A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG READER
SELF-PERCEPTIONS, EARLY READING ABILITY
AND GENDER IN GRADE-ONE STUDENTS

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A Study of the Relationships Among
Reader Self-perceptions, Early Reading Ability and Gender
in Grade-one Students

By

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A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Education

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationships among reader self-perceptions, early reading ability and gender of 77 grade-one children. The purposes of this study were to determine the relationships among self-perceptions of reading ability (social feedback, observational comparisons, physiological states, and progress), reading ability (knowledge of the alphabet, construction of meaning, and conventions of print) and gender. Differing aspects of self-concept include perceptions of oneself which include attitudes, feelings and knowledge about one's abilities that tend to be influenced by significant others.

The instruments used in this investigation were a modified version of Henk and Melnick's (1995) Reader Self-perception Scale (RSPS) and a test of early reading ability, Test of Early Reading Ability (TERA-2) Form A developed by Reid, Hresko, and Hammill (1989).

The study was carried out with 77 grade-one children from a rural area. Forty-two girls and 35 boys participated in the study. They and their parents/guardians were the participants of a pilot project called Significant Others as Reading Teachers, (SORT), for approximately one year. The project was initiated by Joan Oldford-Matchim of Memorial University’s Education Faculty. The project advocates the
importance of significant others sharing reading and demonstrating reading practices in children’s early reading development.

Results from the tests were given in mean scores and percentages. Aspects of the children’s self-perceptions toward reading were mostly positive based on the results from the Reader Self-perception Scale. The children’s scores on the TERA-2 test were average according to the TERA-2 manual. An overall normal curve equivalent (NCE) score was computed from the raw scores on the TERA-2 test. The overall normal curve equivalency score revealed average performance in reading ability for this group of grade-one children. The children’s alphabet knowledge mean scores were the highest of the three categories, followed by construction of meaning scores, then convention scores.

The Pearson-Product-Moment Method was used to determine if relationships existed among reader self-perception, early reading and gender. Cronbach’s alpha was used to determine the reliability of the Reader Self-perception Scale and the TERA-2.

Statistically significant relationships for this group of grade-one children were found between aspects of early reading ability (alphabet awareness, construction of meaning, and conventions of print) and aspects of reader self-perceptions (social feedback, observational comparisons, physiological states, and progress). For this
group of grade-one children, the relationship between gender and reader self-perceptions was found to be statistically significant. Gender and early reading ability was not found to be statistically significant.

The positive relationship between early reading ability and reader self-perceptions indicates that it is important for parents and teachers to promote and practice positive attitudes and perceptions of reading at this early stage of reading development. The findings of this study will provide parents and teachers with a basis for developing information about early reading ability and insight into how young children perceive their reading abilities.
Acknowledgements

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To my late father, Eugene R. Gosse, who has given me all the strength a father could possibly give and for never jeopardizing my chances for success.

To John J. Phillips, my husband, who has encouraged me to follow my dreams, I am forever grateful. For his never-ending patience and inspiration and always being there when I needed a push. I would also like to thank the Phillips’ family for their support.
Dedication

I dedicate my thesis to all of those who supported me throughout my graduate program -- especially to my father, Eugene R. Gosse and my husband John J. Phillips.

"In the struggle between the river and the stone, the river always wins - not by force but by sheer perserverence". Anonymous.
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Chapter 1
An Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Research in the area of reader self-perception has shown relationships between children’s attitudes, self-concepts and their reading ability (Briggs, 1987; Kennedy and Halinski, 1978; Oldford-Matchim, 1996; and Vereen, 1980). How children view themselves as readers is related to their ability to read. Research has also indicated that young readers’ attitudes toward reading is related to reading comprehension and reading achievement (Legge, 1994). Children who feel good about their reading abilities and academic performance seem to do better in school. Those students who feel negatively toward their reading and academic achievements tend to perform worse than those who are more positive (Teale, 1983; and Wirth, 1966).

Performance, whether it includes failure or success, seems to be reinforced by self-perceptions and motivational tendencies, thereby creating a cycle. The cycle of achievement is constantly being reinforced by concepts of the self. Performing well appears to motivate children to take risks. Students who perform poorly in reading and see themselves as inadequate may not take risks, therefore motivation is minimal.
Research has indicated that self-perceptions of young readers are related to their achievements in reading and other academic areas (Fielding, Wilson, and Anderson, 1986; Good and Brophy, 1987; Nolen, 1988; and Schunk, 1985).

Young children, upon entering grade one, have certain concepts already well formed about themselves, their reading ability, and feedback concerning their ability to read. How they perceive themselves as readers, as well as how they perceive the feedback of significant others, is very much a part of their affective domain. Children's self-concepts appear to be a product of attitudes, values, and beliefs about themselves, significant others and reading. Self-concept is not easily defined, therefore, instruments designed to test it have been revised several times in order to try and accurately measure self-concept especially with young children (Marsh, 1990; Henk and Melnick, 1995; and Chapman and Tunmer, 1995).

Awareness of one's thoughts is another aspect of self-concept. Children who are aware of their own cognitive abilities tend to perform better academically than those that are not (Brown, Armbruster, and Baker, 1974; Forrest and Waller, 1980; and Pressley and Waller, 1984). Studies in the area of metacognition have indicated that children who can monitor their cognitive abilities while reading comprehend the text better than those who do not monitor their reading abilities. According to Reid, Hresko, and Hammill (1989): "the ability to discover errors in printed material is
very highly correlated to overall reading ability (p. 4)."

The cycle of achievement seems to be maintained through self-concept, metacognition, and motivation. Positive aspects of the three produce successful achievers, while negative aspects produce failure (Winograd and Paris, 1989). This study measures metacognition by measuring the children's proofreading abilities on the TERA -2 test. The child's thought processes as they select answers to the test demonstrates how they think about their reading as well. Motivation is another aspect of achievement that is measured on the Reader Self-perception Scale. Motivation is an aspect of a child's self-concept and is a determining factor in the success of a reader. How children value their own reading is indicated in the self-perception questionnaire.

Statement of the problem

Research has indicated that children's self-concepts are related to academic achievement. Results have also shown that young children's self-concepts are related to their reading ability and comprehension (Pink, 1996; Legge, 1994). Implications from the data suggest the need for teaching strategies and attitudes that strengthen and foster positive self-concepts.

Research has also shown the important role significant others play in the lives
of young children. They help form children's beliefs and values. These beliefs and values help form children's self-concepts. The developing self-concepts of young children need to be nurtured and have trusting relationships (Hattie, 1992). If self-concept appears to be so influential, it makes intuitive sense to use strategies to enhance self-concept.

Researchers have been skeptical about the abilities of young children to differentiate across various domains, namely the cognitive and affective domains (Harter, 1986; Harter and Pike, 1984; and Stipek and Mac Iver, 1989). Other researchers hold opposing views (Marsh, Craven, and Debus, 1991). This research investigation examines the self-perceptions of young children and the relationships between perceived views of reading and their ability to read. Part of children's difficulties with early reading ability may be attributed to their negative self-perceptions of reading. Determining whether a relationship between reading ability and reader self-perceptions exists, at such an early stage of reading development, is a first step in deciding whether interventions and strategies for reading can be applied and what the nature of those strategies should be. If a relationship exists, such strategies can focus on feedback and children's self-perception and can therefore, be preventive.

Research in the area of self-concept and academic performance has increased

**Purposes of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships among reader self-perceptions, early reading ability, and gender in beginning readers. The main focus will be on children’s perception of themselves as readers. Social feedback, physiological states, observational comparison and progress are the subcategories of reader self-perception to be studied. These subcategories were identified by using a *Reader Self-perception Scale* devised by Henk and Melnick (1995), modified by the examiner. Included in the subcategories are the parental and peer expectations as perceived by the children. From this study some insight into reader self-perception can made by primary teachers about children in their classrooms. Furthermore, the findings should demonstrate the value of the modified *Reader Self-perception Scale* as an instrument for primary classroom teachers.

Early reading ability will be determined by a test called the *Test for Early Reading Ability-2* (TERA-2, Form A) (Reid, Hresko, and Hammill, 1989). TERA-
2 is used to measure three components of reading discovered by most children during the preschool years: 1) using the alphabet; 2) constructing meaning from print; and 3) conventions of print. Knowledge of the alphabet is assessed through letter naming and oral reading. Meaning is assessed by the child’s knowledge of relations among vocabulary items and the awareness of print in connected text. Conventions of written language are assessed through book handling tasks, understanding punctuation, story spacing on a page, and proofreading (Reid, Hresko, and Hammill, 1989). An indication of how the children are performing will be provided with the TERA-2. How the children perceive their reading ability will be useful to parents and teachers. As well, gender will be considered. Several significant differences have been found between boys and girls literacy knowledge and reading behaviour on their entry to Kindergarten (Oldford-Matchim, 1996). An indication of gender differences in this same sample of grade-one children may reveal developmental differences.

Definitions of Key Terminology

Definitions of key terms used throughout the thesis are provided for a clearer understanding of the concepts being explored and an understanding of what the investigator is attempting to find.

Self-concept: A person’s perceptions of him or herself. One’s self-concepts are
formed through experiences and interpretations of one’s environment. Self-concepts are influenced by reinforcements and evaluations by significant others, and one’s attributions for one’s own behaviours. (Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton, 1982).

Reader Self-concept: The evaluation a person has of him or herself as a reader (Valencia, 1990). The social learning theory terms: self-perception of reading and reader self-perception are used interchangeably with reader self-concept.

Significant Others: The important people in an individual’s life who interact with him or her in a way that indicates whether the individual is liked or disliked, accepted or rejected, successful or unsuccessful. The child’s self-concept is influenced by the opinions and actions of the significant others.

Reading Ability: Those abilities that determine the readability of the individual. These abilities include: knowledge of the alphabet, knowledge of the conventions of print and reading, and meaning garnered from the print.

Knowledge of Alphabet: The understanding of letter naming (including numerals), alphabet recitation and oral reading (Reid, Hresko, and Hammill, 1989).

Knowledge of Conventions: The knowledge an individual has of conventions of print such as: book handling; b) response to other print conventions; and c) proofreading (Reid, Hresko, and Hammill, 1989).

Meaning: The ability an individual has to construct meaning from print such
as: a) awareness of print in environmental contexts; b) knowledge of relations among vocabulary items; and c) awareness of print in connected discourse (Reid, Hresko, and Hammill, 1989).

Early Reading Ability: The very early stages of reading development.

Affective Domain: The attitudes, interests, feelings, and motivation that provide the desire to read.

Self-efficacy: One’s judgements of his or her ability to perform an activity and the effect this perception has on the ongoing and future conduct of the activity (Bandura, 1977, 1982).

Reader Self-efficacy: Same as above as it relates to reading (Henk and Melnick, 1995).

Reader Self-efficacy Model: A model describing how individuals take into account their ability as a reader; their performance, observational comparison, social feedback, and physiological states (Henk and Melnick, 1995).

Progress: The redefined form of performance. The perceived present reading performance of an individual as compared to past performance (Henk and Melnick, 1995).

Observational Comparison: An individual's perceptions of his or her reading ability as it compares with reading abilities of his or her classmates (Henk and
Melnick, 1995).

Social Feedback: The direct and indirect feedback about an individual’s reading performance from teachers, classmates, and family (Henk and Melnick, 1995).

Physiological States: The internal feelings the child experiences during reading (Henk and Melnick, 1995).

**Significance of the Study**

If strong relationships are found to exist among reader self-perceptions including social feedback, progress, physiological states, observational comparisons, and early reading ability, the information could possibly have implications for classroom teachers. The results could provide information about some of the factors that contribute to strong reader self-concept such as social feedback and its impact on children’s views of themselves as readers. This knowledge may help teachers enhance their performance while working with students and parents. This study will contribute to the body of research about young children’s reading ability and to the field of knowledge about reader self-concept.

As well, there are implications for significant others, namely teachers, parents or guardians. Increased awareness of young children’s self-concept may be beneficial
to parents of children in the early stages of reading.

Gender may also be a factor in the development of reading skills and positive reader self-perception. Therefore, correlating gender with early reading ability and gender with reader self-perceptions, may reveal a higher reading ability or a more positive reader self-perception in either boys or girls.

**Limitations of the Study**

1. There are many factors in children’s backgrounds of experience which influence their self-concepts and are not measured (Vereen, 1980).

2. One of the instruments to be used in the investigation is modified. It has not been used before. The scores obtained from this instrument must be analyzed bearing this in mind.

3. This study was carried out with grade-one children who had been involved in a literacy program for approximately one year in a rural setting. The results of this study may not be generalizable to other grade-one children.
Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the study, statement of the problem, purposes of the study, definitions of key terms, and significance and limitations of the study. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature. Chapter 3 presents the details of the design and methodology of the research analysis. An analysis of the data is presented in Chapter 4. A study summary, conclusions, educational implications, and suggestions for further research are presented in Chapter 5.
Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to explore the interrelationships among reader self-perceptions and early reading ability and influences of gender. Research in the area of self-concept has frequently used terminology such as attitudes, perceptions and expectations. A new measurement, however, was used in this study -- a modified form of a recent scale devised by Henk and Melnick (1995). They designed an instrument, the Reader Self-perception Scale, to measure children’s perceptions of reading based on their views and expectations of themselves and how others view their reading. The constructs of self-perception used in this instrument include observational comparison of readers, physiological states as attitude, reading progress, and social feedback as a child’s concept of expectations of others. The terms self-concept and self-perception have been used interchangeably throughout the research studies explored.
Self-Concept

An Historical Overview

The concept of 'self' has been explored for hundreds of years by many scholars from various cultural and educational backgrounds. Descartes' (1596-1650) famous quote: “I think, therefore I am” is an example of the exploration of the self that took place four hundred years ago. Descartes, according to John Hattie (1992), was reinforcing the dualism of mind and body. As well, other scholars have studied the self in detail (Locke, 1632-1704; Hume, 1711-1776; James, 1890; Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934; Rogers, 1951, 1954, and 1959; Shavelson, 1976; Rosenberg, 1979).

Locke (1632-1704) wrote that knowledge was derived from experience and the essence of the ‘self’ is consciousness. This consciousness of the ‘self’ is inseparable from thinking and only those experiences we remember are part of this ‘self’ (Hattie, 1992).

Hume (1711-1776) concentrated more on the experiences that formed the ‘self’. The ‘self’ is comprised of perceptions and experiences that are in perpetual flux and movement. Selves are not things but a series of perceptual experiences.

According to Kant (1724-1804) our knowledge of ‘self’ is our awareness of physical objects, including our own body. His notion of self included the idea that how we view ourselves may not reflect the actual or true self.
Principles of Psychology is a detailed and influential theoretical analysis of the self (Damon & Hart, 1982) written by William James (1890). This book is a forerunner of conceptions of the self, containing a contrast between two fundamental aspects of self: the self as actor or subject; and the self as an object of one's knowledge. They are known as the 'I' and the 'Me', respectively. The 'I' is the aspect of the self that organizes and interprets experiences. The 'Me' includes feelings, evaluations and attitudes.

Memory, as well as knowing, is important in our conceptions of our self (James, 1890). The consciousness of self involves a stream of thought, each thought remembering that which went before. Mill (1808-1873) also saw the tie between consciousness and the past as the role of the memory.

Cooley (1902) emphasized the importance significant others played in the formation of the self. He indicated that feedback and responses from significant others were fundamental in forming data about oneself. The symbolic interaction between an individual and his initial assorted groups such as family and peers was referred to as "the looking-glass self".

Mead (1934) constructed a more extensive theory of self based on James' and Cooley's theories. Mead concluded that "the self of any individual develops as a result of his relations to the processes of social activity and experience to other
individuals within those process” (p.15).

Combs and Snygg (1959), co-authors of the book, Individual Behaviour, influenced the reintroduction of the concept of self into both psychology and education. They claimed that an individual’s behaviour was dependent on his or her frame of reference and the enhancement of the self is the basic drive of the individual (Purkey, 1970).

Carl Rogers (1951, 1954, 1959) viewed the concept of self as phenomenological, a social product based on interpersonal relationships and suggested that individuals have a need for consistency. Rogers claimed:

As experiences occur in the life of an individual they are either symbolized, perceived and organized in some relationship to the self; ignored because there is no perceived relationship to the self structure; denied symbolization because the experience is inconsistent with the structure of the self (1951, p. 503).

Rogers’ theory, which later became known as the Self-Theory, was based on a need for positive regard from others and from oneself. He believed every human being contained within themselves the ability to self-actualize and grow as long as the environment was provisional to such growth (1951).

In 1955, Kelly formulated a theory whereby the self was hierarchically
organized into core constructs and peripheral constructs. Core constructs are constructs in which an individual maintains identity and existence. Peripheral constructs are those constructs surrounding the individual that are subject to the influence of significant others and the environment.

Rosenberg (1979) stated: “self-concept is the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object” (p.7). Rosenberg researched the development of self-concept in children from the ages of 3 to 9 and found this period contained rapid development of language skills and a broadening of experience on which the context of self-concept depends. The development of self-concept is a consequence of the interactions between the child, family and peers. The development of the acceptance of self and self-esteem depends on the nature of various facets of this interaction. Among the critical facets are empathy, trust, nurturance, and expectations (Rosenberg, 1979).

Empathy, according to research (Kuhmekkerker, 1975), is very much a part of social behaviour and is a very important part of interacting with others. Empathy involves an awareness of the feelings and reactions of others. Major aspects of empathy include sensitivity to the affective experiences of others and an element of sharing and gaining understanding from others. To be empathetic an individual must have some awareness of another as distinct from the self.
Mead also emphasized the importance of role-playing and fostering empathy; becoming aware of others’ thoughts and feelings and putting oneself in the place of the other in the development of self-concept (Mead, 1934).

Self-concept, according to Lynch (1981), is a set of rules for processing information that, in turn, regulates behaviour. During early and middle childhood several general developmental shifts occur. He suggested that various affective consequences such as anxiety or frustration, may lead to changes in self-concept, when rules about the self are not validated.

Byrne (1984) felt that self-concept is a critical variable in education and in the research of education. This notion is supported in the wealth of research carried out with respect to self-concept and educational settings and the diversity of students. Byrne also claimed that self-concept in educational research can be validated by first gaining an understanding of the construct itself. Byrne took the position that self-concept is multi-dimensional, i.e., it has one general facet and several specific facets, including academic self-concept.

According to researchers, Winne and Marx (1981): 1) the interaction with significant others strongly influences the development of one’s self-concept; 2) self-concept is made up of at least three and, at times, four facets corresponding to how individuals view themselves in specific situations; and 3) self-concept is non-
recursive; it can be interrupted or changed due to positive or negative reinforcement.

Although a universal definition of self-concept is not found in the literature, two aspects of self-concept are accepted by most researchers: 1) self-perceptions persons have include their views of themselves as compared to others (self-perception); their views of how others see them (self-other perception); and their views of how they would like to be viewed by others (self-ideal); and 2) self-perceptions persons have are largely based on the experiences they have had with people who are important to them. Those people are referred to as significant others (Quandt and Selznick, 1984).

Significant others influence self-concept and how an individual interprets past experiences. Significant others are family, teachers, and peers. They are determiners in a child’s self-concept. The most influential of these are the parents. As nurturers, parents are either authoritarian, authoritative, or permissive. Authoritarian parents are very controlling and communicate rarely with the child. They place high standards and demands on the children for maturity. The children who experienced this type of parenting were found to be withdrawn, shy, uneasy around peers, and lacked an eagerness and vitality to achieve. Coopersmith (1967) found that a higher self-concept was associated with authoritative parents.

Authoritative parents were high in all four aspects including control,
communication, maturity demands, and nurturance. The children were self assertive, independent, friendly with peers, and had a high motivation to achieve.

Permissive parents were low in control, high in communication, low in maturity demands, and high in nurturance. Children from this interaction were positive in their moods and showed more vitality than children of authoritative parents.

The concept of self-esteem has come out of the research on self-concept. Researchers, Damon and Hart (1982), explored the study of self-concept and found that studying self-concept has meant exploring the evaluative orientation to the self called esteem. Esteem is an affective orientation and so can conform to a scale demonstrating negative and positive values. Therefore, the study of self-concept has also been approached through self-esteem.

According to Epstein (1973), factors that help to create negative and positive self-concepts differ greatly from person to person, indicating self-concept can be positive or negative. Positive self-concepts are those in which individuals perceive themselves as capable and important. These feelings of competence provide the individual with the ability to perform at normal or superior levels. Negative self-concepts are those in which individuals perceive themselves as incapable or unimportant. This negative view can have powerful implications making performing
tasks at normal levels difficult.

The aspect of consistency has also been studied in the research of self-concept. According to Quandt and Selznick (1986) self-concepts tend to remain consistent after they are formed. From these consistencies of self-concepts, self-fulfilling prophecies for success or failure are formed. Those likely to achieve success believe they will be successful and have strong, healthy self-concepts. Individuals with negative self-concepts, on the other hand, are less likely to succeed. Much research has indicated that children with positive self-concepts do perform better and are more successful in school (Briggs, 1987; Byrne, 1986; Marsh, Smith, Barnes, and Butler, 1983; Rogers, Smith, and Coleman, 1978).

**Self-concept - Shavelson's Model**

Shavelson (1976) and colleagues contended that self-concept is a hierarchical and multifaceted construct. According to Shavelson, seven features can be identified as critical to self-concept. Self-concept can be defined as, organized, multifaceted, hierarchical, developmental, evaluative, and differentiable from other constructs. The model holds General Self-concept in the apex and divided into two facets: academic and non-academic self-concepts. Furthermore, these second order facets can be subdivided. Academic self-concepts may be divided into subject areas, such as history
and math. Non-academic self-concepts can be divided into social, emotional, and physical self-concepts.

Shavelson and Marsh (1985) devised a model for self-concept labelled the Internal/External Frame of Reference Model. This I/E model claims that self-concepts of mathematics and verbal ability are formed through internal and external frames of reference. A student’s comparisons of math and verbal abilities to his peers is deemed an external process. An internal process involves a comparison of self-perceived mathematics and verbal skills. According to the Internal/External Frame of reference model, possessing good mathematics skills diminishes verbal self-concepts and vice versa.

**Song and Hattie’s Model of Self-concept**

Two modifications were made to Shavelson’s model by Song and Hattie (1984, cited in Hattie, 1992). The first modification was the subdivision of academic self-concept into achievement, ability and classroom concepts. Ability self-concepts involve the extent to which the individual believes he or she is capable of actual achievement. Achievement self-concept is the product of an individual’s actual academic achievement at a certain point in time. Classroom self-concept is the confidence in classroom activities.
The second modification made to Shavelson et al. model (1976) is associated with the nonacademic self-concept. These can be divided into social self-concept and self-regard. Social self-concept includes family and peer self-concepts, the two most important significant others in an individual's life. Self-regard concepts can be divided into two factors: confidence and physical self-concept. Confidence is the emotional self-concept; how one presents him or herself to others. Physical self-concepts can be divided into physical ability and physical appearance.

**Summary**

Marsh et al. (1983) claim one definition of self-concept is not often found in research studies. It is assumed by most researchers that the term self-concept is understood like many other psychological constructs and they are hesitant to define what they are measuring.

Byrne (1984), Jersild (1965) and Labenne and Greene (1969) however, define self-concept in very general terms as our attitudes, feelings, and knowledge about our abilities, skills, appearance, and social acceptability. Self-concept is our perception of ourselves. Home (1962) views self-concept as the child's ability to identify with others. A selection of desirable traits found in others that the child would like to possess is adapted by the child to achieve social acceptance. The child then chooses
to keep the socially rewarding traits which make up his or her self-concepts. The relationship between reading and self-concept is explained by Homze as the identification of a model or character in a given story that children can relate to through reading. The child’s ability to identify a model transmits the effects of reading to the self-concept.

It is clear that recent research has indicated that young children in kindergarten and grade-one can and do make self-concept related differentiations across and within domains. A study by Chapman and Tunmer (1995) focused on reading self-concepts of young children ranging in age from five years to eight years old. They found that young children make differentiations in their self-perceptions by the age of five which is consistent with findings made by Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, and Blumenfeld (1993) and Marsh (1991) but contrasted with views by Harter (1986) and Stipek (1981).

Marshall (1989) stated that self-concept is the perceptions, attitudes and feelings we hold about ourselves that permeate who we are. Marshall also reported that individuals with low self-concepts are more likely to experience poor mental health and inferior academic performance.

Various models that constitute the facets of self-concept have been classified in the following manner:

1. Normothetic position. The oldest and only position that treats self-
concept as a unidimensional construct (Rosenberg, 1965).


3. Taxonomic model. Self-concept is formed like a series of several highly specific factors. The facets of self-concepts are viewed as relatively independent of each other.

4. Compensatory model. A "general" facet of self-concept is the main idea but the specific facets are inversely rather than proportionally or independently related. The low status of one facet may be compensated for by the higher status of another.

According to Taube (1988), a multidimensional hierarchal model has been viewed as the strongest so far. She summarizes self-concept as a set of attitudes of oneself or as our perceptions of ourselves which include our attitudes, feelings, and knowledge about our abilities, skills, appearance and social acceptability. Self-concept is similar to attitudes in that:

1. New experiences are perceived according to the impact of old experiences.

2. Self-concept gives an individual a predisposition to behave in a certain
3. An established self-concept is constantly enhanced or maintained.

According to Taube, self-concept differs from attitudes in that:

1. Motivation is needed for the maintenance of a positive attitude toward self.

2. Anxiety and/or depression is linked to negative attitudes toward self.

Studies of self-concept in young children, in particular, have had little focus (Harter, 1986). Fairly recent research has attempted to document age changes in children’s self-descriptions (Bannister and Agnew, 1977; McGuire and McGuire, 1984; McGuire, Padawer and Singer, 1976; Montemayor and Eisen, 1977; Mullener and Laird, 1971; Rosenberg, 1979). The research has indicated that competence perceptions in different domains are clearly differentiated among even kindergarten children. The domains include physical activity, peer relationships, reading, and math (Marsh, Craven, and Debus, 1991). According to Eccles et al. (1993), by grade one, children’s perceptions seem to be differentiated across a range of self-concept domains such as math, reading, music, and sports. It was found in this study that grade-one children not only differentiated reading and math self-concepts but they also distinguished between competence perceptions and subjective task values within each of those academic self-concept areas.
Self-perceptions of Readers

Henk and Melnick (1995) claimed “educators have made some important strides in measuring affective elements in recent years” (p.471). Educators such as McKenna and Kear (1990) saw the need for an attitude survey and developed the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS). The instrument measures elementary students’ attitudes toward both school-based and recreational forms of reading. The affective scale has been used by many primary and elementary teachers who have found significant results among reading attitude and reading comprehension (Legge, 1994; and Pink, 1996).

An individual’s overall orientation toward the reading process can be directly affected by self-perceptions. Those children who perceive themselves as good readers seem to enjoy reading and are destined to positive interactions with reading. However, those children who believe they are poor readers do not have much success with reading. Henk and Melnick (1995) made the following conclusion, “how an individual feels about herself or himself as a reader could clearly influence whether reading would be sought or avoided, the amount of effort that would occur during reading and how persistently comprehension would be pursued” (p. 472).

When devising the instrument, the Reader Self-perception Scale, Henk and Melnick (1995) took into consideration the developmental aspects of children’s
perceptions of academic performance. They concluded that, prior to the fourth grade, children could not estimate academic performance accurately, nor properly attribute its cause (Henk and Melnick, 1995). Some developmental researchers have come to the same conclusion (Blumenfeld, Pintrich, Meece, & Wessels, 1982; Nicholls, 1978; and Stipek, 1981).

Harter (1981) found that positive self-perceptions promote achievement-oriented behaviour unlike low self-perceptions that lead to decreased motivation. As well, positive attitudes and self-perceptions are associated with a sense of control over reading successes and failures. A perceived lack of control can grow out of a succession of failed experiences, which in turn, can cause a child to expect every event as being out of their control.

Wooster and Carson (1982) investigated the effect of a remedial reading program designed to help twenty-six children with deficient social and communicative skills. They administered the Piers and Harris' (1969) Children's Self-Concept Scale before the program began and found that the children were dissatisfied with their social behaviour and academic standing. After the completion of the program the children had improved their self-concepts and abilities in reading.

A study by Brown (1992) revealed relationships among self-concept, reading attitude and reading comprehension. The study was carried out with grade-two
children from an urban center. Children's reader self-concept and total academic self-concept were related to overall reading comprehension. According to Oldford-Matchim (1996), children's attitudes toward reading appears to be related to their literacy knowledge. It seems, the more children like being read to, the more knowledge 1) they have of the alphabet, 2) the more competent they are in understanding and interpreting stories, and 3) the more capable they are in obtaining meaning from print and symbols in the environment.

The Influence of Significant Others

Interactions with significant others greatly influence children's perceptions of themselves (Brookover and Gottlieb, 1964; Purkey, 1970; and Singh, 1972). Parental involvement in reading and the provision of reading materials appears to predict later reading ability (Dix, 1976). As well, children who have been interviewed have stated that their parents' attitudes toward reading influenced their own reading attitudes (Ransbury, 1973).

From a cognitive perspective parents who read to their children are increasing their children's reading relevant skills. From a social-motivational perspective this involvement communicates that reading is a pleasurable activity, and one that provides children with an opportunity to interact positively with their parents.
Research has indicated that the home environment is actually a better predictor of children's attitudes toward reading than social class membership. Availability of reading materials, amount of reading time, amount of reading guidance and encouragement, and the extent to which parents served as models by engaging in reading are all predictors of early reading ability.

Researchers have found that parents influence their child's expectations and concepts of academic ability (Parsons, Adler, and Kaczala, 1982). A significant relationship was found between children's self-concepts, perceptions of task difficulty and expectations and children's perceptions of their parent's beliefs and expectations, and their parent's actual estimate of their ability. Phillips (1987) found similar results in a study of third grade children that showed significant relationships between children's self-perceptions of their ability, effort and standards for success and parent's expectations of children's abilities. Parents with positive perceptions of their child's academic performance had children with positive perceptions of themselves as learners and they performed well. Parents with negative perceptions had children who had negative perceptions of their own abilities.

Peer relationships have been shown to influence a child’s self-concept. Homze (1962) claimed that the roles of his or her peers determine much of what behaviour the child will assume. The child can identify with his or her peers because of the
similarity in age. The peers become the child's life models.

Peer influences on achievement have shown that children's aspirations are quite similar to those of their peers. A child wishing to be accepted may choose not to work as hard in school if the peer group does not value achievement. Children who are intelligent tend to be more popular and slow-learning children tend to be less popular (Campbell, 1964, Coleman, 1960, 1961; Green, 1970). Low-achieving children are likely to be among the least accepted children in the classroom. McMichael (1980) has provided evidence of this dynamic; boys who were both poor readers and lacked social skills, tended to be accepted only by other boys with similar academic and social problems.

**Metacognition and Reading**

According to Flavell (1976) metacognition refers to an awareness of our own cognitive processes or knowing about what we know. In other words metacognition is thinking about thinking. In regard to reading, the definition of metacognition suggests that the reader can choose skills and strategies that are appropriate for the demands of the reading task.

Metacomprehension is a specific type of metacognition. Metacomprehension is the knowledge and control over thinking and learning activities as it relates to
reading. Two phenomena of metacomprehension are:

1) one’s knowledge about cognition - the conscious access one has of one’s own cognitive operations and 2) one’s conscious attempts in regulating cognition - self regulatory mechanisms such as checking, planning, monitoring, testing, revising, and evaluating (Baker and Brown, 1984).

Because readers must exercise some self-awareness and self-control of cognitive activities during reading, most characterizations of reading include skills and activities which are metacognitive. Baker and Brown (1984) list the following reading strategies that result in comprehension: 1) clarifying the purposes of reading; 2) identifying the important aspects of a message; 3) focusing attention on the major content rather than trivia; 4) monitoring ongoing activities to determine whether comprehension is occurring; 5) engaging in self-questioning and 6) taking corrective action when failures in comprehension are detected (p. 4-5).

The concept of metacognition is not new. As far back as 1908, the concept of metacognition had been utilized and recognized. Educators such as Dewey, (1910), Huey, (1908), and Thorndike, (1917), understood the importance of monitoring activities involved in reading (Brown, Armbruster, and Baker, 1986). They knew deliberate planning, checking, and evaluating activities were vital to reading comprehension. Dewey used metacognitive strategies to induce reflective thinking,
intentional “seeking after meaning and relationships”. Thorndike believed reading was reasoning that included many activities called metacognition (Brown, 1985). Thorndike stated:

Understanding a paragraph is like solving a math problem. It consists of selecting the right elements of the situation and putting them together in the right relations, and also with the right amount of weight or influence or force for each. The mind assailed as it were by every word in the paragraph. It must select, repress, soften, emphasize, correlate, organize, all under the influence of the right mental set or purpose or demand (Thorndike, 1917, p. 329).

The cognitive approach to education is specifying in detail the processes underlying thinking skills. To implement such an approach, instructors locate methods to instruct students to master those skills. Comprehension is a predecessor to interpretation. In order for readers to make an interpretation of text they must understand what the author is trying to do. To interpret text the reader must also make appropriate inferences. Therefore, training in metacognitive skills is instrumental in improving comprehension leading to an interpretation of text.
**Metacognitive Skills**

As with any early reading activity, Froese (1990) suggested the metacognitive strategy, DRTA (Directd Reading and Thinking Activity), devised by Stauffer (1971). This predictive activity prompts the student to predict what will happen next in the text and creates self-questioning techniques the child will partake of on his or her own. Directed reading and thinking activities are strongly supported by many teachers because of its motivational tendencies which in tum create positive self-concepts.

Pflaum and Pascarella (1980) investigated a two-component instructional program for improved comprehension: 1) assist the students to determine when they made an error that disrupted meaning, and 2) teach methods to correct the errors. The best predictor of the intervention was the students’ decoding abilities. Decoding is the ability to pronounce or recognize words prior to testing. The students who received both components of the program showed greater gains in reading comprehension than the control group and two other groups each using one component of the program.

Metacognition involves many strategies, therefore, it is evident that good readers have better metacognitive abilities because they utilize various reading strategies. Younger and/or poorer readers on the other hand have two problems: 1) they are less likely to change reading strategies to meet the demands of the situation; and 2) they are less able to assess comprehension and predict accuracy. A possibility
for these problems is that an inability to monitor comprehension results in a lack of awareness that a change in strategy is needed (Pressley and Waller, 1984).

According to research on reading comprehension by Pressley and Waller (1984), the following conclusions were made: 1) reading comprehension and skills increase with grade and reading ability; 2) comprehension monitoring and verbalizing about comprehension and strategies increase with grade and reading ability; 3) performance predicts comprehension; and 4) in the strictest sense only the older/better reader is a mature ‘metacognizer.’ Overall, the poor readers did less well on performance, verbal, and metacognitive measures of reading skills.

In a study of kindergarten children, Pace (1980) used a disruption technique. The technique involved listening to short passages describing normal daily events. An element was substituted so that it was not consistent with the event, such as having peanut butter and ice cream sandwiches for lunch. The children did not seem to notice anything unusual about the text, when questioned. However, if the children were warned in advance to be wary of evident errors, they could notice them (Pace, 1980).

It follows that if children believe the purpose of reading is to say all the words correctly, then their processing should reflect this. Instead of organizing text into larger segments of meaning the children would process in a word-by-word manner and hence, would have difficulty in comprehending (Baker and Brown, 1984, p. 29).

When exploring the significance of metacognitive skills have on reading, the issue of which program better fosters metacognitive knowledge was considered: 1) literature-based programs, or 2) conventional programs. In a study by Gambrell and Palmer (1992) they set out to determine if there were differences between young children's metacognitive knowledge about reading and writing, with regard to literature-based and conventional programs at the end of grades one and two.

Results from the study revealed young children in literature-based classrooms reported greater metacognitive knowledge about reading and writing than those in the conventional classrooms. With regard to writing the differences were more pronounced than for reading at both grade levels. These differences suggested that literature-based programs may be especially effective in developing metacognitive awareness about strategy, task, and person variables related to writing.

According to Gambrell and Palmer (1992), literature-based programs promote
greater metacognitive awareness of strategy, task, and person variables associated with reading than conventional programs do. Results also suggest that the most significant impact of literature-based programs may be on the development of young children’s metacognitive knowledge.

A study by Carr, Borkowski, and Maxwell (1991) revealed the influence of metacognitive and motivational factors in the reading performance of underachievers. Results revealed that self-concept, beliefs in the utility of effort, reading awareness, and reading performance were higher in achievers than underachievers.

Delving into the concept of metacognition, as well, were researchers Pressley, Borkowski, and Schneider (1987), who developed a model of metacognition. This model was based on the argument that successful strategy use enhances self-concept and attributional beliefs, as well as the acquisition of new strategies. Specific strategy knowledge is related to general strategy knowledge in their model, i.e., knowing that the use of a strategy requires effort and that well-chosen strategies result in good performance. Hence, according to Pressley et al. (1987), metacognition knowledge about strategies combined with motivational beliefs influences performance.
Motivation and Reading

Early theoretical views of motivational achievement by McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell (as cited in Wigfield and Asher, 1984) in the 1950's and 1960's claimed that motivation was a personality trait. Winterbottom (1958) believed individual differences in motivation were due to parental practices and how those practices influenced children's developmental motivational achievement. In 1964, Atkinson stated that the motivation to pursue a goal is determined by expectancy and value. An individual is motivated by what he or she expects by attaining the goal and the value placed on attaining it.

Recently, three cognitive theories of motivation have been studied: 1) attributional theory; 2) goal theory; and 3) self-efficacy theory. The principle of the attribution theory is the search for why an event occurred; "Why did John score so poorly on the math quiz?" A causal attribution answers the 'why' question. The search for answers is most evident when an unexpected outcome has occurred. The function of causal search is goal attainment. Therefore, attribution theory is functional; the knowledge of why one has failed may increase later chances for success because pertinent actions can now be used (Weiner, 1984).

According to Weiner (1984), thoughts and emotions are motivators of human behaviour. Individuals search for explanations by forming attributions - searching for
causes. There are three dimensions to these causes: locus of control, the stability of the cause, and the controllability.

The locus of control considers the causes of an event as being 'within us' or 'outside us'. A student with an internal locus of control might consider the cause of doing poorly on a reading assignment as not using the proper strategies. A student with an external locus of control may attribute the cause to saying the assignment was too difficult or the teacher marks too hard.

The second dimension, stability, refers to the stability or changeability of the perceived cause. Personality traits are seen as stable, while ability, laziness and physical ability are viewed as stable traits. Causal stability, sometimes referred to as constancy, contains two components: 1) temporal stability and 2) cross-situational generality (globality) (Weiner, 1984).

The third dimension is labelled controllability. It refers to the degree to which the person feels they can control the perceived cause. Effort is seen as something that can be controlled unlike ability, task difficulty, and luck. Effort, however, is subject to volitional control. How hard an individual tries is the responsibility of that individual. Basically, the responsibility of attaining a goal is based on the effort an individual makes (Weiner, 1984).

Individuals use different sources to form an attribution. Those sources are:
contextual cues, social cues, and personal cues. An example of a contextual cue is the difficulty of a task. An example of a social cue would be the performance of others. A personal cue could be having knowledge of previous performance on similar tasks. How the individual perceives the various cues will affect their perception of an outcome and how they will attempt tasks in the future (Weiner, 1984).

Owing to the complexity and unpredictability of outcomes, it is also difficult to know what is attributed to a given outcome. There are general patterns of attribution individuals generally adhere to. The patterns are: learned helplessness (success is attributed to external, uncontrollable causes while failure is attributed to internal, stable causes); failure avoiding (attributing failure to unstable, external and controllable causes rather than internal, stable, uncontrollable causes); self-serving bias (success is attributed to internal factors and failure attributed to external factors); and mastery (attributing success and failure to internal controllable factors) (Weiner, 1984).

According to Dweck (1986) adaptive and maladaptive motivational patterns shape children's success and failure and influence the quality of their cognitive performance. Dweck described adaptive motivational patterns as those that promote the establishment, maintenance, and attainment of personal goals. Maladaptive patterns are associated with failure to establish personal goals.
Results from Ames (1984) research indicated that children who display the adaptive pattern enjoy exerting effort in pursuing task mastery. Children displaying maladaptive patterns show evidence of negative emotions and negative self-cognitions in the face of difficulty. Research by Ames also indicated that children with performance goals tend to interpret negative outcomes in terms of ability. Children who have learning goals, however, tend to use obstacles as indicators to increase their effort or analyze and choose a variety of strategies. Studies on satisfaction with outcomes indicated that performance goal-oriented children based their satisfaction on ability. Children with learning goals, however, based satisfaction on the effort they put into the task (Ames, 1984).

Personal judgements and beliefs about one's performance capabilities for a specific task is referred to as self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is an important aspect of motivational learning because of the focus on acquiring skills and knowledge, rather than on completing activities only (Schunk, 1985).

Another aspect of self-efficacy is attributional feedback. Schunk (1985) claimed attributing past failures to insufficient effort creates motivational tendencies. Therefore, when students are told increased effort will produce success, they should persist longer when engaged in tasks. Schunk also claims that attributional feedback can be used as a persuasive tool. Telling students they can do better in school if they
worked harder will motivate them to try harder. Schunk (1982) believed that providing feedback on effort for prior success should sustain motivation and increase self-efficacy for continued learning.

Setting goals is another component of motivational learning. Goal setting is comparing one's present performance to some desired standard (Bandura, 1977). When students select or are given a goal to attain, they may feel motivated and experience a sense of self-efficacy for attaining that goal (Schunk, 1985). Specific, rather than general goals (e.g., ‘Do your best’) boost task performance because they specify the amount of effort required for success.

Good readers have more positive attitudes toward reading than poor readers. Attitudes, beliefs, and expectancies that make up self-concept, become more negative with failure. This results in less effort, which also results in a cycle of failure. Asher (1980) found that high interest in reading material results in a greater desire to read and increased reading comprehension.

**Motivation and Reading Attitude**

Motivation and attitudes powerfully influence reading achievements. Good and Brophy (1987) suggest that preconditions be set before a teacher uses strategies to motivate their students. For motivational strategies to be effective: 1) the teacher must
have created a classroom atmosphere that is supportive of students' learning efforts; 2) an appropriate difficulty level has been set for students; 3) activities with worthwhile academic objectives have been selected; and 4) a variety of motivational strategies have been chosen.

Tasks assigned to students must be challenging and provide students with the opportunity of expected success. If students apply reasonable effort and are given explicit instruction so they know what to do and how to do it, then they can succeed. They should view effort as an investment rather than risk (Good and Brophy, 1987).

It is important that students value the activity. Motivational strategies should address the value aspects of motivation. The strategies should emphasize motivation for learning, not merely performing. Motivational strategies should motivate students to study and learn because they find the information or skill so interesting, meaningful, and worthwhile.

Rewards motivate students as well. Students learn from working on tasks what behaviours receive the outcomes they desire and what behaviours bring about undesirable outcomes. Students, therefore, can be motivated to complete a task because of the anticipation of a desired result (Schunk, 1985). The anticipation of a reward should lead to a sense of self-efficacy. It is important that rewards are given for accomplishments by students because self-efficacy diminishes if the rewards are
not expected. When students' work is rewarded and progress is evident, then increased self-efficacy will occur. However, if a reward is given for participation only, the self-efficacy is not enhanced (Schunk, 1985). It is also important to note that rewards should be available to everyone. Weaker students should be encouraged to attain a goal so setting a standard for top marks in the class will not motivate weaker students' performances.

In 1986, Thomas and Rohmer, argued that constructing, selecting, or employing effective study strategies is prevented due to self-perceptions of low ability. Borkowski (1988) also claimed similar findings of self-perceived low ability; students who had self-perceptions of low ability attributed success to luck and failure to lack of ability (as cited in Nolen, 1988). Therefore when providing children with reading tasks, teachers should focus on “effort”. Emphasizing effort and claiming the students will succeed if they try hard is motivational.

Concerning classroom intervention, Dweck (1986) claimed many programs are directed toward self-esteem enhancement by attempting to improve self-confidence. However, enhancing student motivation is not about enhancing self-concept. The focus of motivation enhancement is effort. Dweck claimed, "Enhancing motivation means enhancing children's valuing of effort and a commitment to effort-based strategies through the design of mastery-oriented classroom structures." (Ames, 1992,
Winograd and Paris (1989) redefined the goals of reading instruction to include cognitive and motivational agendas. Combining the two agendas should help children understand the benefits of reading. Winograd and Paris believe that developing cognitive and motivational agendas is crucial to improving reading instruction. They claim that metacognition includes self-appraisal and self-management of affective as well as cognitive components of learning. Cognition and motivation are influenced by a variety of affective constructs including an individual’s beliefs, values, and efforts because self-appraisal and self-management are not separate entities. Hence, attention should be focused on skill and will.

Achievement motivation provides a framework of goals useful in the motivational agenda of reading. According to Maehr (as cited in Winograd and Paris, 1989) there are four goals of schooling: 1) ego goals, 2) extrinsic goals, 3) social solidarity goals, and 4) task goals. To satisfy an ego goal an individual achieves success at someone else’s expense by competing with him/her. Extrinsic goals are satisfied by obtaining such things as money or grades that represent external, symbolic rewards. This behaviour is looked upon as work. Gaining approval or conforming to other’s expectations are social solidarity goals. Social solidarity goals can also be achieved through cooperation and mutual goal achievements. Task goals
can be achieved through the intrinsic enjoyment of a particular task. An example of a task goal is reading for the pleasure of reading.

According to Winograd and Paris (1989) too much emphasis has been placed on ego and extrinsic goal achievement in reading instruction. Too often it is found that competition does not develop or sustain motivation to read. Also, striving for extrinsic goals may interfere with the development of independent motivation. Winograd and Paris feel that a shift in emphasis from ego and extrinsic goals to social solidarity and task goals is needed. Recent studies have found that time spent in voluntary independent reading was the best predictor of size of vocabulary, performance on standardized tests, and reading achievement gains between grades two to five (Fielding, Wilson and Anderson, 1986). It is evident that enjoyment and the positive affect derived from reading are essential for the development of reading proficiency.

**Development of Reading Ability**

Acquiring skills specific to reading and prior linguistic and conceptual knowledge are important aspects of reading development.

Learning to read involves the acquisition of a few skills specific to reading and the use of many other abilities that are common to a variety
of cognitive processes. Previously acquired linguistic and conceptual knowledge relevant for understanding oral language and interpreting visuals experiences is also necessary for reading (Juola, Schadler, Cabot, McCarghey, and Wait, 1979, p. 91).

An appreciation of task requirements is a rudimentary necessity for beginning reading (Paris, Lipson, and Wixon, 1983). Five- and 6-year olds learning to read often display a naivete according to research (Clay, 1973; Mason, 1967; Mass, 1982; Reid, 1966; and Venezky, 1976). Clay claims:

Print awareness begins with oral language development and includes learning that print can be turned into speech; that there is a message recorded; that a picture is a guide to the message; that some language units are more likely to occur than others; that there is a particular message communicated by certain words in a particular order; and that memory helps understanding (Clay cited in Paris, Lipson, and Wixon, 1979, p. 793).

The phases of development in learning to read words are: logographic, alphabetic, and orthographic (Frith, 1985). Logographic, the first phase, is the use of nonphonemic visual, contextual or graphic features to read words. The alphabetic phase involves the use of grapheme-phoneme relations to process correspondences
between the spellings of words and their pronunciations. Orthographic involves the use of spelling patterns and the ability to recognize words.

**Logographic Phase**

During the logographic phase, visual symbols represent words or morphemes, not phonemes. Beginning readers select and remember morphonemic visual characteristics instead of letter-sound correspondences to read words. Those readers in the logographic phase may learn to read a word by remembering the shape of one of its letters or its logo (e.g., the golden arches in McDonald’s logo).

Visual cue reading is also logographic word reading (Ehri, 1987; Ehri and Wilce, 1985, 1987a, 1987b). Logographic readers learn to read words using visual cues. This is labelled paired-associate learning (Gough and Hillenger, 1980; Gough, Juel and Roper/Schneider, 1983, cited in Ehri, 1994). According to Ehri:

Readers form an association between a written word and its pronunciation or meaning in memory by selecting some visual attribute that distinguishes it from other words being learned. The next time that attribute is seen in the same or another word, the response word associated with that attribute is retrieved from memory (Ehri, 1994, p. 326).
**Alphabetic Phase**

When children stop attending primarily to pictures and begin attempting to read print the shift from logographic reading to alphabetic reading is taking place. Phonetic cue reading, a rudimentary form of alphabetic reading, explains how novice beginners can use alphabetic cues to read words by sight. Phonetic cue readers must know letter names or sounds and have some phonetic segmentation skill. The access routes may be formed by only an initial letter or the final and initial letters. Sounds such as /d/ in dog, or letter names such as ‘bee’ in beak are examples of various types of phonetic units in pronunciation that are linked by letters.

Studies of first-year readers (Share et al. 1984; Stuart and Colthart, 1988; Byrne, 1992) revealed the best two predictors of reading achievement are letter knowledge and phonemic-segmentation skill measured before entering school. A series of studies by Ehri and Wilce (1987a, 1987b) found that meaningfulness ratings correlated significantly with ease of learning to read among control subjects but not experimental subjects. Meaningfulness for example would be words deemed meaningful by the child such as the word ‘snake’ rather than the word ‘soles’. However, Ehri and Wilce maintain that letter sound routes provide more systematic, easily remembered links to words in memory than do semantic routes. Ehri and Wilce
also found in a study comparing the word learning of phonetic cue readers and readers who could phonologically recode words, that cue readers were more inconsistent over trials, forgetting words or mixing them up. Decoders were more accurate than cue readers in recalling the spellings of the words they learned. Cue readers did, however, remember most initial and final consonants, an indication that boundary letters were the phonetic cues they used to remember words.

The alphabetic phase is underway when readers can phonologically recode written words into pronunciations (Ehri, 1994). Tunmer, Herriman, and Nesdale (1988), on their research of phonological recoding found that Piagetian concrete operativity was influential in children’s acquisition of low-level phonemic and syntactic awareness skills. Results suggested that some minimal level of phonological awareness was necessary for children to use the letter-name knowledge to acquire phonological recoding skill.

In a study of first graders trained in a synthetic phonics program, Monaghan (1983) identified several stages in the emergence of recoding skill. The mature first graders could sound out the nonwords, but could not blend sounds into words. At the next stage children could slowly sound out and blend sounds. The next stage, children were able to read more rapidly and pronounced words as units with out sounding out aloud or subvocally. According to Monaghan these findings suggest that
developmental phonological recoding progresses from a slow, overt process to a rapid and automatic covert process.

Ehri (1994) provides an outline of ways to read words classified by developmental phases: logographic, alphabetic, and orthographic. The ways to read words are divided into two categories: a) ways to read words familiar in print; and b) ways to read words unfamiliar in print. Ways to read words familiar in print are further divided into three categories: a) by sight; b) by lexical access route; and c) by characteristics of sight-word lexicon. Ways to read unfamiliar words in print are divided into four categories: a) by guessing; b) by mistaken lexical access; c) by phonological recoding; and d) by orthographic recoding.

During the logographic phase of development words familiar in print are identified by visual cue reading (by sight), rote learning (lexical access routes), or context dependent or environmental print (characteristics of sight-word lexicon). The novice alphabetic reader uses phonetic-cue reading (by sight), pronunciations by letter-name or sound knowledge (lexical access route) and recognition of isolated written words (characteristics of sight-word lexicon).

Ways to read words unfamiliar in print in the logographic phase is erratic, and constrained by context (by guessing). New words are misread as sight words having some visual cues (by mistaken lexical access). Phonological and orthographic
recoding is not possible at the logographic phase. In the novice alphabetic phase, words unfamiliar in print are constrained by context and initial letter (by guessing). New words are misread as sight words having some letter cues (by mistaken lexical access). Similar to the logographic phase, phonological and orthographic recoding is not possible in the novice alphabetic phase.

According to Ehri (1994), in the mature alphabetic phase, amalgamated cipher reading (by sight) is evident in recognizing familiar words. Letters amalgamated to phonemes in pronunciation by grapheme-phoneme knowledge (lexical access routes) is used, as well as a possibility of rapid, unitized word reading (sight-word lexicon). Unfamiliar words are constrained by context and spelling (by guessing). Mistaken lexical access is not likely to occur in this phase. Sequential decoding by phonological recoding and analogizing to specific words by orthographic recoding is evident.

Research dealing with reading development and socio-economic status has shown that some reading behaviours develop among children in all socioeconomic classes. Many environments, including those which are impoverished, contain enough print, such as billboards, graffiti, and advertisements, to fascinate preschoolers and foster their attempts at reading (Durkin, 1966, 70, 72, 74). Some researchers based their findings on those children from middle and upper-middle class backgrounds (Goodman, 1980; and Mason, 1984).
According to Reid, Hresko, and Hammill (1989), three highly interrelated components of reading are discovered by most children. They relate to the child’s efforts to: a) construct meaning from print; b) learn and use the alphabet; and c) deduce the arbitrary conventions employed in reading and writing English.

Background knowledge enables us to understand what we read. Knowledge of people, objects, and events in the real world is one source of information we bring to reading. Construction of meaning is brought about by our knowledge of word meaning, syntax or word order, and general background knowledge (Reid, Hresko, and Hammill, 1989).

Young children are exposed to all sorts of print, e.g., verses on birthday cards, correspondence, newspaper articles, and comic strip dialogues. Children start to anticipate the meanings of print and they have a natural interest in making sense of print (Reid, Hresko, and Hammill, 1989).

The relationship between print and its oral language equivalent is graphophonemic knowledge. Recognition of the printed letters of the alphabet, of words, awareness of word ending and beginning patterns, and the relations between letters and words, syllables and individual sounds is included in graphophonemic knowledge. Very young children know that the alphabet can be used to communicate ideas through both reading and writing (Ehri, 1994).
Conventions of print such as page turning and book orientation are acquired by young children quite quickly especially through direct instruction. Young children pick up these abilities from the onset of school and soon figure out that it is the print rather than the logos and pictures that convey meaning. They come to understand directionality, to start reading on the left side of the page before the right and from the top to the bottom of the page. They also learn to read the page on the left, then the page on the right, and then to turn the page and start reading on the left again. Proofreading begins in the orthographic stage when the reader is able to detect errors in text. This requires substantial knowledge and exposure to print (Reid, Hresko, and Hammill, 1989).

**Gender and Self-concept**

Research on gender and reader self-perceptions has revealed differing results. Studies by Stevenson et al. (1986) and Entwisle et al. (1983) have shown that females held higher expectations for their reading performance and more positive attitudes toward reading than boys. A possible explanation given for the results was that female students generally scored better marks in reading than did the boys (Entwisle, 1983).

In a study by Coopersmith (1967), significant correlations were found between gender and self-esteem. Battle (1982), however, found no significant differences. In
some of the research literature (e.g. Connell, Stroobant, Sinclair, Connell and Rogers, 1975; Smith, 1975, 1978), boys were found to have higher self-concepts than girls. A study by Marsh, Smith and Barnes (1985) revealed girls had a higher reader self-concept than boys but a lower math self-concept.

In studies of Newfoundland children's self-concepts, differing results were found. One study found in a grade two class that girls had higher levels of self-concept than boys (Brown 1992). Studies by Byrne, (1993), Legge, (1994), Whiteway, (1995), and Pink, (1996), found no differences in self-concepts of children according to gender. Byrne (1993) studied children in grade six and found no differences in self-concept among boys and girls. Legge (1994) in a study of grade two children found no differences in self-concept according to gender. A recent study on reading and self-concept was carried out by Pink (1996). She studied the effects of gender on the self-concepts of high ability grade four, five, and six students. No differences were found.

Significant others also play an important role in the formation of self-concepts in boys and girls. According to Stevenson et al. (1986) and Entwisle et al. (1987) the influence of parents and parents' expectations for their children was stronger for females than it was for males in regard to academic self-concepts and attitudes. The researchers suggest that females tend to conform to the perceptions of their abilities
from the expectations placed on them by their parents, more so than did males.

Teachers seem to play a part in the formation of self-concepts as well. In one particular study boys were found to receive more teacher feedback and attention than girls (Elaugh and Harlow, 1973). Another study, however, revealed different results. Samuels (1977) found that girls tended to receive more teacher attention and feedback than boys.

In a study of reader self-perceptions by Wallbrown, Levine, and Englin (1981), they found that males tended to see themselves as having difficulty with reading. The girls, however, seemed to view reading more positively and felt positive about the feedback they were receiving from family, friends and teachers about their reading abilities. Oldford-Matchim (1996), in her research revealed a significant difference between how boys perceived their families’ and classmates’ feelings about their reading. The boys, specifically, perceived the feedback from their families more positively than the feedback from their classmates. The girls, however, did not reveal any differences in their perceptions of significant others’ feedback in regard to their reading. Furthermore, the study also revealed a significant difference between how girls and boys perceived their classmates regard of their reading. Girls perceived their classmates’ regard for their reading ability more positively than did the boys.

According to Byrne (1993) research on gender and reading attitude is quite
scarce. Mixed findings have been found in the area of gender and attitude to reading. Some research indicates that interest in reading and a more positive attitude toward reading has been found in girls rather than boys (Arlin, 1977; Crews, 1976; Johnson, 1964; and Wallbrown, Levine, and Engin, 1981). However, other researchers have found the opposite is true (Parker and Paradis, 1986). As well, gender may be subject to cultural differences in socialization. Depending on the culture in which a child is raised may influence the attitude toward reading developed by the individual. Obviously, more research is needed in this area.

**Gender and Reading Ability**

Four factors are suggested by Dwyer (1973) in an attempt to explain the gender differences in relation to reading achievement:

1. The differential rate or level of maturation.
2. Content of basal readers.
3. The negative treatment of boys by female teachers.
4. The differential cultural expectations for the male role.

Studies carried out in England and Nigeria found that boys significantly outscored the girls in reading. In Canada and the United States girls outperformed the boys (Johnson, 1972). According to Preston (1962), cultural and environmental
factors account for gender differences in reading. Preston found that German boys considered reading to be a normal activity while American boys tended to perceive reading activities as feminine.

Cultural factors and teacher bias were found to account for reading achievement differences (Yarborough and Johnson, 1980). In an international review of gender differences in reading ability, most of the investigators agreed upon cultural factors and teacher bias. It was found that until the age of 10 boys lagged behind the girls. After the age of 10, the sex differences became nonsignificant.

In a comprehensive study by Wallberg and Tsai (1985), they found gender to be significantly correlated with achievement and attitude. The females in the study performed better than the males and expressed more interest in reading.

It was found in recent research that girls do better in reading than do boys (Cloer and Pearman, 1992; Oldford-Matchim, 1996; and Ostling, 1992). In a longitudinal study by Cloer and Pearman (1992), students were assessed on their reading skills at ages 9, 13, and 17. The researchers found girls outperformed the boys in each of the six reading assignments. Ostling (1992) reviewed the results of a report on the reading achievement of girls from preschool to secondary school. Results showed that girls tended to perform better on reading tasks than boys from elementary school to high school. Oldford-Matchim (1996) found that girls possessed more
knowledge of the alphabet than did boys at the end of the kindergarten year.

Newfoundland studies by Legge (1994), Byrne (1993), Pink (1996), and Whiteway (1995) found no significant relationships between reading and gender. These studies cover grades two to six. These results, however, do not corroborate the large-scale findings of the Newfoundland children in the Canadian Test of Basic Skills results for 1993 which showed the females were more successful in reading than were the males. Similar results have been found in 1989, 1991, and 1993.

Summary

The literature indicates relationships among the variables found in this study: reader self-perceptions, reading ability and gender. Children who feel good about their reading abilities and academic performance appear to perform better in school. Those students who feel negatively toward their reading abilities and academic achievement seem to perform worse than those who are more positive.
Chapter 3

Design and Methodology

Introduction

This study is designed to investigate the relationships among reader self-perceptions (observational comparisons, social feedback, physiological states, and progress), early reading ability (knowledge of alphabet, conventions of reading and writing, and meaning), and gender in a group of grade-one children.

The proposed research questions to be studied are:

1. Are reader self-perceptions in young children related to their early reading ability?

2. Is a child's gender related to reader self-perceptions and reading ability in young children?

The following hypotheses have been developed based on the TERA - 2 (Reid, Hresko, and Hammill, 1989) measure and a modified Reader Self-perception Scale (1995). They reflect the various components of each test. The hypotheses are stated in the null.
Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The relationship between early reading ability and self-perceptions of reading will be zero. (Self-perceptions include total score, question number one, observational comparisons, social feedback, physiological states, and progress.)

Hypothesis 2: The relationship between alphabet scores and self-perceptions of reading will be zero. (Self-perceptions include total score, question number one, observational comparisons, social feedback, physiological states, and progress.)

Hypothesis 3: The relationship between meaning scores and self-perceptions of reading will be zero. (Self-perceptions include total score, question number one, observational comparisons, social feedback, physiological states, and progress.)

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between convention scores and self-perceptions of reading will be zero. (Self-perceptions include total score, question number one, observational comparisons, social feedback, physiological states, and progress.)

Hypothesis 5: The relationship between gender and early reading ability will
be zero.

Hypothesis 6: The relationship between gender and self-perceptions of reading will be zero.

Sample

This study was conducted with a total of 77 first-grade students from a rural school. Included in the sample are 42 girls and 35 boys. They all come from varying socio-economic backgrounds, ranging from lower-middle class to middle class.

The children in the sample were involved in a literacy project (SORT) initiated by the Education Faculty of Memorial University of Newfoundland and in affiliation with the school. The project advocates the role of significant others in the reading process of young readers. The role of the literacy project is to provide the parents/guardians with the necessary knowledge to help their children become readers (Oldford-Matchim, 1994).

Instruments

Two inventories were administered to the students to measure their reading self-perceptions. A modified version of the Reader Self-perception Scale created by
the examiner will be used to determine the students’ perceptions of reading (including social feedback, observational comparison, physiological states, and progress). The TERA-2 test will be used to determine the students’ knowledge of the alphabet, conventions of print, and meaning.

**The Modified Reader Self-perception Scale (RSPS).** This modified instrument is used to measure how children feel about themselves as readers. The scale is based on Bandura’s theory of perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1982). Self-efficacy, according to Bandura, is one’s judgments of his or her ability to perform an activity and the effect this perception has on the ongoing and future conduct of the activity.

Self-efficacy judgments influence an individual’s choice of activities, task avoidance, effort expenditure and goal persistence thereby affecting judgment (Bandura and Schunk, 1981; Schunk, 1984).

According to the Self-efficacy Model, when individuals take into account their ability as readers they include the aspects of performance, observational comparison, social feedback, and physiological states. Performance referred to as progress is how one perceives present reading performance compared with past performances. Observational comparisons is the child’s perceptions of his or her reading ability as it compares with the reading abilities of his or her classmates. Social feedback deals
with direct and indirect input about reading from teachers, classmates and family. Physiological states are the internal feelings the child experiences during reading (Henk and Melnick, 1995).

This modified version of the **Reader Self-perception Scale**, devised by Henk and Melnick (1995), is more suited to the comprehension of first-graders. The four scales of the **Reader Self-perception Scale** are evident in the modified version as well: 1) progress = PR; 2) observational comparison = OC; 3) physiological states = PS; and 4) social feedback = SF.

The modified **Reader Self-perception Scale** consists of one general item and 16 subsequent items that represent the four scales (progress, observational comparison, social feedback, and physiological states). The general item consists of a question that prompts the children to think about their reading ability (Do you think you are a good reader?). The other 16 questions deal with overall reading ability as well as perceived feelings of reading ability. The scale's language has been modified so that young children understand more clearly what is being asked of them. As well, fewer questions have been chosen so that children will be able to remain focused throughout the questioning.
Table 1

Reliability Analysis of

Reader Self-perception Scale (RSPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
<th>Standardized Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reader Self-perception Scale</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cronbach’s alpha was used to determine the reliability of the Reader Self-perception Scale (Table 1). The Cronbach alpha statistic was developed to measure the internal consistency of attitude scales (Cronbach, 1951). This reliability coefficient is the only available estimate of the instrument’s reliability. This is the first time this modified version has been used in a study.

Test of Early Reading Ability - 2 (TERA - 2). This norm-referenced test is a test of very early reading achievement based on the work of many researchers in emergent literacy from the 1960's to the present (Harp, 1996). The test was designed by Reid, Hresko, and Hammill (1989) based on the current understanding of the early conceptions children have about reading. Handling books, letters and numeral identification, and syllabic awareness are some of the early conceptions of early readers.
The test's intent is the detection of early reading difficulties so that later reading failures can be avoided. Purposes of the test include: identification of significant differences in individual's early reading development; documentation of children's learning to read progress; a measure in research projects; and suggested instructional practices (p.5).

**TERA - 2** is used to measure three components of reading discovered by most children during the preschool years: 1) constructing meaning from print; 2) using the alphabet; and 3) convention in reading and writing.

Meaning is assessed by the child's knowledge of relations among vocabulary items and the awareness of print in connected text. The construction of meaning items were designed to measure children's abilities to read signs, logos, and words frequently found in figural/situational contexts. The items were produced from research on emergent literacy and observation of the print available in the school environment.

Knowledge of the alphabet is assessed through letter naming and oral reading. Research in the area of letter naming (Read, 1975; and Goodman, 1980) demonstrates the ability of young people to use their knowledge of letter names to transcribe their speech sounds and their ability to use oral language to talk about written language.

Conventions of written language are assessed through book handling tasks,
understanding punctuation, story spacing on a page, and proofreading. The basis for developing book handling items was Clay's Sand test (1972). Questions such as, “Will you show me the top of the page?” and “Where should I begin reading?” were asked of children while they were holding a book. The children’s actions were observed and their responses recorded. Questions involving other conventions of print include punctuation, left-right orientation and spatial presentation. Items on the test to measure proofreading abilities were located in sentence contexts so that children could employ their cueing systems in making judgements. Proofreading abilities depends on the child’s ability to anticipate what the printed page should look like and therefore, is dependent on the child’s experience with written language.

Normal curve equivalents (NCEs) are also provided by the TERA-2. Normal curve equivalents are standard scores with a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 21.06. A normal curve equivalent score will always represent the national average for that grade level and month, no matter what time of year the test is given (Reid, Hresko, and Hammill, 1989). A normal curve equivalent score of 50 means a student scored exactly at grade level, whereas, a student who scores below 50 signals below-average achievement. A table is provided in the TERA-2 manual which yields a rating scale for very superior, superior, above average, average, below average, poor, and very poor achievement. Raw scores are converted into normal curve equivalents by
using Tables C and D in the TERA-2 manual. This process was carried out for this study as well.

Reliability scales for the TERA-2 test are found in the TERA-2 manual and have a "stability reliability of .89, a significant statistic that exceeds minimal requirements for reliability" (p. 27). Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the TERA-2 test. The TERA-2 manual provides reliability analysis of the instrument for ages 3 to 8. Since this study was used on 6 year-old readers, a reliability coefficient for 6 year-olds will be provided as the standardized alpha in Table 2.

The internal consistency of the TERA-2 was determined by using the coefficient alpha technique at each age level. The resulting coefficients for Form A range from .78 to .98 (M=.91). Test-retest techniques were used to determine the reliability estimates and generated a reliability coefficient of .90 (Reid, Hresko, and Hammill, 1989).

Concerning validity, the TERA-2 test shows evidence of content validity, criterion-related validity, construct validity, and item validity (Reid, Hresko, and Hammill, 1989, p. 27 & 28). The validity of the TERA-2 test is supported by providing evidence of relationships between TERA-2 and a) the reading subtest of the Basic School Skills Inventory Diagnostic, b) the Test of Reading Comprehension,
c) chronological age, and d) other academic behaviours, such as writing and total achievement (Reid, Hresko, and Hammill, 1989).

Table 2

Reliability Analysis of Test of Early Reading Ability (TERA-2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
<th>Standardized Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TERA-2 (age six)</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedure

The Reader Self-perception Scale was administered to children individually, taking approximately 15 minutes to complete. The administration of the modified Reader Self-perception Scale was carried out by reading aloud the questions one by one to individual children and asking each child if he/she agreed or disagreed with the question. The testing system is based on a 3-point Likert system (2 = yes, 1 = sometimes, and 0 = no). Each question has the same weight therefore each subscale equals a maximum score of 8 (OC = 8, PS = 8, SF = 8, and PR = 8).

The modified scale emphasizes the feedback of significant others in the formation of children's self-concepts. Many questions are worded to find out how the child perceives what others think of his or her reading ability. Unlike Henk and
Melnick's (1995) scale, a question format will be used in this instrument rather than phrased statements.

Before administering the test, the purpose of the instrument was explained to each child and each question carefully read and explained so that children understood what they should do. It was emphasized to the child that he or she be as honest as possible and informed that there are no right or wrong answers.

The TERA-2 test was also given individually. Administration of the TERA-2 took 15-30 minutes depending on the child’s age and ability. Scoring procedures were determined by a correct or incorrect response. Correct responses earn one point (1) and an incorrect response receives no points (0). A composite score for the three subcategories (alphabet, meaning, and conventions) was used for the statistical analysis. Basals and ceilings are used as a method of shortening the testing time. The testing procedure began with the item that corresponded to the child’s age. The examiner began the test at entry level determined by the age of the child and tested the child until five consecutive items are missed (the ceiling). All items above the ceiling are scored as incorrect. As well, if a child has not correctly answered five items in succession during the confirmation of a ceiling, a return is made to the entry point. The testing continues until five items in a row are answered correctly. (All items below the basal are scored as correct.) Directions for administering the test are
Analyses of the Data

The Reader Self-perception Scale was scored by tabulating the raw scores which were obtained by counting 2 points for a positive response, 1 point for sometimes, and 0 points for a negative response. A composite score for each subcategory and an overall score was used for statistical analyses.

The test for early reading ability, TERA-2, was scored by tabulating a raw score which was obtained by counting the number of correct items. The raw scores for each category and overall scores were used in the statistical analyses. Raw scores were converted into normal curve equivalents (NCEs) by using Tables C and D in the TERA-2 manual.

Each child was coded a number according to gender; all boys were coded the number 1, and the girls were coded the number 2. Statistical analyses were carried out using that coding method.

The analyses of data was performed by including the raw scores from both instruments for all participants along with their sex-identity. The interrelationships of early reading ability, reader self-perception and gender were measured through regular correlational analyses and were accepted if significance was achieved at the .05 level.
Chapter 4

Analysis of Data

Introduction

Chapter 4 presents the analysis of the data collected in the study to determine if the research questions and hypotheses have been supported. Descriptive statistics which produced means, standard deviations, minimum, and maximum scores for the self-perception scale and the test for early reading ability were used to determine the percentage of positive and negative responses given on the instruments. The Pearson-Product-Moment Method was used to examine the relationships among measures of reading ability and reader self-perceptions and gender. The alpha level used to determine significance was .05. The correlational analyses were intended to discern levels of association between the Reader Self-perception Scale and a) TERA-2 and b) gender. Each hypothesis is restated and the data pertaining to that hypothesis is reported. Tables are used to report the findings from which the data are then examined and their significance interpreted.

TERA -2 Results. Mean scores for alphabet, meaning, convention and total scores are given in Table 3. The children in the sample appeared to do better on the
Table 3

TERA-2 Mean Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alphabet</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Convention</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>11.57</td>
<td>9.11</td>
<td>7.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

alphabet portion of the test. Meaning scores were the next highest scores followed by convention scores.

TERA-2 results also include the normal curve equivalent (NCEs) scores. Each of the participants' raw scores were converted to normal curve equivalents. Found in Table 4 is the overall normal curve equivalent mean score for this sample of grade-one children. As stated earlier, normal curve equivalent scores of 50 represent performance at grade level. Results from the TERA-2 test revealed an average performance level for the sample group based on the normal curve equivalent scores.

The children in this study achieved average results with an overall normal curve equivalency mean score of 55.45 and standard deviation of 16.19. According to Hresko, Reid and Hammill (1989), the children in this study are performing at grade level.
Table 4

TERA-2

Overall Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normal Curve Equivalent</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>55.45</td>
<td>16.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reader Self-perception Scale Results.** Table 5 contains the responses to each of the questions found on the **Reader Self-perception Scale.** The general item, (question number one, Do you think you are a good reader?) is also found in Table 5.

The children in this study had mixed perceptions of their reading abilities. For the general question (Do you think you are a good reader?), 76% of the children responded with a yes while 16% of the children responded negatively. The other 8% said, "sometimes."

According to questions four, eight, eleven, and seventeen, the children seemed to perceive the feedback from their significant others quite positively. All four questions make up the subcategory social feedback.
Table 5

Reader Self-perception Scale

Questions and Responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Responses in %:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you think you are a good reader?</td>
<td></td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. [OC] Do you read faster than other kids?</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. [PS] Do you like to read aloud?</td>
<td></td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. [SF] Do your classmates like to hear you read?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. [PS] Do you feel good inside when you read?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. [PR] Is reading easier than it was in kindergarten?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>87.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. [OC] Do you know more words than other kids?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. [SF] Do people in your family think you are a good reader?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. [PR] Are you getting better at reading?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>96.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. [PS] Does reading make you feel happy inside?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>96.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. [SF] Does your teacher think you are a good reader?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. [OC] Do you read better than other kids in your class?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. [PR] Can you read better now than you could in kindergarten?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>94.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. [PR] Do you know more words than you did in kindergarten?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. [PS] Do you enjoy reading?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>95.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. [OC] Do you spend more time reading than other kids?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. [SF] Do people in your family like to hear you read?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OC = Observational Comparison  SF = Social Feedback
PS = Physiological States  PR = Progress
In regard to questions two, seven, twelve, and sixteen, the children tended to respond less favourably. Those questions make up the subcategory observational comparisons. The children appeared to judge themselves negatively in comparison to their peers' performance in reading ability. Sixty-five percent of the children tended to perceive themselves as reading slower than their classmates. Fifty-three percent of the children appeared to perceive themselves as not reading as well as other children in their class. Only 52% of the sample seemed to feel they knew more words than the other children, while 54.5% of the children tended to think they spent more time reading than the other children.

Questions three, five, ten, and fifteen comprise the subcategory physiological states. The children tended to perceive reading positively. However, feelings about reading aloud does not tend to be looked upon with the same amount of enthusiasm. Approximately half (53.3%) of the children said they enjoyed reading aloud while 44% said they did not.

The subcategory progress is made up of questions six, nine, thirteen, and fourteen. The children appeared to perceive their own progress positively in relation to their past efforts in reading.

Results of the Reader Self-perception Scale subcategories are found in Table 6. All responses are given in percentages. The total score for each category is eight.
### Table 6

**Reader Self-perception Scale**

**Subcategory Results.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Values</th>
<th>Subcategory Responses in %</th>
<th>OC</th>
<th>SF</th>
<th>PS</th>
<th>PR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>78.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OC** = observational comparisons  
**SF** = social feedback  
**PS** = physiological states  
**PR** = progress

There are four questions for each category. The scores for each response are: (0) = no, (1) = sometimes, and (2) = yes. Totals for the subcategories ranged from 0-8.

The highest scores of reader self-perception were found in the social feedback subcategory and the progress subcategory. The majority of children scored highly in those two categories specifically; 78.7% of the children scored a total of eight for both categories. The lowest category was observational comparisons. Only 8% of the children scored a total of eight.
Summary

The children in this study received an overall mean normal curve equivalent score of 55.45 based on the results from the TERA-2 instrument. This overall mean normal curve equivalent score of 55.45 places the children in the ‘average’ category according to the TERA-2 testing manual.

From the results on the Reader Self-perception Scale, the children tended to feel positively about their reading abilities and how they felt while reading, their feedback from significant others, and their progress. It appears that the children in this study do not feel as positively about their reading ability in comparison to their classmates.

Research Design

The research design chosen is correlational, an interest in associative impact is the intent. The sample chosen is not a random sample and there is no control group. The study investigates the association of self-concept and reading ability and gender. According to Keppel and Zedeck (1989) correlational designs have been traditionally used to study correlations “present and existing in nature.” Correlational research is particularly concentrated in the observation, organization, and description of the data from “nature’s experiments.” Furthermore, correlational research is used to precisely study those phenomena that the experimenter has not learned to control or can never
hope to control (p. 27).

Advantages of Correlational Design

1. Variables such as sex, race, age, social class, and personality traits cannot be manipulated, therefore correlational design is called for.

2. Some processes are long-term or evolve over time and it would be impossible and/or unethical to restrict subjects to a laboratory for the duration of the study.

3. The correlational design is used to clarify, suggest, refine, or amplify experimental findings.

The Reader Self-perception Scale provided six scores (question number one, social feedback, observational comparison, physiological states, progress, and a total score). The TERA-2 tool provided four scores (alphabet, meaning, convention, and an overall score). Together with gender, the scores were used to compute a Pearson Product Moment.

Limitations of the Study

1. There are many factors in children's backgrounds of experience which influence their self-concepts and are not measured (Vereen, 1980).

2. One of the instruments to be used in the investigation is not standardized. A Cronbach Alpha was found to be .44. The scores obtained from this
instrument must be analyzed bearing this in mind.

3. This study was carried out with grade-one children in a rural community who had been involved in a literacy program for approximately one year. The results of this study may not be generalizable to other grade-one children.

**Reading Ability and Reader Self-perception.**

Measures obtained for the students' reading ability were correlated with variables of reader self-perceptions using the Pearson-Product-Moment Method, to determine if any significant relationships existed. Results obtained from the statistical procedures, relate to tests of the first hypotheses. A restatement of the hypothesis is provided and the significance of the data relevant to the hypothesis is discussed. The data collected for hypothesis 1 is reported in Table 7.

Hypothesis 1: The relationship between early reading ability and self-perceptions of reading will be zero. (Self-perceptions include total score, question number one, observational comparisons, social feedback, physiological states, and progress.)

Significant positive relationships were found between total TERA-2 scores and overall scores on the Reader Self-perception Scale, questions number one, physiological states and progress. This leads to the rejection of hypothesis 1.
Table 7

Relationship between Early Reading Ability and Reader Self-perception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship between Reader Self-perception Categories</th>
<th>Pearson’s r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>.3583**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number one</td>
<td>.3541**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observational comparisons</td>
<td>.1877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social feedback</td>
<td>.0730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiological states</td>
<td>.2825**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>.3234**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .01  * p < .05

Reading ability and reader self-perceptions were found to be statistically significantly correlated. A significant relationship was not found between total TERA-2 scores and observational comparison. The results obtained from the analysis are found in Table 7. A significant relationship between early reading ability and social feedback could not be determined through statistical analyses. Two questions within the social feedback subcategory had no variance among their responses. All the children in the
study responded positively to the questions. Since 100% of the responses were positive, a correlational coefficient could not be computed.

Hypothesis 2: The relationship between alphabet scores and self-perceptions of reading will be zero. (Self-perceptions include total score, question number one, observational comparisons, social feedback, physiological states, and progress.)

Significant positive relationships were found between alphabet scores and overall reader self-perceptions, question number one (Do you think you are a good reader?), progress and physiological states. This leads to the rejection of hypothesis 2. Students who scored high in their knowledge of the alphabet tended to perceive themselves as good readers, with positive feelings while reading, and perceived themselves as progressing with their reading. This leads to the rejection of hypothesis 2. A significant relationship was not found between alphabet scores and observational comparison. A significant relationship between social feedback and alphabet scores could not be determined because two questions within the social feedback subcategory had no variance within its responses. All the children in the study responded positively to both questions.
Table 8

Relationship between Alphabet and Reader Self-perception.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Between Alphabet and Reader Self-perception Categories</th>
<th>Pearson’s r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>.3135**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number One</td>
<td>.3598**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observational comparison</td>
<td>.1422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social feedback</td>
<td>.0149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiological states</td>
<td>.2607*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>.3556**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p<.01  *p<.05

Hypothesis 3: The relationship between convention scores and self-perceptions of reading will be zero. (Self-perceptions include total scores, question number one, observational comparison, social feedback, physiological states, and progress).

Significant relationships were found between convention scores and overall scores on the Reader Self-perception Scale, question number one, observational comparison, physiological states, and progress. Specifically, children who know more
Table 9

Relationship between Convention Scores and Reader Self-perception.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship between Reader Self-perception categories</th>
<th>Pearson’s r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>.3569**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number one</td>
<td>.3345**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observational comparison</td>
<td>.2322*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social feedback</td>
<td>.0951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiological states</td>
<td>.2299*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>.2710*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .01   * p < .05

Conventions of print perceived themselves as better readers, felt positive about their reading ability in comparison to other children, had positive feelings while engaged in reading, and perceived themselves as progressing with their reading. This leads to the rejection of hypothesis 3. A significant relationship could not be determined between convention scores and social feedback. Two questions within the social feedback subcategory had no variance, therefore a correlation coefficient could not
be computed within the subcategory. The results obtained are found in Table 9.

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between meaning scores and self-perceptions of reading will be zero. (Self-perceptions include total score, question number one, observational comparison, social feedback, physiological states, and progress).

Significant positive relationships were found between meaning scores and overall self-perceptions of reading, question number one, physiological states, and progress. The children in the study who scored high in meaning seemed to perceive themselves as good readers, had positive feelings while reading, and perceived themselves as progressing in their reading abilities. This leads to the rejection of hypothesis 4. A significant relationship was not found between meaning scores and observational comparison. A significant relationship between meaning scores and social feedback could not be determined because two questions within the social feedback subcategory had no variance. All of the children in the study responded positively to both questions. Because no variance existed within the responses a correlational coefficient could not be computed. The results are found in Table 10.
Table 10

Relationship between Meaning Scores and Reader Self-perception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship between Reader Self-perception Categories</th>
<th>Pearson’s r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>.3172**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number one</td>
<td>.3006*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observational comparison</td>
<td>.1524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social feedback</td>
<td>.0849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiological states</td>
<td>.2764*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>.2601*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .01  * p < .05

Gender and Early Reading Ability

The raw scores obtained for the TERA-2 test were correlated with gender to determine if a relationship could be found between early reading ability and gender.

Hypothesis 5: The relationship between gender and early reading ability will
be zero.

No significant relationships were found between early reading ability and gender. This leads to the acceptance of hypothesis 5 as stated. The results obtained are found in Table 11.

Gender and Reader Self-perception

Measures obtained for the reader self-perceptions were correlated with gender to determine if any significant relationships exist.

Hypothesis 6: The relationship between gender and self-perceptions of reading will be zero.

A significant positive relationship was found between gender and reader self-perceptions in favour of females. The females received an overall reader self-perception mean score of 27.56, while the males received an overall mean score of 25.32. According to the correlational analysis the females scored significantly higher than the boys did. This leads to the rejection of hypothesis 6 as stated. Results obtained from the analysis are found in Table 12.
Table 11

Relationship between Gender and Early Reading Ability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship between</th>
<th>Pearson’s r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TERA-2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>.1896</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .01  * p < .05

Table 12

Relationship between Gender and Reader Self-perception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship between Reader Self-perceptions</th>
<th>Pearson’s r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>.2434*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .01  * p < .05

Summary of Findings

Found in Table 13 is the correlational matrix of all variables used in the analysis of data to determine relationships among early reading ability, reader
Table 13

Correlational Matrix of All Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>alph</th>
<th>con</th>
<th>men</th>
<th>#1</th>
<th>OB</th>
<th>PR</th>
<th>PS</th>
<th>SF</th>
<th>TER</th>
<th>RSP</th>
<th>Gen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>alph</td>
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<td>.7316**</td>
<td>.3598**</td>
<td>.1422</td>
<td>.3556**</td>
<td>.2607*</td>
<td>.0149</td>
<td>.8656**</td>
<td>.3135**</td>
<td>.2194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>con</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.7716*</td>
<td>.3345**</td>
<td>.2322*</td>
<td>.2710*</td>
<td>.2299*</td>
<td>.0951</td>
<td>.8920**</td>
<td>.3569**</td>
<td>.1948</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>men</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.3006*</td>
<td>.1524 .2601*</td>
<td>.2764*</td>
<td>.0849</td>
<td>.9438**</td>
<td>.3172**</td>
<td>.1304</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<td>.3541**</td>
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<td>.7735</td>
<td>.1950</td>
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<td>.0438</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.0961</td>
<td>.2825**</td>
<td>.3655</td>
<td>.0823</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF</td>
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<td>.6086</td>
<td>.1129</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TER</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.3583**</td>
<td>.1869</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>RSP</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td>.2434*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .01  * p < .05

alph = alphabet
con = conventions of reading and writing
men = meaning
#1 = question number one (Do you think you are a good reader?)
OB = observational comparisons
PR = progress
PS = physiological states
SF = social feedback
TER = TERA-2 total scores
RSP = RSPS total scores  Gen = Gender

self-perceptions and gender.

The means and percentages from the data analysis provided a summary of
scores from the Reader Self-perceptions Scale and the TERA-2. According to the scores found on the TERA-2 test, alphabet scores ranked highest of the categories in children's reading ability.

From the results on the Reader Self-perception Scale, the children had perceived the components of their reading abilities differently. In terms of their observational comparisons, the majority of children were not as positive about their own reading ability in comparison to others. They tended to perceive themselves as not reading as fast, or knowing as many words as their classmates. They did however, have positive perceptions of their social feedback, physiological states, and progress in reading.

The sample of children in this study, according to responses on individual questions of the Reader Self-perception Scale, gave a variety of responses. The majority of questions were answered positively, whereas questions three 'Do you like to read aloud?', seven 'Do you know more words than other kids?', and twelve 'Do you read better than other kids in your class?' were answered positively by half the group and negatively by the other. Question two 'Do you read faster than other kids?', a perception of reading rate, however, was answered negatively by most of the children (65%).

Regular correlational analyses using the Pearson-Product-Moment Method was
performed to analyse the data collected in the study. The results obtained determined whether the stated hypotheses were accepted or rejected. Statistically significant relationships were found and listed below.

For this group of young children, statistically significant relationships were found between:

1. Children's early reading ability (total TERA-2) and their reader self-perceptions including overall reader self-perceptions, question number one, physiological states, and progress.

2. Children's knowledge of the alphabet and their reader self-perceptions including overall reader self-perceptions, question number one, physiological states, and progress.

3. Children's knowledge of conventions of print and their reader self-perceptions including overall reader self-perceptions, question number one, observational comparison, physiological states, and progress.

4. Children's ability to construct meaning and their reader self-perceptions including overall reader self-perceptions, question number one, physiological states, and progress.

5. Gender and reader self-perceptions.

The following relationship was not found to be statistically significant:
1. Gender and early reading ability.

Significant relationships were shown between aspects of early reading ability and aspects of reader self-perception. Gender was significantly related to self-perceptions of reading. Gender was not significantly related to early reading ability.
Chapter 5
Discussion, Educational Implications
and Recommendations for Further Research

Introduction

The purpose of chapter 5 is to summarize and discuss the findings revealed by the statistical analyses of data collected during the investigation. Educational implications are drawn from the findings and recommendations are delineated for further research.

Summary

The literature review provided has indicated that some of the research has shown interrelationships exist among the variables that were to be investigated in this study: reader self-perception, early reading ability, and gender. Children who perceive themselves as readers tend to read more and have positive attitudes toward reading. Those children who have negative perceptions of reading have a tendency to not read as often or as widely. Most of the research indicated that students with positive reader self-perceptions appear to have higher reading and academic achievement levels and
those with negative self-perceptions tend to have lower reading and other academic achievement levels. It was found that gender, in most studies, is not significantly related to reading ability or attitude.

Little research has been carried out in the area of reader self-perceptions in young children, since many researchers are somewhat skeptical of young children's ability to differentiate their own self-concept. Further research was needed to understand the extent to which children can differentiate along various academic and affective domains and ways in which parents and teachers can foster positive self-perceptions in children. Furthermore, very little research has been done in the area of acquiring appropriate instruments to measure the subcomponents of self-perceptions in young readers.

The fundamental purpose of this study is to examine the relationships among young children's perceptions of reading (including social feedback, progress, physiological states, and observational comparisons), early reading ability (including knowledge of the alphabet, conventions of print, and the ability to construct meaning from print) and gender. Hypotheses were generated from the literature review to determine the relationships between reader self-perceptions, early reading ability and gender.
The following relationships were investigated:

1. The relationship between overall early reading ability and self-perceptions of reading.

2. The relationship between alphabet scores and self-perceptions of reading.

3. The relationship between meaning scores and self-perceptions of reading.

4. The relationship between convention scores and self-perceptions of reading.

5. The relationship between gender and early reading ability.


A sample of 77 grade-one children were selected to participate in the study, including 42 girls and 35 boys. Two instruments were administered to the children, one self-perception scale, Reader Self-perception Scale, and one test of early reading ability, TERA-2. The scores from the two instruments were analysed using the Pearson-Product-Moment Method to determine relationships among reader self-perceptions, early reading ability and gender.
Findings and Conclusions

**Reader Self-Perceptions and Early Reading Ability**

The relationships between aspects of self-perceptions of reading and early reading ability were found to be statistically significant. Children who scored high in areas of construction of meaning, alphabet knowledge and awareness, and conventions of print have higher self-perceptions of themselves as readers.

Children who have a strong knowledge of the alphabet, conventions of print, and the ability to construct meaning from print think they are good readers and feel positively about their progress in early reading ability according to this investigation. Specifically, children who had a strong knowledge of the alphabet, conventions of print, and ability to construct meaning from print:

1. considered reading easier now than it was in kindergarten.
2. thought they were getting better at reading.
3. thought they could read better now than they could in kindergarten.
4. reported they knew more words now than they did in kindergarten.

The children in the study with a strong knowledge of the alphabet, conventions of print and the ability to construct meaning from print had positive feelings while engaged in reading, i.e., they experienced positive physiological states. Specifically, the children who received high scores in these three aspects of reading ability:
1. liked to read aloud.
2. felt good inside when they read.
3. felt happy inside when they read.
4. enjoyed reading.

Those children in the study who received higher scores in their knowledge of conventions of print had higher self-perceptions of themselves as readers in comparison to their classmates. More specifically, the children with a strong awareness of print conventions perceived they:

1. read faster than other children.
2. knew more words than other children.
3. read better than other children in the class.
4. spent more time reading than other children.

The subcategory, observational comparisons, was found not to be significant with the other two aspects of reading ability: 1) alphabet; and 2) ability to construct meaning from print.

The subcategory, social feedback was found not to be significant with any of the TERA-2 variables. Social feedback includes the perceptions of feedback from classmates, family and teachers. A significant relationship could not be determined between social feedback and the TERA-2 variables. Two of the variables would not
compute a correlation coefficient due to the lack of variance in the responses from the children. The majority of children gave the same response to questions eleven ‘Does your teacher think you are a good reader?’ and seventeen ‘Do people in your family like to hear you read?’ Since there was very little variance in their replies, a correlation coefficient could not be computed for the relationship between that aspect of reader self-perception and early reading ability. The children responded favourably to the questions with 100% of respondents answering ‘yes’ to question eleven and 100% of the respondents answering ‘yes’ to question seventeen. Therefore, all the children felt positively about the feedback given to them by their teachers and families regarding their ability to read.

**Gender and Reader Self-perception**

A significant relationship was found between gender and reader self-perceptions. The females in the study had significantly higher perceptions of themselves as readers. The females had an overall reader self-perception mean score of 27.56 while the male’s overall reader self-perception mean score was 25.32. According to the correlational analysis, the females have a significantly higher reader self-perception than the boys did. This corroborates the findings of other studies (Brown, 1992; Stevenson et al., 1986; and Entwisle et al., 1983).

Earlier research has reported that girls hold a more positive attitude toward
reading (Johnson, 1964, and Wallbrown, Levine, and Engin, 1981). In a study by Parker and Paradis (1986), primary and elementary girls were found to hold more positive attitudes toward reading than boys in the same academic level.

**Gender and Early Reading Ability**

The Pearson-Product-Moment Method for statistical analysis did not reveal any significant relationships between gender and early reading ability. All children tended to perform equally well on the TERA-2 test. This finding corroborates the findings of Legge (1994) and Pink (1996). Both studies found no significant differences in reading comprehension scores between males and females. Legge’s (1994) research studied grade-two children, while Pink (1996) studied 4-, 5-, and 6-grade children.

This finding may have resulted because young children at the grade-one level, female or male, are able to perform equally well on reading ability tasks, despite society’s stereotypical attitudes of male and female roles. Both cultural and environmental factors may have also influenced the children in this study. The students had been involved in a literacy project for approximately one year and may have been exposed to positive values placed on reading and reading practices at home. Both parents may have valued reading activities and so both female and male role models may have existed in the home.
**Educational Implications**

The teaching of reading has evolved from cognitive, drill methods to more holistic approaches involving the whole child. According to recent research the social and psychological effects on reading are favoured. Children's attitudes toward reading, their self-concepts of reading, and the communication between significant others and child, all make up social psychological bases for children learning to read.

Significant others who provide environments rich in literature positively influence children to read. The social aspect of learning includes the communication devoted to learning and discovery. Asking questions, pointing out important aspects of stories, involving the children in discussion and asking their opinions are social psychological aspects of learning. Children are motivated to read because they believe in their ability to read and they have within their self-concept the ideal that they are readers. Motivating children to read and demonstrating positive reading behaviours help to create successful readers.

The results found in this investigation support the research findings of other researchers concerning the effects of reader self-perceptions and reading ability (Briggs, 1987, Henk and Melnick, 1995; Oldford-Matchim, 1996; and Thomas, 1984). The grade-one children in this study who had positive self-perceptions about their
reading abilities had higher reading ability as demonstrated by their knowledge of the alphabet, conventions of print, and their ability to construct meaning from print and symbols.

Educational implications have been devised based on the synthesis of the data from this investigation. Following is a list of educational implications:

1. This investigation has revealed a relationship between aspects of reader self-perception and reading performance. This corroborates the findings of others (Ignoffo, 1988; Henk and Melnick, 1995; Legge, 1994; and Thomas 1984). Those children who performed well on the reading ability test had higher perceptions of their reading ability. Those children who did not feel as positive about themselves as readers did not perform as well. An implication of these results is that positive self-perceptions of reading need to be fostered in all children learning to read. Reading and self-concept seem to go hand-in-hand. Teachers and parents need to support and maintain children's positive reading perceptions and attitudes and promote reading as a worthwhile activity. Teachers and parents can become models for children. Their interest and enthusiasm for reading can demonstrate its rewarding and valuable impact and contribute to children's developing self-perceptions and attitudes.

Positive attitudes toward reading are related to reading comprehension (Alexander, 1983). Attitudes are part of one's self-concept. To develop positive
attitudes in children, parents and teachers must promote reading and reading-related activities by modelling reading behaviours. Parents and teachers can model reading by practising positive reading habits, demonstrating a pleasure for reading and by sharing their likes and dislikes of particular books with the children.

According to Ignoffo (1988) reading achievement is directly affected by children’s beliefs of learning to read. If children believe they are unable to learn to read, chances for reading improvement are drastically reduced.

2. Since this study was carried out with children at such an early stage of reading development, teachers and parents should keep in mind these very young readers are just beginning to learn to read. They are becoming aware of the alphabet and the formation of words. They need positive feedback for their accomplishments and plenty of reading materials and experiences with print. It is important that teachers and parents give praise to the children for their attempts at reading and encouragement while engaged in a reading task. It is also vital that parents and teachers promote risk-taking opportunities for the readers.

Furthermore, it is important that teachers and parents keep open lines of communication. Teachers should provide reading activity suggestions for parents and make every effort to inform parents of the children’s progress.

3. The relationship between gender and reader self-perceptions was found to be
significant for this group of grade-one children. The girls hold significantly higher perceptions of themselves as readers. Teachers and parents should foster and demonstrate positive attitudes toward reading to both boys and girls.

This finding reveals that girls perceive their reading ability more favourably than the boys do. This could imply that girls are reinforced for their reading accomplishments more than the boys are. This finding may also imply that the boys may have been encouraged to think reading is not a favourable activity or one that they may not excel in.

To encourage young male readers to take part in reading practices, older male role models are needed to demonstrate reading as an enjoyable act for males. One method is cross-age tutoring. This method would provide younger children with experiences in learning whereby older students could help them with academic tasks. This could be a positive experience in which older children could demonstrate positive attitudes toward reading and act as a positive influence for younger children.

4. A significant relationship was not found to exist between gender and early reading ability. This finding implies that both sexes performed equally well on the TERA-2 test, even though their perceptions of reading ability differ. The boys perceived their reading ability less positively than the girls did, but performed just as well as the girls. This finding is similar to that found in other Newfoundland studies
(Legge, 1994; and Pink, 1996), although large scale studies of reading show a gender gap favouring girls.

According to results found on the Canadian Test of Basic Skills (1989, 1991, and 1993) of Newfoundland children, girls were experiencing more success in reading than boys at the grade four level. The Canadian Test of Basic Skills was administered province-wide to grade four children and revealed that females exceeded males on the reading subtest. Provincial findings indicated that females have higher scores in reading comprehension than males do.

5. Alphabet scores from the TERA-2 test were higher than conventions of print scores and ability to construct meaning scores for this group of grade-one children. Significant relationships do exist between alphabet, convention and meaning scores, however, investigation of this relationship was not part of the researcher's hypotheses. Significant differences do exist between children's achievement in alphabet, convention and meaning scores, with children's achievement on knowledge of the alphabet being significantly higher than others. This finding implies the that this group of grade-one children were more involved in alphabet identification and awareness tasks than in conventions of print and meaning activities at school and at home.

However, since the goal of reading is meaning construction, perhaps more
emphasis could be placed on the instruction of conventions of print and meaning in reading. Further research is needed to ascertain teachers' emphasis in instruction. According to test results the children were more aware of the alphabet than conventions of print and meaning. Parents and teachers should continue to concentrate on discussing such things as spaces between words, spatial presentation, punctuation, left-right orientation, proofreading, and determining some sort of interpretation of the text.

One explanation for this finding is that these children were receiving more instruction in this aspect of reading. Another explanation is that, as Chall (1976) suggests, the children were particularly sensitive to learning sound and symbol relationships at this stage of reading development. This finding may confirm that some aspects of literacy learning are more salient at particular times in children's reading development.

The lower scores found in the category of conventions of print reaffirms the findings made by Pressley and Waller (1984). According to Pressley and Waller, metacognitive knowledge increases with age. Some of the conventions of print in this test include the ability to proofread, and proofreading can be thought of as a metacognitive strategy. Also, the young children in this study are still in the alphabetic phase of reading. They may not yet be fully aware of the strategies needed
to fully comprehend text, since they are still decoding words and their reading rate or fluency is likely to impede meaning.

6. Social feedback, a subcategory of the Reader Self-perception Scale, was found not to be significant with early reading ability. This finding causes concern because research has shown that self-perceptions of ability are influenced by the feedback of significant others (Phillips, 1987). Two of the questions in the social feedback subcategory did not receive a variety of responses; all the children felt positively about the feedback they received from their parents and family concerning their reading. This indicates that the children have positive perceptions of the feedback they receive from teachers and family members. This finding confirms the importance that parents and teachers must ensure that children receive praise and positive feedback for their reading attempts and accomplishments. The children also need encouragement while learning to read at this early stage of reading development. Fostering children’s self-concepts of reading ability at such an early age is vital to reading success.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

During this investigation various issues not taken into consideration at the onset were realized. To overcome the limitations of this investigation, further research recommendations need to addressed:
1. Research studying grade-one children from other areas, such as urban areas, would be useful to determine the differences or similarities in children’s self-perceptions and reading ability based on the environment. Research by Goodman (1980) demonstrated the importance of environmental print in the development of reading ability. A study of Newfoundland children from various communities, both rural and urban, should be carried out to determine differences in early reading ability. A close look at how children observe their environments and garner information from logos, signs, and posters in different communities and how those children perceive their reading development would be useful information for teachers and parents. Furthermore, research into the area of differences in young children’s self-perception of reading ability according to environmental setting, including home environment and school setting is needed.

2. Follow-up research should be carried out to determine the developmental patterns of reader self-perceptions and reading ability. A clearer concept of reader self-perception development would be beneficial to teachers and parents. Employing a longitudinal study as a research strategy to determine developmental changes in reading ability and reader self-perceptions is recommended. Using the same group of grade-one children in a longitudinal study to determine the developmental process of reading ability and self-perceptions of reading would be useful to determine how
the children progress and how they perceive their progress. Questions concerning changes after grade-one include: to determine if gender has an impact on reader self-perception after grade-one; to determine if reading ability and reader self-perception is still related after grade-one; to determine if reading ability is affected by gender after grade-one.

3. A study with children who were not involved in a literacy project and those who were (e.g., the control group) involved should be carried out to determine differences in children's perceptions of reading based on the impact of a literacy program involving both parents and children. This experimental design would attempt to reveal the effect a reading treatment had on the self-perceptions and reading ability of such a young group of children. Furthermore, to investigate the impact significant others have on the formation of self-concepts and reading abilities of young children due to the education garnered from a literacy project for parents/guardians of the children is useful information for those researchers and program co-coordinators attempting to create literacy programs.

4. Further research into the area of young children's reading is needed to determine if differences exist in the three aspects of reading ability (alphabet knowledge, construction of meaning, and conventions of print) after grade-one. A longitudinal study is recommended to determine whether different aspects of reading
are learned in developmental phases. According to the results found in this study, the children had a stronger knowledge of the alphabet than conventions of print and ability to construct meaning from print. Statistical analyses using paired T-tests to determine if differences exist specifically among those aspects of early reading ability would provide useful information about their reading progress.

5. Statistical analyses of the Reader Self-perception Scale to determine if differences exist among the subcategories (social feedback, progress, observational comparison, and physiological states) was not part of the researcher’s hypotheses. Further research into this area to determine if differences exist between those variables should be considered. Some areas of readers’ self-perceptions may be more stronger then others. Some readers may feel more positively about the social feedback they receive than their perceived progress of reading ability, therefore various strategies to increase that aspect of self-perception may be needed.

6. The reliability of the Reader Self-perception Scale designed by the examiner was found to have a low alpha coefficient. This must be kept in mind when analyzing the data of this study. The Reader Self-perception Scale should be revised so that further research using this measure with young children will better predict the relationships between self-perceptions of reading and early reading ability. A self-perception scale to measure reader self-perceptions for further study should have a
higher reliability coefficient.
References


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APPENDIX A

A certificate of approval confirming that the protocol and procedures of the research conform to Memorial University's guidelines for research involving human subjects was approved as part of the overall ethical approval of the Significant Others as Reading Teachers Project (SORT, 1994–) by the Faculty Committee for the Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Subjects.