf = academic performance
N = 87
*P < .05
**P < .001.
Multivariate Analysis of Variance: Preliminary Screening for Gender and Grade Level Effects

Before proceeding with the regression analyses, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to screen the data for gender and grade level effects. Academic performance, sociometric status, teachers' expectations, parents' expectations, children's perceptions of teachers' expectations and children's perceptions of parents' expectations were entered as dependent variables in one 2 (grade) x 2 (gender) MANOVA for the academic, social, athletic, and behavioral conduct domains, respectively. No significant grade effects emerged. With regard to gender, however, multivariate analysis produced main effects for sex on teachers' expectations, fathers' expectations, mothers' expectations and children's perceptions of teachers' and parents' expectations in behavioral conduct domain (see Table 12). No other domain specific gender effects were found. Consequently, when conducting the hierarchical regression analyses for the behavioral conduct domain in phase three, sex was included in the equation as a control variable.
Table 12

Multivariate Analysis of Variance Test For the
Behavioral Conduct Domain: Gender Effects

<table>
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<tr>
<td>3 Mexbehav</td>
<td>SS 2.73</td>
<td>9.34</td>
<td>1,83</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Cptbehav</td>
<td>SS 3.36</td>
<td>7.65</td>
<td>1,83</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Cppbehav</td>
<td>SS 4.08</td>
<td>10.46</td>
<td>1,83</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note*
1 Texbehav = teachers' behavioral expectations
2 Fexbehav = fathers' behavioral expectations
3 Mexbehav = mothers' behavioral expectations
4 Cptbehav = children's perceptions of teachers' behavioral expectations
5 Cppbehav = children's perceptions of parents' behavioral expectations.
Phase 3: Exploratory Regression Analyses

To address the general research questions posed in this study, the standard regression model provided the most illuminating method of comparing and contrasting the relative contributions made by different socializers to the prediction of children's domain-specific self-perceptions of competence. The use of the standard stepwise regression model is appropriate for the present study since in a multiple linear equation, one variable is entered at a time in a stepwise fashion from a sequence of possible predictors (Dixon & Jennrich, 1988). At each step, the variable with the greatest $F$-to-enter value is added to the regression equation. The criterion for inclusion of independent variables was an $F$ value of 4.0 and a critical value of $p < .01$ for testing the significance of $F$. Thus, four stepwise floating regressions were performed to clarify the extent to which variability in self-perceived competence could be accounted for by variability in parents' and teachers' expectations, children's perceptions of others' expectations, children's sociometric status and children's academic performance across achievement domains. Subsequent examination of the relative contributions made by each independent variable to the prediction of perceived competence followed with respect to the empirical issues listed below: (a) consistency - do the variables identified hold up as powerful predictors of perceived competence across the academic, social, behavioral and athletic
subscales?; (b) does any one variable consistently account for the largest proportion of variance across domains and if so, why?; (c) what differences emerge within and between the four competence domains with regard to the explanatory powers of the independent variables? The completion of this second step was intended to provide a framework for developing a hierarchical model that could be tested across all four achievement domains.

The results of the preliminary stepwise regression analyses are presented in Tables 13 to 16.

**Predicting Self-Perceived Academic Competence.** Table 13 presents the results of this analysis. For the academic domain, the results corroborated the simple correlational analysis, indicating that 74% of the variance in children's self-perceptions of academic competence could be predicted from (a) children's perceptions of their teachers' academic expectations for the (R² increase = .66) and (b) teachers' actual academic expectations for children (R² increase = .07).

**Predicting Self-Perceived Social Competence.** In the social domain, 55% of the variance was predicted by (a) children's perceptions of teachers' social expectations for them (R² increase = .45) and (b) children's perceptions of parents' social expectations for them (R² increase = .10). Table 14 summarizes these results.

**Predicting Self-Perceived Behavioral Competence.** In the behavioral conduct domain, 31% of the variance was
accounted for by (a) children's perceptions of parents' behavioral expectations ($R^2$ increase = .25) and (b) mothers' actual behavioral expectations for children ($R^2$ increase = .06) (see Table 15).

Predicting Self-Perceived Athletic Competence Table 16 summarizes the results of this analysis. For the athletic domain, findings revealed that 50% of the variance was accounted for by (a) children's perceptions of their teachers' athletic expectations for them ($R^2$ increase = .44) and (b) children's perceptions of their parents' athletic expectations for them ($R^2$ increase = .06).
Table 13

Floating Stepwise Regression Equations for Self-Perceived Academic Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>R² change</th>
<th>F to enter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Cptacad</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>125.79**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Texacad</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>16.82**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note

1 Cptacad = children's perceptions of teachers' academic expectations
2 Texacad = teachers' academic expectations

* p < .05
** p < .001.
Table 14

Floating Stepwise Regression Equations for Self-Perceived Social Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$R^2_{\text{change}}$</th>
<th>$F$ to enter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Cptsoc</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>52.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Cppsoc</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>13.83**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note
1 Cptsoc = children's perceptions of teachers' social expectations
2 Cppsoc = children's perceptions of parents' social competence

*p < .05
**p < .001.
Table 15

Floating Stepwise Regression Equations for Self-Perceived Behavioral Conduct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$R^2$ change</th>
<th>$F$ to enter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Cppbehav</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>21.74**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Mexbehav</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>5.53*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note
1 Cppbehav = children's perceptions of parents' behavioral expectations
2 Mexbehav = mothers' behavioral expectations
* $p < .05$
** $p < .001$. 


Table 16

Floating Stepwise Regression Equation for
Self-Perceived Athletic Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>R² change</th>
<th>F to enter</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Cptathl</td>
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<td>.44</td>
<td>50.05**</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2Cppathl</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>8.26</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note
1 Cptathl = children's perceptions of teachers' athletic expectations
2 Cppathl = children's perceptions of parents' athletic expectations
*P < .05
**P < .001.
As can be seen in Tables 13 to 16, in each domain a considerable amount of variance was explained by children's perceptions of parents' and teachers' domain specific expectations. Moreover, the amount of explained variance accounting for children's perceptions of socializers' expectations did not vary considerably across domains. A consideration of these findings suggested the presence of a measurement redundancy between: (1) the scales assessing children's perceptions of teachers' expectations and children's perceptions of parents' expectations; and possibly (2) the scales assessing children's self-perceptions of others' expectations and children's perceived competence. This measurement error was most likely a consequence of the idiosyncratic use of analogous measurement scales concurrently. Consequently, the second phase of analyses involved deconfounding the effects of this variable. In order to accomplish this, a second series of floating stepwise regression analyses were performed on each of the dependent variables discarding the problematic variable - children's perceptions of others' expectations.

To control for measurement artifact and as a second step towards determining a hierarchical model that could be tested across the four self-concept domains, "children's perceptions of others' expectations" was removed from the second phase of analyses and a repeated set of floating stepwise regressions were performed. The primary purpose of this analysis was to clarify the extent to which variability
in perceived competence could be accounted for by variability in parents' actual expectations, teachers' expectations, sociometric status and children's academic performance in the absence of an offending or redundant construct. Results of the analyses are presented in Tables 17 to 20.

**Predicting Self-Perceived Academic Competence.** With regard to the academic domain, teachers' actual academic expectations ($R^2$ increase = .31) and academic performance ($R^2$ increase = .03) accounted for a significant amount of variance in self-perceived academic competence ($R^2$ increase = .33). Table 17 summarizes these results of this analysis.

**Predicting Self-Perceived Social Competence.** For the social domain, results indicated that 29% of the variance could be accounted for by teachers actual social expectations ($R^2$ increase = .17), fathers' social expectations ($R^2$ increase = .07) and children's sociometric status ($R^2$ increase = .05) (see Table 18).

**Predicting Self-Perceived Behavioral Conduct.** In the behavioral domain, 17% of the variance was explained by the mothers' actual behavioral expectations ($R^2$ increase = .09) and academic performance ($R^2$ increase = .08). Table 19 displays the results of this analysis.

**Predicting Self-Perceived Athletic Competence.** Finally, in the athletic domain, results demonstrated that 24% of the variance could be accounted for only by teachers' actual expectations for their students ($R^2$
increase = .15) and mothers' actual athletic expectations for their children (R^2 increase = .08). Table 20 summarizes these results.

The results of the second stage of analyses prompted the development of a hierarchical model that could be tested across the academic, social, behavioral, and athletic respectively.
Table 17

Floating Stepwise Regression Analysis for Self-Perceived Academic Competence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>R² change</th>
<th>F to enter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Texacad</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>38.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Acadperf</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>4.16*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note
1 Texacad = teachers' academic expectations
2 Acadperf = academic performance
*p < .05
**p < .001.
Table 18

Floating Stepwise Regression Analysis for Self-Perceived Social Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$R^2$ change</th>
<th>$F$ to enter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Texsoc</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>18.04**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Fexsoc</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>7.77*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Sms</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>5.58*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note
1 Texsoc = teachers' social expectations
2 Fexsoc = fathers' social expectations
3 Sms = sociometric Status
* $p < .05$
** $p < .001$. 
Table 19

Floating Stepwise Regression Analysis of Self-Perceived Behavioral Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>R² change</th>
<th>F to enter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mexbehav</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>9.05**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Acadperf</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>7.69*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note
Mexbehav = mothers' behavioral expectations
Acadperf = academic performance
*p < .05
**p < .001.
# Table 20

Floating Stepwise Regression Analysis of Self-Perceived Athletic Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>R² change</th>
<th>F to enter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Texathl</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>15.14**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Mexathl</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>9.42*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note**
1 Texathl = teachers' athletic expectations
2 Mexathl = mothers' athletic expectations

*p* < .05

**p* < .001.
Phase 4: Part A

Hierarchical Regression Analyses: Model Testing

The final phase of the analyses involved the development and assessment of a perceived competence model across academic, social, behavioral and athletic competence domains. Two criteria applied to the development of this model: (1) an empirical and theoretical relationship must exist between the independent variables and a general self-concept construct; (2) the independent variables in the model are conceptualized as viable constructs that bear a relationship to children's self-perceived competence based on previous research and preliminary analyses.

Each independent variable was forced into the regression equation according to a previously developed category scheme. Three categories of variables were defined: (1) performance variables (academic performance and sociometric status); (2) socializing agents' expectations (parents and teachers' expectations for their children and/or students across academic, social, behavioral conduct, and athletic competence domains); and (3) child cognitive variables (children's perceptions of parents' and teachers' expectations). Within each category variables were allowed to float into the regression equation according to the strength of the correlation coefficients.

The performance variables (sociometric status and academic competence) were forced into the equation first in light of the evidence suggesting that performance factors
are related to children's self-perceptions of competence. Parents' and teachers' actual expectations were entered second, ahead of children's perceptions of others' expectations, to control for measurement artifact and to examine their explanatory power over and above the contributions made by performance variables. The results from the floating stepwise regression analyses also indicated that the variance accounted for by socializers' expectations is otherwise largely absorbed if children's perceptions of socializers' expectations is given priority in hierarchical order.

Results of the subsequent analysis are summarized in Tables 21 to 24. Each table reflects a regression of a different self-perceived competence domain on the seven independent variables. For each step, the $R^2$ increase, in addition to the $F$ to enter value is presented. As can be seen, differences emerged both within and among the four self-perceived competence domains regarding the explanatory power of academic performance, sociometric status, socializers' expectations and children's perceptions of others' expectations. The results of these analysis are summarized below.

**Predicting Self-Perceived Academic Competence.**

Academic performance, teachers' expectations, parents' expectations and children's perceptions of others' expectations accounted for a significant share in the variance in children's self-perceptions of academic
competence ($R^2$ increase = .70, $p < .05$): a) academic performance accounted for 26% of the explained variance ($R^2$ increase = .26); b) children's sociometric status did not account for a significant increase in explained variance; c) teachers' actual expectations accounted for an $R^2$ increase of .07; d) mothers' actual academic expectations for their children accounted for 2% of the explained variance ($R^2$ increase = .02); e) fathers' academic expectations did not account for a significant $R^2$ increase; f) children's perceptions of teachers' academic expectations accounted for .35 of the variance explained ($R^2$ increase = .35); g) children's perceptions of parents' academic expectations did not account for a significant proportion of explained variance (see Table 21).

Predicting Self-Perceived Social Competence. Table 22 outlines the results of this analysis. In the social domain, results indicated that 56% of the variance could be accounted for by five of the seven predictor variables: a) as expected, children's sociometric status accounted for 16% of the variance ($R^2$ increase = .16) in predicting children's self-perceived social competence; b) academic performance did not contribute significantly to children's self-perceived social competence; c) fathers' social expectations accounted for 7% of the variance to the prediction of children's self-perceived social competence ($R^2$ increase = .07); d) teachers' social expectations accounted for only 4% of the variance explained ($R^2$
increase = .04); contrary to expectations, mothers' social expectations did not contribute significantly to children's self-perceived social competence; e) children's perceptions of teachers' social expectations contributed significantly to children's self-perceived social competence ($R^2$ increase = .24) as did children's perceptions of parents' social expectations ($R^2$ increase = .05).

Predicting Self-Perceived Behavioral (Conduct) Competence. Since the MANOVA indicated that there were gender differences in teachers' behavioral expectations, fathers' behavioral expectations, mothers' behavioral expectations, children's perceptions of parents' and teachers' expectations and gender, gender was entered into the regression equation first as a control variable. The remaining variables were forced into the equation in the following order: performance variables, socializers' expectations and children's perceptions of others' expectations. The results revealed that 40 % of the variance explained was accounted for by four of the seven independent variables: a) sex accounted for a small but significant proportion of the explained variance ($R^2$ increase = .05); b) academic performance accounted for only 9 % of the variance explained ($R^2$ increase = .09); b) children's sociometric status did not account for a significant proportion of the variance explained; c) fathers' behavioral expectations did not account for a significant proportion of explained variance; d) mothers'
expectations accounted for an $R^2$ increase of 8%; e) teachers' behavioral expectations did not account for a significant portion of the variance; f) children's perceptions of parents' expectations accounted for 19% of the variance accounted for ($R^2$ increase = .19); f) children's perceptions of their teachers' behavioral expectations accounted for an $R^2$ increase of 3% (see Table 23).

**Predicting Self-Perceived Athletic Competence.** In the athletic domain, 59% of the variance was accounted for by: a) children's sociometric status accounted for 5% of the explained variance ($R^2$ increase = .05); b) as would be expected, academic performance did not account for a significant proportion of the variance; c) taken together, teachers' and mothers' athletic expectations accounted for 22% of the variance ([teachers] $R^2$ increase = .07; [mothers] $R^2$ increase = .14); d) fathers' athletic expectations did not account for a significant proportion of the variance; e) children's perceptions of teachers' athletic expectations accounted for a significant increase in $R^2$ ($R^2$ increase = .29); and e) children's perceptions of parents' athletic expectations accounted for a 4% increase in the explained variance (see Table 24).

**Phase Four: Part B**

In order to explore the statistical and empirical soundness of the perceived competence model further, to obtain the "best linear unbiased estimates", and to reduce
the over-estimation problem associated with multicollinearity in the present study, $F$ values of all previous hierarchical regression analyses were re-calculated to reduce the error variance accounted for by the offending variables. As can be seen in Tables 21 to 24, once the error variance was corrected all $F$ values increased, bringing to statistical significance level variables that had not previously achieved significance.

Predicting Self-Perceived Competence. As indicated in Tables 21 to 24, the fourth phase of analyses revealed three additional significant $R^2$ coefficients when $F$ values were recalculated for the academic, social, behavioral conduct and athletic subscales, respectively. Only the additional effects will be discussed below for each achievement domain.

With regard to the academic domain, the $R^2$ increase for children's sociometric status reached significance level ($R^2$ increase = .013, $F$ increase = 3.90, $p < .05$). For the social domain, a recalculation of the $F$ values brought both academic performance ($R^2$ increase = .02, $F$ increase = 3.90, $p < .05$) and mothers' social expectations ($R^2$ increase = .01, $F$ increase = 3.83, $p < .05$) to significance levels in predicting children's self-perceived social competence. If the recalculated $F$ value of a predictor variable increased to a value equal to or above the default level of BMDP (criterion level of entry, $F = 4.0$) and reached statistical significance at the $p < .05$ level it was considered for discussion.
Table 21

Stepwise Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Academic Domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>R² Change</th>
<th>F to Enter</th>
<th>Recalculated F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>.26</td>
<td>31.11**</td>
<td>76.86**</td>
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<td>Sms</td>
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<td>.01</td>
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<td>3.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Texacad</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>8.12**</td>
<td>18.64**</td>
</tr>
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<td>2.48*</td>
<td>5.60**</td>
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<td>Fexacad</td>
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<td>.01</td>
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<td>Cppacad</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note
1 Acadperf = Academic performance
2 Sms = Sociometric Status
3 Texacad = Teachers' academic expectations
4 Mexacad = Mothers' academic expectations
5 Fexacad = Fathers' academic expectations
6 Cptacad = Children's perceptions of teachers' expectations
7 Cppacad = Children's perceptions of parents' expectations
*p < .05
**p < .001.
### Table 22

**Stepwise Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Social Domain**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>$R^2$ Change</th>
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<th>Recalculated $F$</th>
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<td>.02</td>
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<td>.07</td>
<td>8.60**</td>
<td>17.28**</td>
</tr>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>4.53*</td>
<td>9.00**</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>1.30</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Cptsoc</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Cppsoc</td>
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<td>.05</td>
<td>10.83**</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note**

1. Sms = Sociometric Status  
2. Acadperf = Academic Performance  
3. Fexsoc = Fathers' Social Expectations  
4. Texsoc = Teachers' Social Expectations  
5. Mexsoc = Mothers' Social Expectations  
6. Cptsoc = Children's Perceptions of Teachers' Expectations  
7. Cppsoc = Children's Perceptions of Parents' Expectations  

$p < .05$  
$p < .001$. 
Table 23

Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Behavioral Domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>$F$ to Enter</th>
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<td>.30</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Mexbehav</td>
<td>.17 .08</td>
<td>7.32**</td>
<td>12.07**</td>
</tr>
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<td>1.58</td>
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<td>.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cppbehav</td>
<td>.37 .19</td>
<td>24.39**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Cptbehav</td>
<td>.40 .03</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note
1. Acadperf = Academic performance
2. Sms = Sociometric Status
3. Texbehav = Teachers' behavioral conduct expectations
4. Mexbehav = Mothers' behavioral conduct expectations
5. Fexbehav = Fathers' behavioral conduct expectation
6. Cptbehav = Children's perceptions of teachers' expectations
7. Cppbehav = Children's perceptions of parents' expectations

$p < .05$

$p < .001.$
Table 24
Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Athletic Domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$R^2$ Change</th>
<th>$F$ to Enter</th>
<th>Recalculated $F$</th>
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<td>.04</td>
<td>4.10*</td>
<td>9.16*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Acadperf</td>
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<td>.01</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.14</td>
<td>14.97**</td>
<td>28.88**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.08</td>
<td>7.92**</td>
<td>14.10**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fexathl</td>
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<td>.00</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Cptathl</td>
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<td>.29</td>
<td>53.40**</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note
1 Sms = Sociometric Status
2 Acadperf = Academic Performance
3 Mexathl = Mothers' Athletic Expectations
4 Texathl = Teachers' Athletic Expectations
5 Fexathl = Fathers' Athletic Expectations
6 Cptathl = Children's Perceptions of Teachers' Expectations
7 Cppathl = Children's Perceptions of Parents' Expectations

$p < .05$
$p < .001$.
CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

The active sense of living, which we all enjoy before reflection shatters our instinctive world for us, is self luminous and suggests no paradoxes. When the reflective intellect gets to work, however, it discovers incomprehensibilities in the flowing process. Distinguishing its elements and parts it gives them separate names and what it thus disjoins it cannot easily put together.


The chapter is organized as follows: (1) an overview of the general findings is presented; (2) the results are discussed with respect to the differential contributions made by socializers' expectations to the prediction of children's perceived competence across achievement domains; (2) the role children's self-perceptions of significant others' expectations play in influencing children's perceived competence is outlined; (3) the role past performance plays in predicting children's domain-specific self-perceptions is highlighted; (4) the usefulness of testing a uniform model of perceived competence is discussed; (5) implications for counselling are highlighted; and finally (6) limitations and conclusions are discussed with respect to future research.

General Overview

The purpose of this investigation was to identify important socialization references children may utilize in constructing aspects of their self-image, and, in particular, to identify factors that have discrete domain-
specific evaluative power in predicting children's self-perceptions of competence. In an attempt to address these concerns, the overall design of the study involved a consideration of two research strategies. The first strategy examined the research questions from an exploratory perspective and was primarily concerned with the assessment of: (1) the relative contributions made by teachers' and parents' expectations to the prediction of children's perceived competence across achievement domains; and (2) the relative contributions made by performance factors and children's perceptions of teachers' and parents' expectations in predicting children's perceived competence across achievement domains. The second strategy examined the research questions from a theoretical perspective. The purpose of this was to enable a comparison of the contributions made by theoretically derived variables in predicting perceived competence across achievement domains. A uniform perceived competence model was developed to accomplish this task.

**Predicting Domain Specific Self-Perceived Competence**

Within the parameters of the constructs utilized, the developmental stage of the children sampled and the exploratory nature of the study, the results provided a cogent framework for answering the research questions outlined in the present study:
(1) The contributions made by parents' and teachers' expectations to the prediction of children's perceived competence varied as a function of the domain assessed.

(2) Socializers' expectations and children's perceptions of others' expectations significantly predicted children's perceived competence within and across achievement domains over and above the variance accounted for by performance factors.

(3) A coherent pattern was found in the relation between performance variables and children's self-perceptions of competence across achievement domains. This pattern suggested that while performance factors contribute differentially to the prediction of children's perceived competence they are not, as traditionally thought, crucial predictors of children's self-perceptions across achievement domains.

(4) The variable or combination of variables that best predicted children's perceived competence varied as a function of the self-concept domain assessed.

(5) The amount of variance accounted for by the regression model varied as function of the domain assessed.

(6) The social references children use when making self-evaluations can be conceptualized within a domain and context specific framework.

(7) Indirect support was provided for Harter's (1981, 1982, 1985) perceived competence model which has demonstrated a
link between socializers' beliefs regarding children's abilities, children's performance and perceived competence. Parents and Teachers as Expectancy Socializers

Predicting Self-Perceived Academic Competence.

Turning to the research questions for the academic domain, two interesting findings emerged with regard the differential contributions made by socializers' expectations. First, teachers' expectations contributed more variance to children's self-perceptions of competence compared to mothers' and fathers' expectations. Second, while teachers' expectations significantly predicted children's self-perceived competence, the combination of academic performance and children's perceptions of others' expectations contributed significantly more variance to children's self-perceived academic competence than teachers' expectations.

Teachers as Expectancy Socializers. While the amount of variance accounted for by teachers' expectations was only moderate, the findings provide partial support for the assumption that children perceive teachers' expectations as salient when making self-evaluations of their academic competence. This argument is strengthened when the results of recent empirical and theoretical formulations concerning self-concept development are examined. For example, Parsons, Kaczala, and Meece (1982) found that teachers' expectations were related to children's past performance and children's confidence in their math abilities; however, the
expectancy effects themselves were minimal. On this basis, Parsons, Kaczala, and Meece (1982) concluded that their findings "probably reflect the congruence of teachers' expectations with a students' past performance rather than the effects of teachers' expectations on student attitudes" (Parsons et al. 1982, p. 333). The conclusions drawn by Parsons et al. (1982) point to a developmental phenomenon known as the "teacher as veridical observer" hypothesis (Crano & Mellon, 1978; Parsons et al. 1982) — the notion that teachers' expectations commensurate unequivocally with past performance. However, the plausibility of the "teacher as veridical observer" hypothesis has been dispelled in the present study since if teachers' expectations were merely reflective of the child's academic performance, academic performance should more significantly predict perceived competence than the combination of teachers' actual expectations and children's perceptions of teachers' expectations.

Despite the proliferation of studies supporting the "teacher as veridical observer hypothesis" (see Crano & Mellon, 1978; Connell & Ilardi, 1987; Eccles, 1983), a consideration of the contributions made by teachers' expectations seems warranted. First, teachers exercise a considerable degree of authority over students and play an evaluative role in children's intellectual development (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1984). Consequently children are required, through the process of schooling, to place
emphasis on teachers' expectations when making self-evaluations of academic competence. Second, in an attempt to avoid internal conflict and maximize cognitive processing efficiency, children may formulate self-views that serve to legitimize the expectations of those significant others perceived as capable of assessing their abilities accurately. Previous sociological research indirectly supports this view. For example, Apple and King (1978) have suggested that young children often attribute full authority to teachers' professional status when making self-assessments. The large body of evidence now accumulated regarding the socializing impact of teachers' expectations and differential treatment on children's self-views supports these conclusions (see Braun, 1976; Brophy, 1977; Brophy & Good, 1974; Cooper, 1979; Parsons et al. 1982; Weinstein et al. 1982).

Parents' Expectations. That teachers' expectations had more predictive validity than parents' expectations does contradict other empirical findings. For example, Eccles (1983) and Stevenson and Newman (1986) found stronger relations between parental attitudes and children's self-perceptions of math ability when compared with the same teacher-expectancy/student-self-perception relationship. The question that remains is "how does one account for such empirical inconsistency across studies?"

One explanation is that research on the "expectancy effect" has not been confined to any one theoretical
movement and numerous measurement tools designed to assess socializers' expectations have been developed. Consequently, concurrent studies have failed to use convergent measures in assessing expectancy constructs across socializing agents. In the Parsons et al. (1982) study, for example, subjects were requested to fill out a six-item questionnaire assessing "how well [they thought] their student would do in an advanced math course" and "how good their student is at math" (p. 325). In the present study, an adapted version of the Self-Perception Profile was used to assess socializers' expectations. Indeed, when developmentalists propose numerous construct definitions and then proceed autonomously in developing and/or utilizing measurement tools in the assessment of that construct, incongruent results can be placed within the context of methodological inconsistency. Analogous problems are associated with the measurement of the self-concept. As Leahy and Shirk (1985) have stated,

Although there is a need for an eclectic resolution of this diversity, the compatibility of the diverse treatments of the [self] is rather questionable. (p. 123)

A second and related conclusion is that in the studies reviewed, divergent academic self-concept constructs were assessed. For example, in the Eccles (1983) study, the assessment of children's self-concept of math ability was of paramount concern. In contrast, the present research assessed an indiscriminate measure of children's perceived academic competence (Harter, 1982). In comparing the data
across studies, two possible conclusions emerge: (1) facets of academic self-concept may reflect expectations specific to socializers playing a central role in sub-domain of academic competence being assessed; (2) the strength of the predictive relationships between socializers' expectations and self-perceptions may vary as a function of academic self-concept construct employed.

Third, the subjects' age range in the present study was incongruous with samples in comparative studies. For example, fourth and fifth graders' self-perceptions of academic ability were assessed in the present study; teacher expectations were significant in predicting perceived academic competence. In the Parsons et al. (1982) study, children in grades 5 through 9 were assessed; parents' expectations were more salient in influencing self-perceptions of math ability. In comparing these results, it seems plausible that teachers' expectations are more influential in the academic domain during early elementary school years whereas parents may be more salient for children during early adolescence.

Predicting Children's Self-Perceived Social Competence. Turning to the research questions in the social domain, the variables that significantly predicted children's self-perceived social competence over and above the contributions made by sociometric status were fathers' expectations, teachers' expectations, and children's perceptions of others' expectations.
Parents Expectations. With regard to the domain-specific evaluative power of parents' expectations, fathers' expectations were more significant in predicting children's self-perceived social competence than mothers' expectations. Given the lack of emphasis placed on the socializing role of males in society, the role that fathers' expectations play in influencing children's self-perceptions of social competence is of particular interest. Males hold significantly more social status in society than females. Consequently, children may perceive their social competence as convergent with the social expectations their fathers hold for them (Gilligan & Wiggins, 1987). This conclusion is based on the assumption that self-judgements are interactive with situations and stem from the infiltration of expectancy information from significant others in a position of social power (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1984). This should be particularly prevalent in the social domain where expectations for socially acceptable behavior are based on the predominant aspects of the particular subculture from which children extract their experience.

Teachers' Expectations. Several factors may account for the relative contributions made by teachers' expectations in predicting children's self-perceived social competence. First, because important developmental factors such as peer relations and social comparison processes emerge later in childhood (Stipek, 1984), young children may view teachers as important expectancy socializers across
contexts. For example, Pintrich and Blumenfeld (1985) have suggested that teacher feedback during elementary school years is a very important source of expectancy information for children across a range of situations. Arguably then, teacher feedback during the elementary school years embodies a consortium of unequivocally positive and negative expectancy statements regarding children's success on variety of tasks, not just academic tasks. The findings of the present study indicate that, although the variance accounted for is minimal, teachers' expectations may influence children's self-perceptions in areas other than the academic domain. More research, however, is necessary in unravelling the complexity of associations between school context variables such as teachers' expectations and children's self-perceptions of social competence.

**Predicting Children's Self-Perceived Behavioral Conduct.** Turning to the research questions in the behavioral conduct domain, the data indicate that mothers' expectations significantly predicted children's self-perceived behavioral competence over and above the contributions made by academic performance. In contrast, fathers' and teachers' expectations did not significantly contribute to children's self-perceived behavioral competence. Noteworthy, however, is that inspection of the correlation analyses suggested only minimal differences in the relations between mothers' and fathers' expectations and children's self perceived behavioral conduct.
Nevertheless, these findings suggest that at least in the elementary school years that parents' expectations make important contributions to the development of children's self-perceptions of behavioral conduct. Although studies have not adequately explored this relation, a number of possibilities can be proposed regarding the ways in which parents' expectations influence children's self-perceived behavioral competence.

First, since parents are typically the primary caregivers and most often define the boundaries of acceptable behavior for their children across behavioral contexts, children may perceive parents' expectations as important when making self-evaluations of behavioral competence. Second, previous research has suggested that expectations for success in this domain are strongly emphasized by parents, thereby increasing the pressure for children to adopt self-views that are not significantly discrepant from parental expectations. Finally, it is also possible that parents' expectations, conveyed through rewards and punishments, function to indoctrinate children into a belief system regarding their behavioral competence. For example, a child that is punished regularly may maintain a low self-perceived competence whereas as a child rewarded regularly may hold themselves in high regard. That teachers' expectations did not contribute significantly to perceived behavioral conduct further supports these conclusions.
Predicting Children's Self-Perceived Athletic Competence. Turning to the research questions for the athletic domain, mothers' expectations, teachers' expectations and children's perceptions of teachers' expectations were the most significant predictors of children's perceived athletic competence over and above the contributions made by sociometric status.

Parents' Expectations. In the absence of a theoretically derived explanation regarding how children acquire knowledge of their athletic abilities, the interpretation of these findings is incomplete. However, they do cast a preliminary light on the varying roles socializers' expectations play in influencing children's self-perceptions of athletic competence. Previous research has indicated that parents spend a lot of time engaging in sport related activities with children during elementary school years (Watkins & Montgomery, 1989). Indeed, if parents spend time engaging in and conveying expectations to children regarding their athletic competence children may be more likely to internalize parents' expectations. In support of this conclusion, Horn (1985) has provided evidence suggesting that evaluative feedback from a significant other strongly influences children's self-perceptions of athletic competence.

Teachers' Expectations. Horn's (1985) conclusion may also apply to teachers in the athletic context. In the present study, teachers' expectations significantly
contributed to children's self-perceived athletic competence. Of interest is that in the present sample teachers instructed every subject of study, including physical education. Thus, a disproportionate amount of time spent with students combined with the conveyance of expectancy information regarding students athletic abilities may also lead children to internalize teachers' expectations. That sociometric status (peer popularity) was predictive of self-perceptions of athletic competence suggests, however, that other socializing agents may be important in the athletic domain such as peers and/or coaches. Despite this possibility, the results corroborate the possible "teacher expectancy" findings in the academic domain.

In concluding this section, it is important to note some additional points. First, notwithstanding the moderate amount of variance accounted for by socializers' expectations, the regression analyses suggested that mothers' and teachers' expectations contribute significantly to the prediction of children's self-perceptions of competence across achievement domains; fathers' expectations appear to contribute small amounts of unique variance to perceived competence over that which they share with mothers' and teachers' expectations. One exception is the significant contributions made by fathers' expectations in predicting children's self-perceived social competence.
Second, these findings indicate that socializers' expectations differentially contribute to children's self-perceptions of competence across achievement domains. However, the amount of variance accounted for by both parents' and teachers' expectations across domains is only moderate. One reason for this may be that middle school age children rely less on social feedback (e.g., socializers' expectations) and more on objective feedback received from adults and/or peers when making self-evaluations of competence across contexts. Stipek and Mac Iver (1989), in their review of the literature, summarized findings suggesting that young children's ability judgements (kindergarten through to grade two) were more readily influenced by social feedback (i.e., expectancy information) than by objective feedback such as grades and verbal reports of competence; the converse is true for middle school age children and adolescents. This finding is supported by Kohlberg (1969) who suggests that adult evaluation is important for young children until they reach the "concrete operational stage because [until then] they attribute full evaluative and moral authority to adults" (Stipek & Mac Iver, 1989, p. 527). Kohlberg (1969) refers to this developmental phenomenon as the "good boy" or "good girl" premise of moral action (Stipek & Mac Iver, 1989, p. 527). According to Kohlberg (1969), young children are preoccupied with internalizing the attitudes and beliefs of adults in an effort to please and gain acceptance from them. Given the
developmental stage of children in the present sample (middle school), more objective feedback sources may have been emphasized.

In addition to the salience children attribute to significant others and objective feedback, research suggests that children also have difficulty deconstructing the meaning of two or more feedback sources simultaneously (Stipek & Mac Iver, 1989). Consequently, children may formulate self-perceptions using only the most salient social references while simultaneously disregarding other feedback information. This limit in children's cognitive capacity is commonly referred to as "centration" (Liben & Bigler, 1987). In the present study, developmental differences in children's ability to interpret and deconstruct social and objective feedback may explain the low variance accounted for by socializers' expectations in the prediction of perceived competence.

Third, in considering the context specific nature of self-perceptions across achievement domains, it becomes clear that formulating self-perceptions in one domain may be more difficult than in others. For example, it was more difficult to detect a coherent pattern of results in the behavioral conduct domain when compared with the academic domain. One reason for this difficulty may be that in the academic domain children have access to concrete feedback sources such as grades and/or teachers' expectations. In contrast, within the behavioral conduct context children
receive non-standardized and less concrete forms of feedback information.

Fourth, the findings also suggest that teachers' play a more significant role in children's developing self-perceptions across domains than previously thought. For example, the majority of studies imply that teachers' expectations only influence children's ability perceptions in the academic domain. However, in the present study teachers' expectations significantly predicted children's self-perceptions across academic, social and athletic domains. This finding suggests that teachers do not influence children's self-perceptions unidimensionally. As Rosenholtz and Simpson (1984) state: "if classrooms [teachers] are organized to create multiple performance dimensions, multiple bases [on the part of the teacher] for evaluating performances will exist" (p.37). Arguably, this implies that teachers are not only seen by children as academic authorities. Rather, teachers are more likely to be perceived by children as legitimate reference sources across contexts.

In pursuing this issue one step further, it can be argued that children's self-knowledge thus becomes intimately linked to institutionalized conceptions of ability formulated on the basis of teachers' expectations (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1984). Therefore, "what individuals know to be real [about themselves] is at least in part socially constructed [on the basis of teachers'
expectations]" (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1984, p. 33). In support of this conceptualization, Rosenholtz and Simpson (1986) state that,

The centrality of intellectual ability to American culture and the traditional structure of school experiences makes it extremely likely that schools [thus teachers] will generate ability conceptions among students that are isomorphic with those of the larger society. (p. 35)

Such isomorphism between the teachers' expectations and children's self-perceptions is seen by educational institutions as necessary for social stability. It is instructive that the same point can be made regarding children's self-views; the less disparity between a significant others' expectations and children's self-view, the less internal conflict and greater stability children will experience. Clearly, this reflects the imposition socializers often place on children to maintain standardized norms of academic, social and moral behavior.

Unfortunately, the transmission of culturally based expectations may discourage some children from succeeding in the present system. For example, children socialized in social arrangements antithetical to mainstream expectations for behavior may develop self-perceptions that do not accurately reflect their ability. In this way, expectancy feedback may attenuate children's self-esteem, their future psychosocial adjustment and vocational opportunities. While the data do not directly address these issues and no causal relations can be inferred, they highlight the need for further research on the socializing influence of teachers'
expectations on children's developing self-perceptions across achievement contexts.

Finally, it should be stressed that, consistent with previous research, mothers' expectations were significant in predicting children's self-perceptions. Moreover, this relationship held up in three of the four achievement domains examined. Since in most domains, the correlation coefficients in relation to perceived competence between mothers' and fathers' expectations were not substantively disparate, it cannot be inferred that mothers' expectations rather than fathers' expectations play a more salient role in children's developing self-perceptions. It reiterates, however, the importance of age differences in determining which socializing agents' will be deemed most important by children when making self-evaluations. For example, mothers may be the primary socializing agents for middle age school children. Fathers may figure more prominently at a later developmental stage. This is consistent with socialization research and traditional conceptions of the family.

Children's Perceptions of Others' Expectations

Probably the most striking finding of the study concerns the primary role children's perceptions of significant others' expectations play in predicting children's self-perceptions; "children's perceptions of others' expectations" contributed the largest proportion of variance to children's self-perceived competence both across and within achievement domains. These results replicate
previous findings of Eccles (1983) and others (Phillips, 1984, 1987) that suggest a predictive relationship between children's perceptions of others' expectations and children's self-perceptions of competence. The basic question that remains then is "why is it that children's perceptions of others' expectations maintain more predictive power than either socializers' expectations and past performance?"

One possibility is that children may acquire expectancy information from a significant other that is previously organized, regulated and consistent. However, through the interaction of others' expectations and a child's level of psychological adjustment, children may reconstruct or distort the information originally conveyed. For example, consider a child that has been traumatized as a result of parental abuse. The abused child, viewing the self in negative terms, might misinterpret significant others' expectations and their underlying significance simply by maintaining a psychological position that does not accurately reflect their ability.

A related conclusion has been outlined by Eccles (1983) and others (see Bandura, 1977; Damon & Hart, 1982; Phillips, 1987; Mead, 1934; Weinstein et al. 1986). Eccles (1983) and Bandura (1977), for example, argue that feedback or expectancy information from a significant other is most accurately reflected in children's perceptions of others and thus self-perceptions when: (1) children attend to the
original message relayed by significant others (Damon & Hart, 1982); (2) when these expectancy messages are not significantly incongruent with the expectations of other salient influences (Mead, 1934); and (3) when the significant other is perceived by the child as important (Bandura, 1977). In light of this evidence, perceptions of others may not be entirely accurate representations of the environment, and "intraindividual factors may play a role in what is perceived" (Weinstein et al. 1982, p. 679). In the present study, children's perceptions of their teachers' and parents' expectations were significantly but only moderately correlated with teachers' and parents' actual expectations further supporting a "cognitive distortion" hypothesis.

Third, children may not be capable of distinguishing between a self and self/significant-other construct at this developmental stage. That is, it is possible that perceptions of others' expectations and self-views are imperceptible to children. Such limits in cognitive capacities may impede children's attempts to make conceptual distinctions between constructs. Furthermore, this possible homogeneity of cognitive constructs calls into question the validity of utilizing measures defined as conceptually distinct structures when they have not yet been validated as such. While research on domains of social and cognitive judgement have supported the contention that young children form general concepts distinguishable by domain (Harter, 1982), there are virtually no validation studies assessing
the construct validity of children's perceptions of others' expectations.

Another alternative explanation is that the variance accounted for by children's perceptions of others' expectations is due to measurement artifacts such as the idiosyncratic use of measurement scales. In the present study children were administered all the questionnaires assessing children's perceptions of teachers' and parents' expectations concurrently. Moreover, the structure and content of the questionnaires were virtually analogous. Thus, while it is plausible that children do make distinctions between perceptions of their own ability and their perceptions of what others expect of them, the methodological inadequacies may have rendered the constructs redundant.

Of interest is that in previous work by Eccles (1983), strong relations between children's perceptions of parents' expectations and children's self-perceptions of math ability were also found. The correlations ranged from .48 to .55 across 3 different samples. Eccles (1983) also identified a domain entitled "Perception of parents' perception of child's math ability". The correlations between the perception of parents' perception of a child's math ability and children's math self-concept ranged from .69 to .74 across these samples. Similar methodological procedures were employed in the present study.
Although the artifact interpretation or cognitive maturation argument could account for Eccles (1983) data and the results of the present study, what is perplexing is that Eccles (1983) disregards the possibilities of rival hypotheses in explaining the data. Undoubtedly however, the findings of the present study point to limitations of previous empirical work conducted in this area and indicate a call for more rigorous measurement procedures when assessing young children's cognitions. Unfortunately, the available data cannot speak directly to the issue of the artifact interpretation. The results do, however, speak indirectly to this issue because they highlight the question of whether an assessment tool of this nature should be deemed age-appropriate.

**Performance Factors**

An unequivocal pattern emerged with respect to the relative contributions made by performance factors to the prediction of children's self-perceptions of competence across achievement domains. As expected, academic performance contributed a significant amount of variance to the prediction of children's perceptions of academic competence. Similar results emerged in the social domain; sociometric status significantly predicted children's self-perceived social competence. Differences were most marked in the behavioral conduct and athletic domain where the amount of variance accounted for by performance factors was reduced significantly. One reason for this may be that
adequate performance measures were not used as predictor variables in either of these domains. Academic performance is traditionally seen as a performance measure in the academic domain and sociometric status is traditionally seen as a measure of performance in the social domain. These two variables, however, are not traditionally viewed as performance measures in other achievement domains.

In conclusion, these results suggest that the relative contributions made by performance factors to the prediction of perceived competence does vary across achievement domains. For example, academic performance has domain-specific evaluative power in the academic domain. Conversely, in the social domain sociometric status emerges as the significant predictor. Both within and across domains, however, children's perceptions of others' expectations contributed more variance to perceived competence over that which performance factors contributed.

Implications For Theories of Child Development

This study has proposed and supported the assumption that socializers' expectations, children's perceptions of these expectations and performance factors contribute differentially to the prediction of children's domain-specific self-perceptions of competence. Extrapolating from the perspective of Harter (1981, 1982, 1985) and Eccles (1983), a general model of perceived competence was developed and assessed in relation to these assumptions. While the development of such a model does not provide
support for causal associations between the variables assessed, the results provide preliminary support for the suggestion that children's self-judgements are interactive with contexts and that, in part, evaluations of one's competence stems from the expectations socializers' communicate to children, children's perceptions of these expectations and performance factors.

Findings that support the predictive validity of socialization factors across domains of the self-concept are not in themselves indicative of the validity of a theoretical position on the nature or sources of self-concept development. However, they elucidate four salient issues for the developmental theoretician attempting to identify the origins of self-concept development.

First, this research calls into question the symbolic interactionists' position suggesting that all self-knowledge inevitably proceeds from the actual messages conveyed by significant others. This position "presumes a direct link between self and others" (Blum, 1988, p.315) and implies that children "are relatively passive recipients of the prestructured reality of the external world" (Liben & Bigler, 1987, p.98). However, it does not take into consideration the indirect means of forging or [recreating] a subsequent cognitive link between self [child] and other (Blum, 1987). In the present study, evidence suggested that children's perceptions of others' expectations, rather than socializers' actual expectations, were more important
predictors of children's perceived competence. This finding implies that children utilize personal schemes to assimilate information from the environment into their own cognitive structures while simultaneously reconstructing it according to their perceptions. "Thus, stimuli acquire their meaning not only from the external world of the investigator, but also from the internal world of the subject" (Liben & Bigler, 1987, p. 98). Wittgenstein has shed theoretical light on this problem. As highlighted in Blum (1987):

Wittgenstein sees the commonalty between persons sharing a form of life as a condition of the possibility of knowledge of others, and indeed a presupposition of any processes of inferences made by one person of significance with regard to another. At the moment the notion of the child, generating knowledge of others purely out of his own experience [without involving some form of interpretation of that knowledge] - the paradigm for empiricist epistemology - is, Wittgenstein argues, an incoherent one. (Blum, p.315)

In other words, children's ability to grasp the meaning of significant others' expectations is a highly specialized cognitive process that has not yet found its conceptual grounding in theory. Elaborating on this, Shrauger and Schoeneman (1979) state:

that the aspect of the looking-glass hypothesis that has been most frequently examined, the effect of direct feedback form other people, reflects only one of the ways that interaction with others has an impact on self-judgements. (p. 569)

Therefore, at issue for the theoretician is not whether socializers actually communicate expectations to children but the form of those communications, as well as the nature of their effectiveness. This implies that the analyses of
significant other-child interactions necessitates the development of more detailed conceptions of the expectancy/self-concept relation in children. Expectancy/self-concept relations can be broadened in two ways. One is to account for the various ways expectations are conveyed (i.e., punishment, praise, grades, etc) to children and to compare the differential effectiveness of these influences on children's self-views. The second is to describe the reciprocity in adult-child interactions and children's cognitive representations of these interactions more accurately. Certainly the translation of expectations by children involves an interactive process demanding both interpretation and understanding of their social meaning. Implementation of these functions implies that the development of self-knowledge is not a top-down accommodation process that stands apart from the various cognitive operations children engage in. Thus, a departure from self-concept research lacking explicit theoretical links between socializers' expectations and children's self-views would be a worthwhile empirical leap.

Second, given the purported significance of children's perceptions of others' expectations for self-concept development, future studies of the extent and impact of socializers' expectations on children's self-perceptions should focus on the cognitive processes whereby children acquire erroneous or inaccurate views of others' expectations. Indeed, if children maintain a erroneous view
of significant others over the course of their development, then the establishment of an accurate self-view appears unlikely.

Third, more observational research is needed to examine the methods whereby adults convey expectations to children. Although research conducted in the area of social cognition has provided relevant leads, the ongoing use of questionnaires assessing actual expectancies confine the researcher's ability to accurately translate their implicit meaning. Thus, "real life" circumstances that are not contrived may be more appropriate research settings for examining the role socializers' expectations play in predicting children's self-views.

Fourth, the use of diverse methodological frameworks in the examination of children's self-perceptions would assist in ameliorating the problems associated with alternative interpretations of the data. For example, while the independent variables significantly predict children's perceived competence, it may also be the case that the reverse is true - children's self-perceptions are predictive of academic performance and/or children's perceptions of others' expectations. Employing longitudinal studies and cross lagged panel analyses are two research strategies that may be useful in teasing out problems of this nature.

Finally, although numerous criticisms have been leveled against the basic methodological framework of the study, the most urgent task is to develop instruments that parallel
theoretically and statistically sound constructs that children can distinguish. These issues must be dealt with before progress is made in understanding the nature and origins of children's self-perceptions.

Implications for Counsellors

In addition to presenting implications for the propagation of theory in the area of self-concept development, several practical issues are relevant when considering counselling strategies for children suffering from low self-esteem.

The first issue is that counsellors need to give heed to problems of "centration" in children - a child's tendency to attend to one environmental stimuli to the extent that other equally important social references (Liben & Bigler, 1987, p. 99) are excluded. If children focus only on one aspect of their immediate context in formulating self-perceptions, they may unknowingly endorse a self-view that bears no real relation to their actual ability. These restraints on children's cognitive capacities suggest that counsellors assist young children in replacing the "reliance on significant others' views" with more appropriate self-reliance dimensions such as interests, contributions, skills or self-comparison strategies. Additionally, counsellors should encourage children to categorize expectancy information they receive in multiple ways. This will assist young children in examining the various ways in which they
are perceived so that unidimensional and erroneous assessments of their competence is avoided.

Second, counsellors should be aware that children's self-views diverge markedly across class and culture. Such divergence represents the various ways on which children construct their self-perceptions. Understanding the varying social dimensions of self-perceptions will assist the counsellor in better understanding the child's difficulties and corresponding needs. Moreover, the assessment of children's perceived barriers to change will be more easily detected if the counsellor is adept to both culture and class in the development of self-perceptions.

Third, counsellors should examine the degree to which there is congruence between socializers' expectations, children's perceptions of these expectations and children's self-perceptions. If this issue is avoided, counsellors will impede their own attempts to detect cognitive distortion mechanisms operating either in parents, teachers, or children. Such neglect may bring about an intervention method that is ineffective in promoting a change in children's self-perceptions of competence.

Fourth, the findings suggest that counsellors attend to the developmental stage of children when addressing problems associated with low self-esteem. If children utilize different social references when evaluating their competence across developmental stages, then counselling practices that "maximize self-confidence and positive motivation for
children in one age group may not be appropriate for children in another age group" (Stipek & Mac Iver, 1989, p. 535).

Finally, in keeping with an ideological commitment to improving the social status of children, the counsellor should pursue the question of "which social references have social meaning to children across contexts?". The purpose of this is to bring into relief any possible inequities the child may feel with regard to socializers in particular contexts. That counsellors may need to redress the imbalance between significant others and their children and/or students has not been dealt with adequately in the counselling arena. However, assisting in improving a child's psychological status implies a necessity to examine perceived competence within a sociological framework that serves to uncover the often unrealistic expectations imposed on children by authority figures in the larger society.

Limitations of the Study

The conclusions of the present study should be examined with some caution. With the general perceived competence model as the primary unit of analysis, the study is limited in scope with reference to the explanation of other possible predictors of domain-specific self-perceived competence. In addition, because of little precedent in previous research for the classification of domain-specific influences, the study took an approach that was largely exploratory. For example, it was not possible to establish a precise
perceived competence model that retained an adequate statistical fit across the academic, social, athletic and behavioral conduct domains. Finally, it should be noted that several rival hypotheses can be posed in light of the methodological inadequacies of the present study.

General Conclusions

The author has attempted to advance an exploratory model of perceived competence that elaborates on previous empirical work by Eccles (1983) and Harter (1981, 1982, 1983, 1985). Testing a "perceived competence" model has provided some support for the suggestion that self-perceptions of competence are based, at least in part, on significant others' expectations and children's perceptions of significant others' expectations.

In light of these findings, the results accent the need for: (1) a more extensive investigation of the significant other-child interaction process in conjunction with a improved understanding of the psychological processes shaping children's perceptions of others' expectations; and (2) the need for better methodological adeptness when conducting research in social cognition. It is only then that we will understand, first, why children become marginalized through a seemingly incomprehensible process of socialization and second, how such marginalization can be ameliorated.
1 This is not to suggest that a positive relationship between socializers' expectations and children's self-perceptions of academic competence does not exist. In fact, the theoretical arguments provided highlight the significance of assessing the impact of socializers' expectations across self-concept domains. However, little attention has been paid to the variation of instrumentation within a single domain such as English self-concept and or Math self-concept. Additionally, the preceding correlation between teachers' expectations and children's self-perceptions of competence was considered to be moderate to high thus providing further evidence of a link between teachers' expectations and children's self-perceptions of academic competence.
REFERENCES


there still a place for joy? In G. C. Roberts, & D. M. Landers (Eds.), *Psychology of motor behavior and sport-1980* (pp. 3-29). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.


Nicholls, J. (1979). Development of perception of own attainment and casual attributions for successes and


APPENDIX A
Questionnaire Assessing Parents' and Teachers' Expectations
REVISED VERSION

PARENT’S EXPECTATIONS FOR CHILD’S FUTURE BEHAVIOUR

Child’s name __________________________ Class/grade/school __________________________

Father (Mom or Dad) __________________________

Please indicate what you feel will be your child’s future competence (next year and the year after) on each question, in your opinion. First decide what kind of child he or she will be like, the one described on the left or right, and then indicate whether this is just sort of true or really true for your child. Thus, for each item, check one of four boxes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Really True</th>
<th>Sort of True</th>
<th>Really True</th>
<th>Sort of True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This child will be able to do his/her school work.</td>
<td>This child will not be able to do the school work assigned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This child will find it hard to make friends.</td>
<td>For this child it will be pretty easy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This child will do well at all kinds of sports.</td>
<td>This child will not be very good when it comes to sports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This child usually will be well-behaved.</td>
<td>This child will often not be well-behaved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This child often will forget what she/he learns.</td>
<td>This child will be able to remember things easily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This child will have a lot of friends.</td>
<td>This child will not have many friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This child will be better than others his/her age at sports.</td>
<td>This child will not be able to play as well as others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This child usually will act appropriately.</td>
<td>This child will be better if she/he acts differently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This child will have trouble figuring out the answers in school.</td>
<td>This child will almost always figure out the answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This child will be popular with others his/her age.</td>
<td>This child will not be very popular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This child will not do well at new outdoor games.</td>
<td>This child will be good at new games right away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This child often will get in trouble because of things he/she does.</td>
<td>This child usually will not do things that get him/her in trouble.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B
Questionnaire Assessing Children's Perceptions of Socializers' Expectations
**REVISED VERSION**

**WHAT MY TEACHER THINKS I WILL BE LIKE NEXT YEAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s name</th>
<th>Class/grade/group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Really True</th>
<th>Sort of True</th>
<th>My teacher thinks</th>
<th>Sort of True</th>
<th>Really True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>My teacher thinks I will be able to do my school work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td>My teacher thinks I will find it hard to make friends.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td>My teacher thinks I will do well at all kinds of sports.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td>My teacher thinks I usually will be well-behaved.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td>My teacher thinks I will often forget what I learn.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td>My teacher thinks I will have a lot of friends.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td>My teacher thinks I will be better than others my age at sports.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
<td>My teacher thinks I usually will act properly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td></td>
<td>My teacher thinks I will have trouble figuring out the answers in school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td></td>
<td>My teacher thinks I will be popular with others my age.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td></td>
<td>My teacher thinks I won't be able to do well at new outdoor games.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td></td>
<td>My teacher thinks I often will get in trouble because of things I do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Note: The table represents a set of statements about the student's behavior and abilities as perceived by their teacher. The options include choosing from "Really True," "Sort of True," and "Sort of False."
## REvised Version

### What My Parents Think I Will Be Like Next Year

- **Child's name**
- **Class/grade/group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Really True</th>
<th>Sort of True</th>
<th>My parents think I will</th>
<th>Sort of True</th>
<th>Real True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents think I will be able to do my school work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents think I will find it hard to make friends.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents think I will do well at all kinds of sports.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents think I usually will be well-behaved.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents think I often will forget what I learn.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents think I will have a lot of friends.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents think I will be better than others my age at sports.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents think I usually will act properly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents think I will have trouble figuring out the answers in school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents think I will be popular with others my age.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents think I won't be able to do well at new outdoor games.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents think I often will get into trouble because of things I do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **My parents think I won't be able to do the school work assigned.**
- **My parents think I will be able to make friends pretty easily.**
- **My parents think I won't be very good when it comes to sports.**
- **My parents think I often won't be well-behaved.**
- **My parents think I will be able to remember things easily.**
- **My parents think I won't have many friends.**
- **My parents think I won't play as well as others.**
- **My parents think I will be better if I act differently.**
- **My parents think I almost always will be able to figure out the answers.**
- **My parents think I will not be very popular.**
- **My parents think I will be good at new games right away.**
- **My parents think usually I won't do things that get me in trouble.**
APPENDIX C
The Self Perception Profile for Children
What I Am Like

Name __________________________  Age _______ Birthday __________  Group _______
Boy or Girl (circle which)

SAMPLE SENTENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Really True for me</th>
<th>Sort of True for me</th>
<th>Sort of True for me</th>
<th>Really True for me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other kids would rather watch T.V.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>Some kids would rather play outdoors in their spare time</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other kids would rather watch T.V.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Some kids feel that they are very good at their school work BUT Other kids worry about whether they can do the school work assigned to them.  
2. Some kids find it hard to make friends BUT Other kids find it's pretty easy to make friends.  
3. Some kids do very well at all kinds of sports BUT Other kids don’t feel that they are very good when it comes to sports.  
4. Some kids are happy with the way they look BUT Other kids are not happy with the way they look.  
5. Some kids often do not like the way they behave BUT Other kids usually like the way they behave.  
6. Some kids are often unhappy with themselves BUT Other kids are pretty pleased with themselves.  
7. Some kids feel like they are just as smart as as other kids their age BUT Other kids aren’t so sure and wonder if they are as smart.  
8. Some kids have a lot of friends BUT Other kids don’t have very many friends.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Really True for me</th>
<th>Sort of True for me</th>
<th>BUT</th>
<th>Really True for me</th>
<th>Sort of True for me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Some kids wish they could be a lot better at sports</td>
<td>Other kids feel they are good enough at sports.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Some kids are happy with their height and weight</td>
<td>Other kids wish their height or weight were different.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Some kids usually do the right thing</td>
<td>Other kids often don't do the right thing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Some kids don't like the way they are leading their life</td>
<td>Other kids do like the way they are leading their life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Some kids are pretty slow in finishing their school work</td>
<td>Other kids can do their school work quickly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Some kids would like to have a lot more friends</td>
<td>Other kids have as many friends as they want.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Some kids think they could do well at just about any new sports activity they haven't tried before</td>
<td>Other kids are afraid they might not do well at sports they haven't ever tried.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Some kids wish their body was different</td>
<td>Other kids like their body the way it is.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Some kids usually act the way they know they are supposed to</td>
<td>Other kids often don't act the way they are supposed to.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Some kids are happy with themselves as a person</td>
<td>Other kids are often not happy with themselves.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Some kids often forget what they learn</td>
<td>Other kids can remember things easily.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Some kids are always doing things with a lot of kids</td>
<td>Other kids usually do things by themselves.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Really True for me</td>
<td>Sort of True for me</td>
<td>Sort of True for me</td>
<td>Really True for me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Some kids feel that they are better than others their age at sports</td>
<td>BUT Other kids don't feel they can play as well.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Some kids wish their physical appearance (how they look) was different</td>
<td>BUT Other kids like their physical appearance the way it is.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Some kids usually get in trouble because of things they do</td>
<td>BUT Other kids usually don't do things that get them in trouble.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Some kids like the kind of person they are</td>
<td>BUT Other kids often wish they were someone else.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Some kids do very well at their classwork</td>
<td>BUT Other kids don't do very well at their classwork.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Some kids wish that more people their age liked them</td>
<td>BUT Other kids feel that most people their age do like them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>In games and sports some kids usually watch instead of play</td>
<td>BUT Other kids usually play rather than just watch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Some kids wish something about their face or hair looked different</td>
<td>BUT Other kids like their face and hair the way they are.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Some kids do things they know they shouldn't do</td>
<td>BUT Other kids hardly ever do things they know they shouldn't do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Some kids are very happy being the way they are</td>
<td>BUT Other kids wish they were different.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Some kids have trouble figuring out the answers in school</td>
<td>BUT Other kids almost always can figure out the answers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Some kids are popular with others their age</td>
<td>BUT Other kids are not very popular.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Some kids don't do well at new outdoor games</td>
<td>BUT Other kids are good at new games right away.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Some kids think that they are good looking</td>
<td>BUT Other kids think that they are not very good looking.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Some kids behave themselves very well</td>
<td>BUT Other kids often find it hard to behave themselves.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Some kids are not very happy with the way they do a lot of things</td>
<td>BUT Other kids think the way they do things is fine.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D
Questionnaire Instruction for Children
INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CHILD:

We have some sentences here and, as you can see from the top of your sheet where it says "What I am like," we are interested in what each of you is like, what kind of a person you are like. This is a survey, not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. Since kids are very different from one another, each of you will be putting down something different.

First let me explain how these questions work. There is a sample question at the top marked (a). I'll read it out loud and you follow along with me. (Examiner reads sample question.) This question talks about two kinds of kids, and we want to know which kids are most like you.

(1) So, what I want you to decide first is whether you are more like the kinds on the left side who would rather play outdoors, or whether you are most like the kids on the right side who would rather watch T.V. Don't mark anything yet, but first decide which kind of kid is most like you, and go to that side of the sentence.

(2) Now, the second thing I want you to think about, now that you have decided which kind of kids are most like you, is to decide whether that is only sort of true for you, or really true for you. If it's only sort of true, then put an X in the box under sort of true; if it's really true for you, then put an X in that box, under really true.

(3) For each sentence, you only check one box. Sometimes it will be on one side of the page, another time it will be on the other side of the page, but you can only check one box for each sentence. You don't check both sides, just the one side most like you.

(4) OK, that one was just for practice. Now we have some more sentences which I'm going to read out loud. For each one, just check one box, the one that goes with what is true for you, what you are most like.