

CORRELATION BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM, LEVEL OF IDENTIFICATION WITH PARENTS, AND ADJUSTMENT OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN

GEORGE H. STANFORD

The University of Texas at Austin

DARHL M. PEDERSEN

*Brigham Young University
U.S.A.*

Such parental variables as acceptance (Medinnus, 1965), interest (Rosenberg, 1963), and attitudes (Jourard & Remy, 1955) have been found to be related to children's self-esteem. Another seemingly important variable is the child's level of identification with parents, particularly the parent of the same sex (Jourard, 1957, Smith & Suinn, 1965).

The present study explores the relationship between self-esteem in children and: parental adjustment scores, and identification with parents. In addition, the relationships were examined between children's adjustment scores and: self-esteem, parental adjustment scores, and identification with parents.

METHODS

Thirty-three fathers and 39 mothers volunteered as subjects from among participants in Human Relations workshops sponsored by several school districts in southern Utah. Each of the children of these parents in the fourth through eighth grades were selected as subjects. This sample included 34 girls and 37 boys, ranging in age from nine to 15 years. Since the children were selected for the study if either parent volunteered, some of the children's parents were not included in the study. Consequently, sample sizes varied, the smallest being the 24 boys whose fathers participated.

The California Test of Personality (CTP) was selected to define adjustment in both parents and children. This test seems to place a good deal of emphasis on the ability to form and maintain relationships. The Sears Self-Concept Inventory developed at Stanford University was used to measure the children's self-esteem. The Identification Inventory used is a semantic differential of children after Medinnus (1965) to measure level of identification of children with parents. It is composed of 22 bipolar adjectives, each on a seven choice continuum. The measure is administered three times with separate instructions to "mark it as you are," "mark it as your father is," and "mark it as your mother is." Identification scores are inversely related to the distance between the child's markings for the parent and himself.

The parents were asked to complete the California Test of Personality after the workshop. The CTP, Self-Concept Inventory, and Identification Inventory were administered to the children in groups in the schools they attended. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients were obtained between the variables explored. Where the CTP was a variable, correlations were obtained for the 12 subscales upon which the adjustment scales are based, as well as the three adjustment scales.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The trends in those results involving CTP scores seem to be represented by the correlations obtained on the three total scores. For this reason, only the total scores are reported in the data tables. Several trends not reflected in the correlations for the total scores, but found in the correlations for the subscales, are also reported.

It appears from Table 1 that self-esteem is highly related to the adjustment of boys in the study, but not to the adjustment of girls. Highly significant correlations were obtained between self-esteem and three CTP total scores for boys. None of these same correlations were significant for girls, but one subscale, Self-Reliance, was found to be significantly correlated (.01 level) with self-esteem in girls.

This difference between boys and girls may be an attribute of

TABLE 1
Children's Self-Esteem Correlated with Children's CTP Scores
SELF-ESTEEM

		Boys	Girls
Children's CTP Scores	Personal Adjustment	.50**	.33
	Social Adjustment	.45**	.10
	Total Adjustment	.54**	.26
	*probability	.05 (two tailed test)	
	**probability	.01 (two tailed test)	

TABLE 2
Children's Self-Esteem Correlated with Parents' CTP Scores
SELF-ESTEEM

		Boys	Girls
Father's CTP Scores	Personal Adjustment	.20	.24
	Social Adjustment	.27	.48*
	Total Adjustment	.25	.36
Mother's CTP Scores	Personal Adjustment	.16	.27
	Social Adjustment	.07	.23
	Total Adjustment	.11	.26
	*probability	.05 (two tailed test)	
	**probability	.01 (two tailed test)	

SELF-ESTEEM, IDENTIFICATION, ADJUSTMENT OF PARENTS-CHILDREN

the age range of the subjects. Boys at this age seem to have a particularly strong need to prove themselves to themselves and others. Adjustment may be related to how well they feel they are achieving this end.

The results in table 2 do not indicate that parental adjustment as measured by the CTP for parents is associated with self-esteem in boys. There were no significant correlations between boys' self-esteem and fathers' or mothers' CTP scores. The same results were found when girls' self-esteem was correlated with mothers' adjustment scores. However, Sense of Personal Freedom and Anti-social Tendencies for mothers were significantly correlated (.05 level) with self-esteem in girls.

Whereas the Personal Adjustment and Total Adjustment of fathers was not found to be related to self-esteem in girls, a significant correlation (.05 level) was obtained between fathers' Social Adjustment and girls' self-esteem. The fathers in the study with the highest social adjustment scores tended to have daughters high in self-esteem. Although this trend was maintained throughout the subscales composing the Social Adjustment scale, only one subscale, Social Skills, was found to be significantly correlated (.01 level) with self-esteem. A father's inability to develop social standards and relationships seems to be related to low self-esteem in girls of the age studied.

It can be seen in table 3 that children's personal adjustment in this study was significantly associated with the personal adjustment of parents of the opposite sex, but not the same sex. Boys' personal adjustment was significantly correlated with mothers' personal adjustment scores, but not with the fathers'; girls' personal adjustment was significantly correlated with the fathers' personal adjustment scores, but not the mothers'. None of the other adjustment scores

TABLE 3
Children's CTP Scores Correlated with Parents' Respective
CTP Scores
CHILDREN'S CTP SCORES

		Boys	Girls
Father's CTP Scores	Personal Adjustment	.27	.45*
	Social Adjustment	.36	.15
	Total Adjustment	.32	.36
Mother's CTP Scores	Personal Adjustment	.39*	.01
	Social Adjustment	.23	.17
	Total Adjustment	.35	.12
	*probability	.05 (two tailed test)	
	**probability	.01 (two tailed test)	

for children were significantly related to adjustment scores for parents.

TABLE 4

Children's Identification Correlated with Children's CTP Scores

	IDENTIFICATION WITH PARENTS			
	Boys with Fathers	Boys with Mothers	Girls with Fathers	Girls with Mothers
Personal				
Adjustment	.27	.32	.19	.67**
Social				
Adjustment	.24	.11	.21	.57**
Total				
Adjustment	.29	.28	.21	.67**
*probability	.05 (two tailed test)			
**probability	.01 (two tailed test)			

As reported in table 4, highly significant correlations were obtained between the three adjustment scores for girls and level of identification with their mothers. None of the other correlations between level of identification and children's adjustment were significant. While the adjustment of girls in this study is more highly associated with the adjustment of their fathers than the adjustment of their mothers, it is significantly associated with how well they identify with their mothers.

Two interesting trends not shown in table 4 were found upon examination of the correlations for subscales. Whereas Sense of Personal Freedom in girls was one of the few CTP subscales not significantly correlated with identification with mothers it was significantly correlated (.01 level) with identification with fathers. Even though none of the adjustment scales for boys was significantly correlated with identification with either parent, boys' Feeling of Belonging was significantly correlated (.05 level) with identification with both fathers and mothers.

The correlations between children's self-esteem scores and identification scores are reported in table 5. None of these correlations are significant. The fact that girls' identification with mothers is highly related to adjustment but not to self-esteem is consistent with the low correlation between self-esteem and adjustment reported for girls in table 1.

REFERENCES

- Jourard, S. M. Identification, parent-cathexis, and self-esteem. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 1957, 21, 375-380.

SELF-ESTEEM, IDENTIFICATION, ADJUSTMENT OF PARENTS-CHILDREN

- Jourard, S. M. & Remy, R. M. Perceived parental attitudes, the self, and security. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 1955, 19, 364-366.
- Medinnus, G. R. Adolescent's self-acceptance and perception of their parents. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 1965, 29, 150-154.
- Rosenberg, M. Parental interest and children's self-conceptions. *Sociometry*, 1963, 26, 35-49.
- Smith, T. L., & Suinn, R. M. A note on identification, self-esteem, anxiety, and conformity. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 1965, 21, 286.

ABSTRACT

Correlations were obtained between self-esteem in children and: parental adjustment scores on the California Test of Personality (CTP), and identification with parents. Correlations were also obtained between children's CTP scores and: self-esteem, parental CTP scores, and identification with parents. No systematic relationships were found between self-esteem and: parental CTP scores, or identification with parents. However, the self-esteem of girls was significantly correlated with the social adjustment of their fathers. Self-esteem as significantly correlated with adjustment in boys, but not girls.

A systematic trend was found in the relationship between parents' adjustment and children's adjustment. Significant correlations were found between children's personal adjustment and the personal adjustment of the parent of the opposite sex. Girls' scores for identification with their mothers were highly associated with girls' adjustment. None of the other identification scores were significantly correlated with children's adjustment.

RESUMEN

Se calculó la correlación entre "propia estima" en niños y las calificaciones de "adaptación" en el Test de Personalidad California (CTP) de los padres con el grado de identificación con los mismos. También se obtuvieron correlaciones entre las calificaciones de los niños en el CTP, la propia estima, las calificaciones de los padres en el CTP y la identificación con ellos. No resultó haber relación sistemática entre propia estima y las calificaciones de los padres en el CTP, ni tampoco con identificación. Sin embargo, en el grupo de mujeres, la correlación entre propia estima y adaptación social de los padres resultó significativa. Por otra parte, la correlación entre propia estima y adaptación, resultó significativa en los varones más no así en las mujeres.

Se encontró además una tendencia sistemática de relación entre adaptación de los padres e hijos. Más aún, la adaptación personal de los niños se correlacionó significativamente con la adaptación personal del padre de sexo opuesto. En cambio las calificaciones de las mujeres en identificación con sus mamás se asocia altamente con la adaptación de ellas mismas. Ninguna de las demás calificaciones de

identificación se correlacionó significativamente con la adaptación de los niños.

RESUMO

Correlações foram obtidas entre "amor próprio" (self-esteem) em crianças e escores de ajustamento paterno através do California Test of Personality (CTP), bem como identificação com os pais. Correlações foram também obtidas entre escores das crianças no CTP e "amor próprio," escores dos pais no CTP, e identificação com os pais. Não se encontraram relações sistemáticas entre "amor próprio" e escores dos pais no CTP, ou identificação com os pais. Porém, "amor próprio" para meninas e ajustamento social do pai resultaram em correlação significativa. "Amor próprio" e ajustamento resultaram em correlação significativa para meninos mas não para meninas.

Uma tendência sistemática foi encontrada na relação entre os escores de ajustamento de pais e de crianças. Correlações significativas foram encontradas entre ajustamento pessoal das crianças e o do pai ou da mãe (o sexo paterno sempre sendo oposto ao sexo da criança em questão). Os escores das meninas em termos de identificação com a mãe relacionaram-se altamente com ajustamento para as meninas. Nenhum dos outros escores de identificação revelou correlação significativa com ajustamento para as crianças.