

An investigation of the relationship between parental empathy and children's self-esteem

by

Jennifer Dawn Riday

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This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Jennifer Dawn Riday

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between parental empathy and children's self-esteem was examined by administering questionnaires (Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory; Questionnaire Measure of Emotional Intelligence) to a sample of 410 fifth- and sixth-grade children and their parents. Drawing on symbolic interaction theory, which suggests that parents' attitudes and behavior toward their children may have an impact on children's self-esteem, it was hypothesized that parents reporting higher levels of empathy have children with higher levels of self-esteem. The results did not support this hypothesis. It was also hypothesized that gender may account for significant differences in empathy and self-esteem levels and that income is positively correlated with empathy and self-esteem. It was found that mothers had significantly higher empathy levels than fathers, that girls had significantly higher self-esteem than boys, and that parental income was significantly related to children's self-esteem. Implications for future research are considered.

INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that parents have a significant influence on children's behavior in many different ways. Not only do parents' behaviors influence infants' level of attachment to parents (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1969; Bowlby, 1988; Smith & Pederson, 1988), but parenting style has been found to be strongly related to children's and adolescents' social behavior (Baumrind, 1966, 1967, 1978).

Many researchers have also specifically examined how parents' attitudes and behaviors influence their children's self-esteem. Studies have shown that children's self-esteem is related to (a) the quality of parents' verbal interactions with their children (Burnett & McCrindle, 1999; Blake & Slate, 1993; Chartier & Goehner, 1976); (b) parental interest, fairness, and praise (Joubert, 1991); and (c) parental acceptance, control, and discipline (Cruse, Foss, & Colbert, 1981).

Although many factors influencing self-esteem have been examined, little research has examined the relationship between parental empathy and children's self-esteem. Most of the research examining parental empathy has examined instead the relationship between parental empathy and children's empathy (Barnett, King, Howard, & Dino, 1980) or between parental empathy and children's distress levels in emotion-invoking situations (Eisenberg, Fabes, Schaller, Carlo, & Miller, 1991). Researchers have also examined the effect of parental empathy on (a) children's physiological emotional responses (Mehrabian, Young, & Sato, 1988), (b) children's self-control (Feshbach, 1987), or (c) children's academic achievement, attention skills, and peer relations (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997).

It is also critical for researchers to more fully understand the relationship between parental empathy and children's self-esteem. Understanding this relationship is important; low self-esteem has been found to be related to several negative occurrences, including loneliness (Joubert, 1990), depression (Battle, 1987), lower-rated popularity and physical appearance (Brown, 1993), and low levels of creativity (Coopersmith, 1967), among other things. An examination of the relationship between parental empathy and children's self-esteem not only would increase our understanding of how parents' attitudes and behaviors influence children's self-concepts, but teachers, parents, and therapists all could utilize the present research as a means to help increase children's self-esteem.

In this research the constructs of empathy and self-esteem will be defined, and related research will be presented. Symbolic interaction theory will also be discussed. Hypotheses regarding the relationships between children's self-esteem, parental empathy, and other variables will be presented and the corresponding data analyses and results will be presented. Implications of the current research and suggestions for the future will also be discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Self-Esteem

Self-esteem, like most constructs in social science, at times can be complex and difficult to define. Dozens of self-esteem measures have been created, each measuring a slightly different aspect of self-esteem (Battle, 1982; Wylie, 1974). In addition, several measures of self-esteem have focused specifically on children, as well (e.g., Coopersmith, 1967, 1989). The complexity involved in defining self-esteem is reflected by the large number of definitions and instruments that have been utilized to measure various aspects of self-esteem.

James (1892), one of the earliest researchers to examine the sense of self, defined self-esteem as something “determined by the ratio of our actualities to our supposed potentialities” (p. 187). In other words, James saw self-esteem as being equal to the ratio of success over pretensions. According to James, individuals who consider their personal potential to be high must achieve a relatively high level of success in order to have high self-esteem. By the same logic, James argued, even those who propose to achieve little, but still succeed, will have high self-esteem. However, individuals who do not succeed in achieving what they perceive to be their personal potential, whether high or low, would have low self-esteem, according to James.

Cooley (1902) had a slightly different approach to self-esteem. Cooley emphasized the impact of appearance (how one imagines others perceive his or her clothes, face, and figure) on individual self-esteem. He listed three main elements of self-esteem, including: 1) how the individual imagines others perceive his or her appearance, 2) how the individual supposes others judge his or her appearance, and 3) some element of self-feeling, including

mortification or pride. Cooley believed that the significant others in an individual's life provide a mirror from which the individual forms his or her sense of self, an idea popularly known as the "looking glass self" (p. 152).

Mead (1934) similarly suggested that an individual's sense of self stems from the attitudes of "the generalized other" toward the individual (p. 154). According to Mead, individuals gain their sense of self solely through their interactions with others and from how they think those around them perceive them. Both Cooley and Mead suggested, therefore, that self-esteem is a global construct in which one's view of the self is formed primarily from an individual's perception of how others view him or her.

Coopersmith (1967), one of the early researchers who examined self-esteem in children specifically, believed that self-esteem consists of several domains. Focusing only on boys, Coopersmith identified and categorized four domains of boys' self-esteem, including the domains of self, peers, school, and parents. He defined self-esteem as "the evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself: it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy" (p. 5). Coopersmith's definition of self-esteem is based on the idea that a person feels a general liking toward the self when he perceives himself as possessing positive qualities and characteristics.

Rosenberg (1986), who focused on adolescents, defined "the self" as "a world of general emotions, attitudes, beliefs, wishes, feelings, motives" (p. 111), largely created and defined through "interpersonal sentiments and relationships (one's feelings toward others and others' feelings toward self)" (p. 109). Self-esteem, therefore, "primarily involves

feelings of self-acceptance, self-liking, and self-respect, both conditional and unconditional” (p. 120). Instead of analyzing domains of self-esteem, as Coopersmith did, Rosenberg’s definition of self-esteem emphasized the summation of an individual’s feelings and thoughts toward the self generally.

In contrast to Rosenberg’s (1986) emphasis on one’s feelings toward the self generally, Harter defined self-esteem as a collection of feelings and thoughts about one’s characteristics and abilities in several specific domains of life, a definition that seemed to be a combination of the definitions provided by James (1892) and Coopersmith (1967). Harter specifically argued that self-esteem is a blend of (a) children’s evaluations of their successes in several domains, including “...scholastic competence, athletic competence, social acceptance, physical appearance, and behavioral conduct” (p. 153), and (b) their evaluations of the importance they assign to each of these domains. Harter argued that children with higher self-worth are better able to discount the importance of areas in which they are not successful and assert the importance of areas in which they are successful. The combined evaluation of one’s personal competence in each of several domains, along with the judged importance of each domain, utilizes Coopersmith’s idea of the importance of measuring specific areas of self-esteem along with James’ idea of self-esteem as a ratio of actuality over potentiality.

Table 1 provides an overview of each of the definitions of self-esteem that have been discussed.

Table 1.

Overview of key definitions of self-esteem

Researcher	Date	Sample/Focus	Definition
James	1892	Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratio of actualities to potentialities
Cooley	1902	Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How one imagines others perceive him/her
Mead	1934	Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of self stems from attitude of others
Coopersmith	1967	Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possession of positive qualities in specific domains (self, peers, school, parents).
Rosenberg	1986	Adolescents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summation of one's thoughts/feelings toward the self generally
Harter	1986	Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific domains (scholastic, athletic, social, physical appearance, behavioral) combined with evaluation of importance of each domain

One problem with Harter's (1986) definition of self-esteem is that a child's evaluation of the importance of certain domains may not be related directly to self-esteem. Instead, it is likely that these ratings may originate from other sources, such as social norms or expectations from parents (i.e., parents' expectations that their children succeed in school). It is interesting to note that the children across all self-esteem levels in Harter's research (low, medium, high) rated the domains of scholastic competence, behavioral conduct, and physical appearance to be of equal importance, regardless of their competency in each of those domains. Furthermore, even children with low self-esteem were able to discount the importance of athletics and social acceptance to some extent, two areas that,

according to social norms or parental standards, may be less important. Although Harter's ideas are logical, future research will need to clarify and validate Harter's definition and research on self-esteem.

In addition to the aforementioned potential problems with Harter's definition of self-esteem, she did not include a domain specifically measuring children's self-esteem in relation to their parents, like Coopersmith (1967) did. Furthermore, Harter did not include a domain measuring one's feelings toward the self in general, a domain that may be necessary to validly assess the global sense of self that Rosenberg (1986), Cooley (1902), and Mead (1934) believed existed. For these reasons, Coopersmith's (1967) definition and measure of self-esteem will be used for the present research examining children's self-esteem.

Coopersmith not only focused solely on children, but he measured self-esteem in the specific domains of self, school, peers, and parents, areas with which all children are familiar and likely would rate as important (unlike athletics, such as in Harter's [1986] research). Finally, specific analyses regarding the domains of "parents" and "self" are essential for the present research examining the relationship between parental empathy and children's self-esteem.

Defining Empathy

Empathy, like self-esteem, is a construct that has been defined in several different ways. In a broad sense, Letourneau (1981) comprehensively defined empathy as "(1) the ability to distinguish among and label the thoughts and feelings of another, (2) the ability to take the role of another, that is, to put oneself mentally in another person's place, which is referred to as 'role-taking,' and (3) the ability to become emotionally responsive to another's feelings" (p. 383). Empathy is important within the parent-child relationship because it

“specifically enables parents to understand their children’s experience not from their own, but rather from the child(ren)’s perspective” (Miliora, 1993, p. 108).

Two specific definitions of empathy have been widely utilized within the social sciences. One definition considers empathy to be a cognitive ability that enables an individual to understand another’s experience through mental role-taking. Mead (1934) adhered to this viewpoint, considering sympathy, or empathy, to be a mental role-play allowing an individual cognitively to understand another’s situation. He described this role-play as taking another’s “attitude toward, and his role in, the given social situation . . . thus responding to that situation implicitly as he does” (p. 300). Strayer (1987) described this cognitive definition of empathy as the ability to recognize emotions in others while recognizing them as distinct and separate (as belonging to another person).

In contrast to the cognitive definition of empathy, many researchers also define empathy as an affective construct. Researchers adhering to this viewpoint consider empathy to be “an individual’s vicarious emotional response to perceived emotional experiences of others” (Mehrabian et al., 1988). Eisenberg and Strayer (1987) defined empathy as “an emotional response that stems from another’s emotional state or condition and that is congruent with the other’s emotional state or situation” (p. 5), while Feshbach (1987) defined it “as a sympathetic reaction to distress” which reflects “social understanding and emotional identification” (p. 272). Stated more simply, those who adhere to the affective definition consider empathy to be “the capacity of an individual to feel the needs, the aspirations, the frustrations, the joy, the sorrows, the anxieties, the hurt, indeed, the hunger of others as if they were his or her own” (Clark, 1980, p. 188). Finally, most researchers

adhering to the affective definition of empathy would agree that empathy is experienced not only emotionally, but physically and psychologically as well (Barnett, 1987; Strayer, 1987).

For research examining parent-child interactions, it can be argued that the affective definition of empathy is most appropriate because the parent-child relationship almost always includes some level of emotional involvement. The affective definition of empathy will be used for the current research. Table 2 provides an overview of some fundamental cognitive and affective definitions of empathy.

Table 2.

Overview of cognitive and affective definitions of empathy

Researcher(s)	Date	Focus	Definition
Mead	1934	cognitive	• mental role-play; cognitive understanding
Strayer	1987	cognitive	• recognize others' emotions as distinct and separate
Eisenberg & Strayer	1987	affective	• emotional response congruent with another's emotional state
Feshbach	1987	affective	• sympathetic reaction to distress
Barnett	1987	affective	• reaction experienced emotionally, physically, psychologically
Mehrabian, Young, & Sato	1988	affective	• vicarious emotional response to others' experiences

Empathy Research

Many researchers have examined the relationship between empathy and several other variables. Researchers have found that individuals who are highly empathic tend to have higher scores on moral judgment measures (Eisenberg-Berg & Mussen, 1978) and to be more affiliative (Mehrabian et al., 1988). Mehrabian et al. (1988) also reported that empathic parents tend to show more affection for their children, to spend greater amounts of time with them, and to be more verbally expressive about emotion. Also, mothers who report higher levels of empathy tend to be more physically and emotionally responsive to their infant children (Wiesenfeld, Whitman, & Malatesta, 1984). Furthermore, it has been found that mothers who show higher levels of empathy tend to be more positive and more involved with their children than mothers reporting lower levels of empathy, and that children reared by empathic mothers tend to show more self-control and have fewer behavior problems (Feshbach, 1987).

Mehrabian and Epstein (1972) found that participants who reported higher levels of empathy tended to be less aggressive in an experimental shock administration study, and tended to engage in a greater amount of helping behavior, in response to a distressed classmate than did their low-empathy counterparts. Other researchers have found that individuals reporting high levels of empathy tend to be socially more aware, engage in more volunteer activities, and have stronger moral development than individuals reporting low levels of empathy (Chlopan, McCain, Carbonell, & Hagen, 1985).

On a more specific level, the affect-based construct of empathy appears to be closely linked to many physiological changes that occur within human beings. Individuals reporting higher levels of empathy tend to have higher levels of cortical development (Clark, 1980);

and mothers reporting higher levels of empathy tend to have a more arousable nervous system as measured by increased skin conductance and increased heart rates in response to videotapes of infants' emotional signals (Wiesenfeld et al., 1984).

Several instruments measuring empathy have been created. While some of these measures, such as the Hogan Empathy Scale (Hogan, 1969), examine a more cognitive, intellectual aspect of empathy, measuring how insightfully individuals interpret others' behavior, other instruments such as the Questionnaire Measure of Emotional Empathy (QMEE) (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972) provide a measure of empathy that focuses on affect and emotion. Measures like the QMEE perhaps are more effective for research examining parent-child interactions because the relationship between parents and children involves much sharing of emotion. Nevertheless, both cognitive and affective measures of empathy have been used in research examining parent-child relations.

Many researchers have used both cognitive and affective measures to examine the relationship between parental empathy and child abuse. Letourneau (1981) examined two groups of mothers, one comprised of physically abusive mothers and one made up of non-abusive mothers. The groups were equivalent in terms of income, class, education, and family structure. Using the Hogan Empathy Scale (Hogan, 1969) and the QMEE (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972), Letourneau found that the two groups were significantly different in their empathy levels; the abusive mothers reported lower empathy levels. As Letourneau states, the results of this research are logical because parents who are limited in their ability to understand and perceive their children's feelings, needs, and intentions would be increasingly likely to give a more punitive response when conflict or negative emotions arise.

Several other studies have also found empathy to be linked to abusive or behavioral problems. Marshall and Maric (1996) studied 29 incarcerated child molesters and found that they tended to be lacking in a generalized sense of empathy as compared to 29 nonoffenders. Schonert-Reichl (1993) examined 78 adolescent males, half with behavior disorders and half without. She reported that individuals labeled as behavior disordered scored significantly lower than their non-behavior disordered counterparts on the QMEE (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972).

Not only is empathy linked to nonabusive or behaviorally appropriate parenting, but empathy is critical for a successful parent-child relationship because it influences how well children's physical and emotional needs are met. Dix (1992) states:

Empathic goals reflect the value parents place on outcomes children want and may be critical to responsive parenting. Empathic goals lead to information processing oriented toward understanding events from the child's perspective; to emotional reactions that are tied to outcomes children receive, rather than to outcomes parents receive; and to generation and selection of parenting behaviors aimed at improving the child's sense of well-being. Empathic cognition, emotion, and response evaluation are primary components of responsive parenting because they are the means whereby, despite children's limited power and competence, their needs get represented and effectively handled. Parental empathy results in children's wants and needs being potent determinants of parenting processes and behavior (p. 320).

Clearly affective empathy is linked to several overt human behaviors, many of which would have a strong influence on the parent-child relationship, as well as on children's well-being.

Research Examining Self-Esteem and Constructs Similar to Empathy

Although many researchers have investigated empathy and its relationship to several variables, few researchers have specifically examined the relationship between empathy and self-esteem, particularly, how parental empathy is related to children's self-esteem.

Nevertheless, many researchers have studied how children's self-esteem is related to parents' attitudes and behavior, a domain that includes several constructs similar to empathy. These include constructs such as parental discipline and control, parental support and participation, parent-child communication, and parental warmth and acceptance. In each of these areas, researchers have found that parental behavior significantly influences children's self-esteem.

Coopersmith (1967) was one of the first researchers to examine thoroughly the influence of parents on children's self-esteem. Using data from several interviews with parents, as well as from questionnaires filled out by both parents and boys, Coopersmith found that boys' self-esteem was positively related to maternal self-esteem. He also reported that self-esteem was negatively related to marital disagreement, as well as to marital history and to mothers' and fathers' reported levels of satisfaction with their roles in the family. Coopersmith found that boys with high self-esteem tended to have parents who were less concerned with child obedience and accommodation and were more concerned with child achievement. Finally, he also found that boys with higher self-esteem reported that they were most likely to confide in their fathers than in their mothers or another person, which Coopersmith suggested may show that boys with high self-esteem feel closer emotionally to their fathers than to their mothers.

Coopersmith (1967) summarized his research by listing three antecedents, or conditions, that are a necessary part of high self-esteem in children. These include “total acceptance of the children by their parents, clearly defined and enforced limits, and the respect and latitude for individual action that exist within the defined limits” (p. 236). Following Coopersmith’s listing of the three antecedents of self-esteem, a large number of researchers similarly became interested in investigating how parents influence their children’s self-concept. Much important research examining parental discipline, parental support and participation, parent-child communication, and parental warmth has been conducted and has had great impact on present-day theory and research of parent-child relations.

Parents’ style of discipline and control is one aspect of the parent-child relationship that researchers have found linked to children’s self-esteem. Baumrind (1966, 1967, 1978) identified three different styles of parenting and their influence on children’s behavior. According to Baumrind, authoritative parents are warm and accepting. They also have rules and limits which children are allowed to discuss and help determine in a democratic fashion. Baumrind defined permissive parents as parents who are nonpunitive and accepting, providing their children with warmth but with little discipline. Finally, authoritarian parents, according to Baumrind, are parents who control and show little warmth toward their children.

After examining children reared by each type of parents, Baumrind (1966, 1967, 1978) reported that children reared by authoritative parents were self-controlled, self-assertive, buoyant, affiliative, and explorative. Children with permissive parents tended to be lacking in self-control and self-reliance and had difficulty working with others in a group.

Children reared by authoritarian parents were discontent, rebellious, more dependent on their parents, and less affiliative with their peers when compared to the other two groups. Although Baumrind did not specifically examine self-esteem or empathy, it can be argued that the parental warmth exhibited by authoritative parents is similar to empathy, and that the self-control and self-assertion exhibited by children reared by authoritative parents is similar to self-esteem.

In addition to examining parental discipline and control, like Baumrind did, many researchers have examined parental support and participation. For example, Gecas and Schwalbe (1986) examined the relationship between adolescent self-esteem and adolescents' perceptions of parental participation and support in 128 families. They found that adolescents' self-esteem was positively related to parental support and participation. Support, defined as how much the parents helped their children and showed affection towards them, is a construct similar to empathy. Although Gecas and Schwalbe did not examine parental empathy specifically, they did find that a construct similar to empathy influences adolescents' self-esteem.

Many researchers have also examined indirectly the influence of parental participation and support. Rosenberg (1989) measured parental interest, which is quite similar to participation and support, and how it related to self-esteem in 5,024 high school juniors and seniors. Students with high self-esteem had parents who showed more interest in them than children with low or medium self-esteem levels. Bowlby (1969, 1988) examined parents' responsiveness and concern toward their children (also similar to participation and support) and found these constructs strongly related to children's behavior. When Ainsworth and Bell (1970) studied infants' attachment to their parents, they found

that when parents acknowledged their infant's feelings and met their needs, the infants showed more securely attached behavior and felt more confident to explore the environment around them.

Perhaps the relationship between parental responsiveness and secure attachment in infancy is closely linked to the relationship between parental empathy and self-esteem. Ablon (1983) suggested that the foundation of self-esteem is developed in infancy as parents establish an "effective reciprocal communication of affect" with their infant (p. 81). As parents consistently validate and respond to their children's feelings, children feel more confident in their environment, which, in turn, increases their self-confidence. A more specific examination of the relationship between parental empathy and children's self-esteem may provide greater support for Ablon's hypothesis.

Parent-child communication, another construct closely related to empathy, has been found to be linked to children's self-esteem. Burnett and McCrindle (1999) examined the relationship between parents' positive and negative statements and children's self-esteem by administering questionnaires to 269 children in grades three through seven. They found that children who perceived their parents as making a greater number of positive statements engaged in more positive self-talk and consequently had higher levels of self-esteem than did children whose parents made a greater number of negative statements.

Other researchers have found similar results. Chartier and Goehner (1976) studied 84 10th and 11th-grade children and found that the teens' self-esteem was significantly related ($r = .60$) to their perception of the constructiveness of their parents' communication with them. Blake and Slate (1993) measured the relationship between adolescents' perceptions of their parents' verbal interactions with them and the adolescents' self-esteem using a sample

of 97 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students. They found that perceived parental verbal interaction was strongly related to self-esteem ($r = .65, p < .01$). Therefore, greater perceptions of negative parental verbal interactions resulted in lower levels of adolescent self-esteem, while more positive perceptions of parental verbal interaction results in higher levels of self-esteem. Finally, Joubert (1991) examined 134 young college-aged adults' perceptions of their relationships with their parents when they were younger, as well as their current self-esteem. He found that participants who perceived their parents as having shown greater interest in them and who engaged in more positive verbal interactions with them when they were younger also reported higher levels of self-esteem.

Parental warmth is a construct that is perhaps the most closely related to empathy. Feshbach (1987) states that warmth is closely related to empathy because a parent who is judged to be empathic attends to "the child's point of view and feelings, and is able to understand and share these feelings," which are behaviors that would be more likely to be displayed by parents rated as being warm on a "warmth-coldness dimension" (p. 273).

Much research has examined the relationship between parental warmth and children's self-esteem. For example, Sears (1970) examined several factors related to children's self-concept by utilizing a sixth-grade sample of 84 girls and 75 boys. Using parent interviews and child questionnaires, Sears found that boys' and girls' self-concepts were positively related to maternal and paternal warmth. Similarly, Loeb, Horst, and Horton (1978) examined parental warmth and involvement during administration of a Rorschach task to the child and found parental warmth and involvement during the task to be positively correlated with children's self-esteem. When Paulson, Hill, and Holmbeck (1991) examined 200 seventh-grade children's self-esteem levels and their perceptions of their relationships

with their parents. They reported that perceived parental warmth accounted for a significant portion of the variability in self-esteem scores.

As the research has suggested, parents who are more supportive, communicative, and warm, all constructs similar to empathy, tend to have children with higher self-esteem. Although these constructs are not exactly the same as empathy, empathy certainly is related to each of them. As Dix (1992) states, “almost by definition, parental warmth involves empathy. It is frequently the expression of joy when children are pleased and the expression of concern when children are upset.” He states further, “reasoning and communication involve empathy because they are the means parents use to learn about the child’s position in an interaction and to communicate their own” (p. 335).

Because empathy is so strongly related to other constructs, some researchers have argued that a single, unified construct should be created. For example, Rollins and Thomas (1979) argued that parental nurturance, warmth, and acceptance should be unified into a single construct labeled “parental support.” Despite such a viewpoint, however, the majority of researchers support an advancement of research examining empathy specifically, whether defined as the cognitive ability to take on a role of another or as an affective ability to share another’s emotions. A specific examination of empathy as a single construct is important because empathy, which is the cognitive or affective understanding of another’s viewpoint, is the foundation from which warmth, interest, acceptance, discipline, and communication are formed.

Although much research has examined constructs similar to empathy and how they influence children’s self-esteem, little research has specifically examined the relationship between empathy and self-esteem. Miller (1971) examined mothers’ non-verbal behavior

toward 203 eighth-grade children using the Relationship Inventory-B: Parent-toward-Child Form (Bierman, 1967, as cited in Miller, 1971), a questionnaire that assesses parental affective and empathic responses to their children. Miller measured the children's self-esteem using the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (1967). He found that maternal empathy and verbal description were significantly related to children's self-esteem scores ($r = .16$). Although Miller's research adds insight into the relationship between parental empathy and self-esteem, Miller did not examine the relationship between fathers' empathy and children's self-esteem. Further research should expand Miller's study by examining both maternal and paternal empathy utilizing a more extensive measure of emotional empathy and by more thoroughly examining variables such as child gender and socioeconomic status.

Parent and Child Gender

Many researchers have examined the effect of gender on self-esteem levels, as well as on empathy levels. Research examining child gender and self-esteem has yielded mixed results. Although some researchers have found small main effects for gender, reporting either girls as having higher self-esteem (Gecas, 1971) or boys as having higher self-esteem (Chubb, Fertman, & Ross, 1997), others have reported no differences. A review of the research by Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) suggests that no overall significant differences in self-esteem for boys and girls exist from childhood to college. Another review by Wylie, Miller, Cowles, and Wilson (1979) specifically examined a large amount of research using the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) (1967) as well as Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale and reported no significant overall differences in self-esteem between boys and girls.

Researchers examining parental empathy have reported that females are consistently more empathic than males. For example, using a sample of 402 males and 787 females, Eysenck and Eysenck (1978) measured empathy using Mehrabian and Epstein's (1972) Questionnaire Measure of Emotional Empathy and found that men had lower empathy scores than women. Similarly, Paulson, Hill, and Holmbeck (1991) examined 200 seventh-grade children's perceptions of their parents and found that both boys and girls perceived their relationships with their mothers to be warmer and closer than their relationships with their fathers.

Utilizing a sample of 54 enrolled preschool and kindergarten children and their parents, Barnett et al. (1980) studied parents' and children's empathy levels. They found that mothers reported significantly higher levels of empathy than did fathers. They also reported that girls' empathy levels were positively related to their mothers' levels of empathy while being negatively related to their fathers' empathy scores. Boys' empathy scores had no correlation with either of their parents' reported empathy levels. As Barnett et al. suggest, children's empathy may be viewed as a gender-appropriate behavior, explaining why only the girls' empathy scores were related to mothers' reported empathy levels. It is likely that an examination of parental empathy and children's self-esteem, rather than children's empathy, would also show significant gender effects.

Many researchers have also examined various interactions among parent gender, child gender, parental empathy, and self-esteem. Sears (1970) examined the effect of parental warmth on 159 sixth-grade children's self-concept scores and found that boys' and girls' self-concept scores were similar. He also reported that both boys' and girls' self-concept scores showed similar correlations to both paternal and maternal warmth.

Other researchers, however, have reported findings quite dissimilar to those of Sears. Coopersmith (1967) reported that boys with high self-esteem were more likely to confide in their fathers, while boys with low self-esteem were more likely to confide in their mothers, suggesting that boys with high self-esteem may feel closer to their fathers emotionally. Rosenberg (1989) similarly found that children who reported close relationships with their fathers had higher self-esteem than those reporting a more distant relationship with their fathers. Richards, Gitelson, Petersen, and Hurtig (1991) examined 139 high school seniors and found that girls and boys who reported their cross-sex parent as supportive and warm also reported higher self-esteem levels.

Gecas (1971), however, found that children tended to be more influenced by parental support from their same-sex parent rather than their cross-sex parent. Loeb et al. (1980) examined the relationship between parental warmth and involvement and children's self-esteem and found significant parent gender and child gender interactions. They reported that maternal support had a stronger influence than paternal support on both boys' and girls' self-esteem, and that paternal involvement had a stronger effect on self-esteem for girls than for boys. In contrast, Miller (1971) reported that mothers' empathy had a greater effect on self-esteem in girls than boys. Clearly the research examining interactions between parent and child gender, empathy, and self-esteem has yielded very mixed results. Additional research is needed to clarify past confusion.

Income

Little or no research has examined potential interactions involving income, empathy, and self-esteem. Becker (1964) reported that middle-class parents tended to be warmer and less demanding, while working-class parents tended to use more physical punishment and

shouting, in addition to being more demanding. In a study of 5,024 high school juniors and seniors in the state of New York, Rosenberg (1989) reported that higher social class students had higher self-esteem than lower social class students. Similarly, Rosenberg found that socioeconomic status mediated the main effect of gender on self-esteem. He reported that boys from a higher social class had much higher self-esteem than boys from a lower social class, while the difference between girls from both high and low social classes was minimal. Gecas (1971) examined the relationship between parental support and children's self-esteem and found that middle-class children reported their fathers as more supportive than did lower-class children. However, as Gecas states, although significant, the differences were minimal. Despite research suggesting main effects of income, a review of research examining self-esteem and socioeconomic status concluded that there is no strong positive relationship between these two variables (Wylie et al., 1979). Researchers need to continue to examine the influence of income on the relationship between parental empathy and children's self-esteem to clarify many of the conclusions from past research.

Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbolic interaction theory is an effective base from which parental empathy and children's self-esteem can be examined because this theory allows researchers to focus specifically on the meaning individuals and groups symbolically attach to people, behaviors, and objects as individuals interact with one another. As LaRossa and Reitzes (1993) state, symbolic interactions are both verbal and nonverbal communications to which individuals attach meaning. Therefore, symbolic interaction theory allows researchers to examine how interactions come to have meaning and are perceived by different individuals, as well as

how different actions and communications between individuals and groups influence people's thoughts and behavior.

LaRossa and Reitzes (1993) help to define symbolic interaction theory more clearly by listing several of its main assumptions. First, symbolic interaction theory assumes that human beings act based on the meaning people, objects, and situations have for them personally. Second, it is assumed that both personal and shared meaning develop as human beings interact with each other. Third, it is assumed that individuals personally interpret the meaning of the people, situations, and objects they encounter. Fourth, symbolic interaction theory assumes that "individuals are not born with a sense of self but develop self concepts through social interaction" (p. 144). Finally, it is assumed that these self-concepts are an important motivator of human behavior.

One important aspect of symbolic interaction theory is that it acknowledges that parent-child relationships are bidirectional. In other words, parents and children both influence each other. Symbolic interaction theory therefore acknowledges not only that parents' behaviors influence children, but children's behaviors and varying temperaments influence parents, as well. Nevertheless, due to the complexity of examining parent-child relations, most research examines only one aspect of this bidirectional model. Although it is clear that children also influence parents' behaviors, the present research will simplify this relationship and attempt to examine how parents' empathy levels affect their children's self-esteem. Once that relationship is established, further research can perhaps examine the effect children's self-esteem has on parents' empathy, as well as how children's individual behavior influences their self-esteem across their development.

One researcher specifically examined self-esteem along with verbal interaction, a variable related to empathy, in a manner that supports symbolic interaction theory. Burnett (1996) found support for symbolic interaction theory in two studies. The first study examined the relationship between parents' self-esteem and children's self-esteem to find support for social learning theory, which suggests that children develop self-esteem as a means of watching and imitating their parents. The second study examined the relationship between children's perceptions of parents' positive and negative statements and children's self-esteem in order to find support for symbolic interaction theory.

Burnett (1996) found that the statements parents make to their children were more highly correlated with children's self-esteem scores than were parents' self-esteem scores. This research supports the symbolic interaction assumption that children's perceptions are strongly influenced by the interactions they have with those around them. As Burnett states, "the symbolic interaction model is based on the notion that children's self-concept and self-esteem are developed and maintained by the reflective appraisal of feedback given by significant others, particularly parents" (p. 58).

Gecas (1971) also did research that supports symbolic interaction theory. In a study of the relationship between parents and their adolescents Gecas reported that parental support is strongly related to adolescent self-esteem. Gecas argued that this relationship provides support for the symbolic interactionist idea that self-esteem is significantly determined by the interactions children have with significant others, including parents. Just as Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934) proposed, Gecas theorized that individuals' perceptions of how significant others, or the "generalized other," view him or her play a significant role in the development of the self-concept.

Applying symbolic interaction theory specifically to the study of parental empathy and children's self-esteem can be a helpful means of interpretation. According to the assumptions of symbolic interaction theory, children assign meaning to interactions they have with their parents. As a result, various parental attitudes and behaviors, including parental empathy, might have a strong effect on children's perception of themselves. Therefore, the present research will examine the relationship between parental empathy and children's self-esteem from a symbolic interaction perspective. This research also will expand on research by Miller (1971), who found a significant but fairly small relationship between maternal empathy and children's self-esteem. The present study will attempt to replicate his findings utilizing a sample of both mothers and fathers, as well as to examine gender and income along with children's self-esteem and parental empathy.

Research Questions

The present research will examine the following research questions:

1. Do mothers and fathers reporting higher levels of empathy have children who report higher levels of self-esteem?
2. Are mothers' empathy levels higher than fathers' empathy levels?
3. Are there significant differences for self-esteem in boys and girls?
4. Are the cross-sexed parents' empathy levels more strongly related to boys'/girls self-esteem than the same-sexed parents' empathy levels?
5. Is annual household income positively related to parental empathy levels?
6. Is annual household income positively related to children's self-esteem?
7. Do child's gender, household income, and parental empathy account for a significant amount of the variance in children's self-esteem scores?

8. Is parental age significantly related to parental empathy?
9. Is children's age significantly related to children's self-esteem?

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 410 fifth- and sixth-grade children (215 girls, 195 boys, M age = 11.14 years, SD = .65 years) from two Iowa public school districts from communities with populations ranging from 10,000 to 15,000 people. The children were primarily of Anglo-European descent (89.5% Caucasian, 4.9% Native American, 2.4% Hispanic, 1.7% Black, 1.5% Asian). The two schools combined had a total of 455 children; however, several children ($n=17$) were excluded due to absence on the day the questionnaires were administered, because their parents did not allow them to participate ($n=8$), or because they chose not to participate ($n=1$). Furthermore, one child from each set of twins or siblings was randomly selected to be removed from the data set ($n=12$), and 7 children were removed from the data set later because they did not complete at least 95% of the questions on the questionnaire. Fifth- and sixth-grade children were selected because it has been shown that after age 8 children show a strong sense of their overall personal worth (Harter, 1996). Furthermore, children's self-esteem reaches a peak during ages 12-13 (Rosenberg, 1986), leading to potential ceiling effects. Therefore, fifth-grade and sixth-grade children (ages 10-12) were selected to be a middle range between the extremes.

Using class lists provided by the schools, two questionnaires measuring empathy were mailed to the homes of all fifth- and sixth-grade children in the two schools. Both parents (where applicable) were instructed to complete the questionnaires. One or both parents from 173 of the 410 participating children returned their questionnaires (117 fathers, 165 mothers), resulting in an overall response rate of 42%. The parents were primarily of white European descent (96%), and 86% of the parents were married, 11% were divorced,

and 3% were widowed, single, or living with a significant other. The mean annual household income was between \$50,000-\$59,000, (75% of the sample reported an income higher than \$30,000 and 25% reported an income higher than \$70,000). The mean age of the mothers was 39.09 years ($SD = 4.95$ years), and the fathers' mean age was 41.04 years ($SD = 5.62$ years). Mothers and fathers had similar levels of education (50% of the sample had completed at least some college, 40% had completed at least a 2-year college degree; 20% had completed at least a 4-year college degree). Mothers worked outside of the home an average of 25-30 hours, while fathers worked outside of the home an average of 40-45 hours. Parents reported a mean of 2.57 children ($SD = 1.34$ children).

Measurements

Children's Self-Esteem. The School Form of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) (Coopersmith, 1967, 1989) was used to measure children's self-esteem (see Appendix A). The SEI is a 58-item self-report questionnaire; participants are instructed to respond "Like Me," or "Unlike Me" to each item. Four subscales measuring the child's perceptions relating to Social Self-Peers, Home-Parents, School-Academic, and General Self include 50 statements such as "I'm easy to like," or "My parents and I have a lot of fun together." The other 8 items, which are not actually scored with the SEI, are lie-scale statements assessing the accuracy of the respondents' answers. The responses of the four main subscales are summed and then multiplied by 2, resulting in a Total Self maximum score of 100. Battle (1982) reported a test-retest reliability of .88 for the SEI over five weeks. Although Coopersmith did not report the internal reliability of the SEI, other researchers using the SEI have reported alpha coefficients of .78 (Blake & Slate, 1993) and

.86 (Betz, Wohlgemuth, Serling, Harshbarger, & Klein, 1995). The alpha coefficient for the SEI in the current research was .88 (for boys = .875, for girls = .882).

Parental Empathy. The QMEE (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972) was used to measure parental empathy in the present research (see Appendix B). This Likert-type self-report test, which focuses on measuring vicarious emotional empathic arousal, includes statements such as “I am annoyed by unhappy people who are just sorry for themselves,” or “I tend to get emotionally involved with a friend’s problems.” The 33 items from the QMEE are scored from +4 (very strong agreement) to –4 (very strong disagreement), with a total score ranging from –132 to + 132. Higher QMEE scores represent greater levels of emotional responsiveness or empathy.

Researchers in the past have reported the mean QMEE score to be 23 for males and 44 for females (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). The split-half reliability of the QMEE has been reported at .84 and its correlation with the Crowne and Marlowe (1960) social desirability scale was reported at .06 (Mehrabian & Epstein). The QMEE has also been negatively correlated with aggression and positively correlated with helping behavior (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). The alpha coefficient of the QMEE for the current study was .83 (for mothers = .81, for fathers = .85).

Demographic Variables. The parents were asked several demographic questions relating to their age, gender, monthly income level, the number of hours worked per week, the number of children in the household, education level, marital status, and race. Children were asked to report their gender and race in addition to completing the SEI. Age and number of children in the household were measured continuously. Gender, race, and marital status were measured categorically. Income levels were measured by intervals from

\$0-\$9000 (0) to \$100,000 or more (10). The number of hours worked per week was measured by intervals from 0-4 (1) to 46 or more (6), and education was measured by intervals from “some high school” (1) to “Ph. D.” (9) (see Appendix C and Appendix D).

Procedure

Approval for this research was obtained from the Iowa State University Institutional Review Board, after which permission was obtained from the school boards of each of the two school districts. The principals of each school furnished class lists and addresses. A grant of \$250.00 from the CFCS graduate research fund was used to pay for duplication of permission slips and questionnaires and for postage. Pre-notification letters explaining the research and promising confidentiality were mailed to parents along with the parent questionnaires. The letters also included a form that the parents were asked to sign and return to the teacher or researcher if they objected to their child’s participation in the study. Both parents (where applicable) were instructed to complete and return the parent questionnaire in the provided stamped and addressed envelopes to the researcher at Iowa State University. Parents were also notified that all participants returning the questionnaires before a certain date would be entered in a drawing for a gift certificate at a local grocery store.

The Coopersmith SEI was administered in each fifth- and sixth-grade classroom in two central Iowa school districts. Only children whose parents did not object to their children’s participation in the study were allowed to participate. The participating children were told the nature of the study, that all responses were confidential, and they were given the opportunity to choose whether or not they wanted to complete the study. The questions were read aloud to the children to help them maintain their interest and attention. The test

administration took 15 minutes for each classroom. The children were instructed to be honest, and that there was no “best” or “right” answer. Those choosing not to participate or whose parents did not consent to their participation were allowed to sit quietly at their desks and read a book or go to another room and do whatever the classroom teacher desired.

The questionnaires for each parent-child dyad were coded so that parents could be matched to their children. Following data collection, two \$25.00 gift certificates were purchased and a name from each school district was drawn from a pool of all participating parents. The gift certificates were mailed to the two selected families. The research results were presented to the principals at each school, and upon parent request, letters explaining the results of the research were sent home with the children from school. To analyze the data, any children’s questionnaires that were less than 95% complete were removed from the data set ($n = 7$). Any missing responses on the parents’ questionnaires were recoded to “0,” which is equivalent to “unsure” on the QMEE.

RESULTS

To analyze the data all children who completed fewer than 95% of the items on the SEI were removed from the data set ($n = 7$). When two children from a family completed the questionnaire, one sibling was randomly selected to be removed from the data set ($n=12$). The final number of children participating was 410, and 42% of their parents returned questionnaires resulting in a sample of 165 mothers and 117 fathers.

One component of the SEI is the Lie Scale, which is scored from 1 to 8. According to Coopersmith (1989) a higher score would indicate that children's SEI responses would tend to be answered in ways that the children would perceive as socially desirable. The mean Lie Scale score for this sample of children was 5.07 ($SD = 1.79$), a score slightly higher than the middle point of 4, suggesting that the responses potentially were influenced by social desirability. Nevertheless, social desirability is likely a factor influencing all self-report instruments, so results should always be interpreted cautiously.

Question 1: Do Mothers and Fathers Reporting Higher Levels of Empathy Have Children Who Report Higher Levels of Self-Esteem?

Pearson correlation coefficients revealed that there were no significant correlations between maternal empathy and children's self-esteem in the domains of Social Self-Peers, Home-Parents, School-Academic, and Total Self. However, a significant negative correlation was found between maternal empathy and General Self, $r = -.16$, $p < .04$. No significant correlations were found between paternal empathy and children's self-esteem. Table 3 provides a summary of these relationships.

Table 3.

Correlations between parental empathy and children's self-esteem

	Mat. Emp.	Pat. Emp.	Gen. Self	SSelf-Peers	Home-Par.	School-Acad.	Total Self
Maternal Empathy	1.00 (165)	.17 (107)	-.16* (165)	-.04 (165)	-.08 (165)	-.03 (165)	-.13 (165)
Paternal Empathy		1.00 (117)	.08 (117)	.08 (117)	-.22 (117)	.01 (117)	.06 (117)
General Self			1.00 (410)	.68** (410)	.60** (410)	.66** (410)	.95** (410)
Social Self-Peers				1.00 (410)	.47** (410)	.59** (410)	.80** (410)
Home-Parents					1.00 (410)	.54** (410)	.73** (410)
School-Academic						1.00 (410)	.80** (410)
Total Self							1.00 (410)

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Note. Top number represents correlation; bottom number represents sample size.

Question 2: Are Mothers' Empathy Levels Higher than Fathers' Empathy Levels?

A paired-samples t-test showed that mothers have a significantly higher level of empathy than fathers, $t(106) = 9.8$, $p < .001$. The mean maternal empathy score was 41.34 ($SD = 22.4$) and ranged between -24 and 104. The mean paternal empathy score was 13.01 ($SD = 23.86$) and ranged between -64 and 78 (see Table 4). A Pearson correlation coefficient between maternal and paternal empathy scores was not significant, $r = .17$, $p = .09$. However, the correlation between maternal and paternal empathy for parents of girls only was significant, $r = .30$, $p = .02$.

Table 4.

Means and standard deviations for maternal and paternal empathy

	M	SD	n
Maternal Empathy	41.34	22.40	107
Paternal Empathy	13.01	23.86	107

Question 3: Are there Significant Differences for Self-Esteem in Boys and Girls?

One-way ANOVAs showed significant main effects of gender on the self-esteem levels of boys and girls in the domains of General Self, School-Academic, and Total Self. Girls reported higher self-esteem than boys in three domains, as follows: General Self, $F(1, 408) = 6.05$, $p = .01$, (\underline{M} for girls = 15.99, \underline{M} for boys = 14.87); School-Academic, $F(1, 408) = 4.29$, $p < .04$ (\underline{M} for girls = 6.19, \underline{M} for boys = 5.85); and Total Self, $F(1, 408) = 5.15$, $p = .02$ (\underline{M} for girls = 64.96, \underline{M} for boys = 61.36). Main effects of child gender were not significant for Social Self-Peers, $F(1, 408) = .56$, $p = .45$, or for Home-Parents, $F(1, 408) = 2.38$, $p = .12$. Table 5 provides a summary of all the self-esteem means and standard deviations and Table 6 provides a summary of the F-values for the effect of gender for each of the ANOVAs for each domain of self-esteem. The effect sizes of children's gender on General Self, School-Academic, and Total Self for all 410 children were .24, .21, and .22 respectively (calculated $\underline{M1} - \underline{M2} / \sqrt{(MSE)}$).

Table 5.

Means and standard deviations for girls, boys, and total self-esteem for all domains

Domain (Possible Score)	Girls (<u>n</u> =215)		Boys (<u>n</u> =195)		Total (<u>N</u> =410)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
General Self (26)	15.99	4.72	14.87	4.50	15.45	4.64
Social Self-Peers (8)	5.95	1.56	5.83	1.60	5.89	1.58
Home-Parents (8)	4.36	1.41	4.13	1.53	4.25	1.47
School-Academic (8)	6.19	1.59	5.85	1.70	6.03	1.65
Total Self (100)	64.96	16.03	61.36	16.06	63.25	16.12

Note. The following are the total possible scores for each domain:

Table 6.

F-Values of children's gender for five separate ANOVAs for each domain of self-esteem

Source/Error	df	F
General Self/Error	1, 408	6.05* (21.29)
Social Self-Peers/Error	1, 408	.56 (2.50)
Home-Parents/Error	1, 408	2.38 (2.16)
School-Academic/Error	1, 408	4.29* (2.69)
Total Self/Error	1, 408	5.15* (257.36)

Note. Value enclosed in parentheses represents mean square error.

* $p < .05$.

Question 4: Are the Cross-Sexed Parents' Empathy Levels More Strongly Related to Boys'/Girls' Self-Esteem than the Same-Sexed Parents' Empathy Levels?

Pearson correlation coefficients were used to examine whether the cross-sexed parents' empathy levels are significantly related to boys' and girls' self-esteem levels. No significant correlations were found. Table 7 shows the correlations between boys' and girls' self-esteem and maternal and paternal empathy.

Table 7.

Correlations between self-esteem and maternal and paternal empathy for boys and girls

Self-Esteem Domain	Girls		Boys	
	Maternal Empathy	Paternal Empathy	Maternal Empathy	Paternal Empathy
General Self	-.11	.07	-.17	.09
Social Self-Peers	.03	.07	-.13	.10
Home-Parents	-.12	.05	-.04	-.10
School-Academic	.05	.01	-.15	-.01
Total Self	-.07	.07	-.14	.00

Question 5: Is Annual Household Income Positively Related to Parental Empathy Levels?

A Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationship between mean annual household income and maternal and paternal empathy. Significant relationships were not found between income and maternal empathy, $r = .08$, $p = .33$, and

income and paternal empathy, $r = .00$, $p = .99$ (see Table 8). Additionally, a high/low categorical income variable was created using a mean-split. An ANOVA was used to examine the effect of this categorical income variable on maternal and paternal empathy, and it was found that income had no significant effect on maternal empathy, $F(1, 163) = .886$, $p = .35$, or on paternal empathy, $F(1, 113) = .68$, $p = .41$. These and subsequent analyses were not separated by child gender because gender did not result in significant differences in these variables.

Question 6: Is Annual Household Income Positively Related to Children's Self-Esteem?

Pearson correlation coefficients showed that children's self-esteem is related to annual household income in several domains. Income showed a positive relation with General Self ($r = .16$, $p = .03$), Social Self-Peers ($r = .16$, $p < .04$), School-Academic ($r = .21$, $p = .01$), and Total Self ($r = .20$, $p < .01$). Interestingly, it was also found that General Self was positively related to the number of hours fathers worked ($r = .20$, $p = .03$). The fathers' education level was also related to Social Self-Peers ($r = .22$, $p < .02$), to School-Academic ($r = .23$, $p = .012$), and to Total Self ($r = .20$, $p = .03$). Maternal education and maternal hours worked were not significantly related to any domain of self-esteem. For a summary of Pearson correlations see Table 8.

Additionally, a mean-split was used to change income into a categorical high/low variable, after which ANOVAs were run to examine the effect of income on children's self-esteem. Using this procedure, however, income had a main effect only on General Self, $F(1, 171) = 3.95$, $p < .05$. The effect size of income on General Self was .30 (calculated $M1 - M2 / \sqrt{(MSE)}$). The main effect of income on Total Self was not significant, $F(1, 171) = 3.51$, $p = .06$ (see Table 9).

Table 8.

Correlations between children's self-esteem, household income, and maternal and paternal education, empathy, and hours worked

	Gen. Self	SSelf- Peers	Home- Par.	School Acad.	Total Self	Income	Mat. Work	Mat. Educ.	Mat. Emp.	Pat. Work	Pat. Educ.	Pat. Emp.
General Self	1.00 (410)	.68** (410)	.60** (410)	.66** (410)	.95** (410)	.16* (173)	.05 (164)	.02 (164)	-.16* (165)	.20* (115)	.14 (115)	.08 (117)
Social Self-Peers		1.00 (410)	.47** (410)	.59** (410)	.80** (410)	.16* (173)	.02 (164)	.13 (164)	-.04 (165)	.06 (115)	.22* (115)	.08 (117)
Home-Parents			1.00 (410)	.54** (410)	.73** (410)	.13 (173)	.01 (164)	.05 (164)	-.08 (165)	-.03 (115)	.12 (115)	-.02 (117)
School-Academic				1.00 (410)	.80** (410)	.21** (173)	.13 (164)	.10 (164)	-.03 (165)	.09 (115)	.23* (115)	.01 (117)
Total Self					1.00 (410)	.20** (173)	.06 (164)	.07 (164)	-.13 (165)	.15 (115)	.20* (115)	.06 (117)
Income						1.00 (173)	.09 (164)	.20** (164)	.08 (165)	.17 (114)	.43** (113)	.00 (115)
Mat. Hrs. Worked							1.00 (164)	-.07 (164)	-.02 (164)	-.07 (105)	.01 (104)	-.19 (106)
Maternal Education								1.00 (164)	.05 (164)	-.20* (105)	.37** (104)	-.11 (106)
Maternal Empathy									1.00 (165)	-.04 (106)	.15 (105)	.17 (117)
Pat. Hrs. Worked										1.00 (115)	-.02 (114)	-.05 (115)
Paternal Education											1.00 (115)	.00 (115)
Paternal Empathy												1.00 (117)

*p < .05. **p < .01.

Note. Top number represents correlation; bottom number represents sample size.

Table 9.

F-Values of household income for five separate ANOVAs for each domain of self-esteem

Source/Error	df	F
General Self/Error	1, 171	3.95* (17.00)
Social Self-Peers/Error	1, 171	.95 (1.93)
Home-Parents/Error	1, 171	.85 (2.03)
School-Academic/Error	1, 171	2.58 (2.58)
Total Self/Error	1, 171	3.51 (203.30)

Note. Value enclosed in parentheses represents mean square error.

* $p < .05$.

Question 7: Do Child's Gender, Household Income, and Parental Empathy Account for a Significant Amount of the Variance in Children's Self-Esteem Scores?

A General Linear Model analysis of covariance was used to find the factors that account for a significant proportion of the variance in children's Total Self scores. Child gender, annual household income, maternal empathy, and paternal empathy were included in the model. However, only income proved to be a significant predictor of children's self-esteem, $F(1, 102) = 5.59$, $p = .02$. The effect size of income on self-esteem was .26 (calculated $\frac{M1-M2}{\sqrt{(MSE)}}$). Significant main effects were not found for maternal empathy, $F(1, 102) = 1.58$, $p = .21$, paternal empathy, $F(1, 102) = 1.96$, $p < .17$, or child gender, $F(1, 102) = 1.09$, $p < .30$ (see Table 10). The entire model together accounted for 8.3% of the variance in children's Total Self scores, and income alone accounted for 5.2% of that variance. Other variables, including parental education or number of hours worked, were included in another separate GLM model but this resulted in no significant main effects on Total Self.

Table 10.

Univariate Analysis of Variance for Children's Self-Esteem

Source	df	F
Between Subjects		
Maternal empathy	1	1.58
Paternal empathy	1	1.96
Income	1	5.59*
Child gender	1	1.09
Error	102	(186.02)

Note. Value enclosed in parentheses represents mean square error.

* $p < .05$.

Question 8: Is Parental Age Significantly Related to Parental Empathy?

No significant relationships were found between maternal age and maternal empathy, $r = -.06$, $p = .81$, nor between paternal age and paternal empathy, $r = .11$, $p = .25$ (see Table 11).

Question 9: is Children's Age Significantly Related to Children's Self-Esteem?

Children's age was not significantly related to General Self, Social Self-Peers, School-Academic, and Total Self. However, children's age did show a significant positive relationship with the Home-Parents factor of self-esteem, $r = .13$, $p = .01$ (see Table 11).

Table 11.

Correlations between parental empathy, children's self-esteem, and age

	Mat. Emp.	Pat. Emp.	Gen. Self	SSelf- Peers	Home Par.	Sch.- Acad	Total Self	Mat. Age	Pat. Age	Child Age
Maternal Empathy	1.00 (165)	.17 (107)	-.16* (165)	-.04 (165)	-.08 (165)	-.03 (165)	-.13 (165)	-.06 (163)	-.02 (106)	.04 (164)
Paternal Empathy		1.00 (117)	.08 (117)	.08 (117)	-.22 (117)	.01 (117)	.06 (117)	-.02 (105)	.11 (116)	.17 (117)
General Self			1.00 (410)	.68** (410)	.60** (410)	.66** (410)	.95** (410)	.10 (163)	.02 (116)	-.02 (409)
Social Self- Peers				1.00 (410)	.47** (410)	.59** (410)	.80** (410)	.07 (163)	.01 (116)	-.04 (409)
Home- Parents					1.00 (410)	.54** (410)	.73** (410)	.07 (163)	.14 (116)	.13** (409)
School- Academic						1.00 (410)	.80** (410)	.04 (163)	-.09 (116)	.03 (409)
Total Self							1.00 (410)	.09 (163)	.02 (116)	.01 (409)
Maternal Age								1.00 (163)	.64** (104)	.07 (162)
Paternal Age									1.00 (116)	.10 (116)
Child Age										1.00 (409)

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.Note. Top number represents correlation; bottom number represents sample size.

DISCUSSION

Parental Empathy and Children's Self-Esteem

Although past research has shown that parents' attitudes and behaviors influence children's self-esteem (Burnett & McCrindle, 1999; Blake & Slate, 1993; Crase et al., 1981), little research has examined the relationship between parental empathy and children's self-esteem. Miller (1971) was one of the few researchers who examined the relationship between mothers' empathy and children's self-esteem. Using the Relationship Inventory-B: Parent-toward-Child Form, which examines several variables, of which empathy is one subset, he found that maternal empathy was significantly related to children's self-esteem ($r = .16, p < .05$). The present research sought to expand on his findings utilizing a larger measure of empathy, the QMEE, as well as including a sample of both mothers and fathers. The present research also examined gender and income in addition to empathy and self-esteem.

Parental Empathy and Children's Self-Esteem

Although past research would suggest that parental empathy would be positively related to children's self-esteem, no significant relationships between paternal empathy and the various domains of children's self-esteem were found, and a significant negative relationship was found between maternal empathy and the General Self domain of self-esteem. This result is surprising in light of Miller's (1971) research. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the relationship between maternal empathy and General Self was quite small and further research needs to investigate this finding.

A possible explanation for the discrepant findings between the present research and that of Miller's is that Miller measured only mothers, and he also measured mothers'

empathy levels specifically toward their children rather than toward the general population as the QMEE does. Future researchers should consider creating a valid instrument that specifically examines empathy of parents toward their children rather than toward society at large.

Maternal and Paternal Empathy Levels

The research showed that maternal empathy levels were significantly higher than paternal empathy levels. Past research has similarly reported that female empathy levels ($M = 44$, $SD = 21$) are significantly higher than male empathy levels ($M = 23$, $SD = 22$) (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). Although the mean maternal empathy level in the present research ($M = 41.34$, $SD = 22.40$) resembled that of the females in Mehrabian and Epstein's research, it is interesting to note that the mean paternal empathy level in the present research ($M = 13.01$, $SD = 23.86$) was much lower than the mean reported by Mehrabian and Epstein.

It is also interesting to note that mothers' and fathers' empathy levels were not significantly correlated except when considering only parents of female children participants. For boys and for all children combined, however, a significant relationship between maternal and paternal empathy did not exist. Overall, then, children of mothers with high empathy levels do not necessarily have fathers with high empathy levels and vice versa.

Boys' and Girls' Self-Esteem

It was found that girls' self-esteem levels were significantly higher than boys' self-esteem levels in several domains, specifically General Self, School-Academic, and Total Self. However, although the differences were significant, the effects were somewhat small due to the large sample size. This result does little to clarify past research that has produced

a variety of research findings. While some researchers have shown that girls' self-esteem levels are higher than boys' self-esteem (Gecas, 1971), others have reported that boys' self-esteem is higher (Chubb et al., 1997), or that there is no difference (Miller et al., 1979). As in the present research, reported differences between boys' and girls' self-esteem in either direction generally have been small.

Cross-Sexed vs. Same-Sexed Empathy and Boys' and Girls' Self-Esteem

Past research has been unclear about the relationship between self-esteem, empathy, and parent/child gender. Although few researchers have examined gender and empathy, several have examined similar variables and found that gender has an effect on children's self-esteem or that self-esteem has an influence on how children feel toward their parents. For example, Coopersmith (1967) reported that higher self-esteem boys were more likely to confide in their fathers than in their mothers, suggesting that boys with high self-esteem feel closer emotionally to their fathers than to their mothers. Other researchers similarly have found that children's self-esteem levels are influenced more strongly by parental support from the same-sexed parent (Gecas, 1971; Miller, 1971). However, other studies have shown that children's levels of self-esteem are related more strongly to the perceived support from the cross-sexed parent (Loeb et al., 1980; Richards et al., 1991).

The present research sheds little light on the discrepant research findings of the past. No significant relationships were found between girls' and boys' self-esteem and same- and cross-sexed parental empathy. However, there may be a slightly stronger relationship between both boys' and girls' self-esteem and maternal empathy than with paternal empathy. Nevertheless, the results must be interpreted cautiously as they are not significant.

Income and Parental Empathy

No significant relationships were found between annual household income and paternal and maternal empathy levels. Past research has also been inconclusive about the relationship between income and empathy. Although some research has found a relationship between parental supportiveness and socioeconomic status (Gecas, 1971), research has not found a relationship between income and empathy.

Income and Children's Self-Esteem

Annual household income was significantly related to children's self-esteem in the domains of General Self, Social Self-Peers, School-Academic, and Total Self. Further analyses examining the main effect of income on self-esteem revealed that income had a significant effect only on General Self. This is consistent with past research by Rosenberg (1989), who reported that higher social class students had higher self-esteem levels than lower social class students. The present research also found that fathers' education level was significantly related to the domain of General Self and that the number of hours the father worked weekly was related to children's self-esteem in the domains of Social Self-Peers, School-Academic, and Total Self. These relationships are not surprising given that education, hours worked, and income are generally related. These findings may suggest that a father's stereotypical role of "breadwinner" may be important for children's sense of self. Nevertheless, the relationships between these variables are relatively small and certainly not causal, so results must be interpreted cautiously.

The Effect of Gender, Income, and Empathy on Children's Self-Esteem

The present research examined whether child gender, income, and maternal and paternal empathy each would account for a significant amount of the variance in children's

Total Self scores. It was found, however, that income was the only variable that was a significant predictor of children's self-esteem. However, income accounted for only 5.2% of the variance in self-esteem scores, suggesting that income has a relatively small effect on children's self-esteem.

Age, Empathy, and Self-Esteem

No significant relationships were found between parental age and parental empathy. Age also was not significantly related to children's General Self, Social Self-Peers, School-Academic, and Total Self scores. However, surprisingly, children's age showed a significant positive relationship with the Home-Parents domain of self-esteem. This result might suggest that older middle-school children have a higher level of self-esteem in areas relating to home and family. This is logical because many parents provide children with increased independence as they get older, perhaps resulting in a higher level of self-esteem.

Limitations

Some limitations concerning the present research should be mentioned. First, the present research is limited by self-report data. Although questionnaires may be one means of obtaining information about self-esteem and empathy, the data may not be completely valid. Not only might children and parents tend to respond in socially desirable ways, but there may have been a difference between the parents who did and did not return their questionnaires. Nevertheless, this effect would be difficult to examine. Other forms of measurement, such as observation or interviews, in addition to questionnaires, may provide greater insight into the relationships between empathy and self-esteem.

Another limitation is that empathy and self-esteem were measured at only one time and at only one point in the children's development. Although age had little effect on

empathy and self-esteem, the current research did not analyze a broad enough age range to examine parental and child age influences validly. Also, the participants in the present research were a predominantly white, midwestern sample. Such a sample does not provide results that are generalizable to the entire United States population.

Finally, the present research was limited to parental empathy toward society as a whole rather than toward their children specifically. The QMEE, although a strong, valid measure of empathy, may not be valid internally for analyzing parents' empathy levels toward their children.

Implications for Future Research

In the future, researchers might do well to create a measure of parents' empathy toward their children with greater face validity. Such a measurement might result in significant relationships between parental empathy and children's self-esteem. Future research also might examine the relationship between parental empathy and children's self-esteem better by utilizing observer-report or interview methods. Such methods of triangulation would lead to much higher levels of internal validity.

Research also should examine whether parental empathy is related more closely to children's self-esteem across the child's development. It is likely that self-esteem and parental empathy change over time and that the relationship between these two variables might be different for younger and older children.

Finally, researchers also need to examine the relationships between parental empathy, parental warmth, communication, and other similar variables. Parental empathy is closely related to several variables that have been shown to be related to self-esteem, including parental warmth (Sears, 1970; Paulson et al., 1991), communication (Burnett &

McCrindle, 1999), and support (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986). Research examining these variables simultaneously would enable us to understand more effectively the interrelationships between these factors and how they each influence children's self-esteem.

Summary

The present research found that a) paternal empathy levels are not significantly related to children's self-esteem; maternal empathy levels are not significantly related to children's self-esteem except for a negative relationship between maternal empathy and General Self, b) mothers have higher empathy levels than fathers, c) girls have higher self-esteem than boys in several domains, d) no significant differences exist in the relationship between cross-sexed and same-sexed parents and boys' and girls' self-esteem, e) income is not significantly related to parental empathy, f) income is significantly related to children's self-esteem in several domains, g) income is the only significant predictor of children's self-esteem, f) parental age is not significantly related to parental empathy, and g) children's age is not significantly related to children's self-esteem except for the domain of Home-Parents.

This research specifically did not support symbolic interaction theory, which suggests that parents' attitudes and behaviors influence children's self-esteem. Nevertheless, symbolic interaction theory has been supported in the past (Burnett, 1996). Furthermore, although the present research did not support the hypothesis that maternal and paternal empathy levels are significantly related to children's self-esteem, it does not necessarily stand that parental empathy has no effect on children's self-esteem. Future research needs to examine empathy and self-esteem by using instruments that measure parental empathy specifically toward the child, by utilizing a larger variety of methods, and by analyzing several related variables simultaneously.

APPENDIX A
THE COOPERSMITH SELF-ESTEEM INVENTORY (SEI)

Questionnaire for 5th and 6th Grade Children

Please circle each statement in the following way:

If the statement describes how you usually feel, circle “*Like Me.*”

If the statement does not describe how you usually feel, circle “*Unlike Me.*”

There are no right or wrong answers.

- | | | |
|---|----------------|------------------|
| 1. I spend a lot of time daydreaming. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 2. I'm pretty sure of myself. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 3. I often wish I were someone else. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 4. I'm easy to like. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 5. My parents and I have a lot of fun together. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 6. I never worry about anything. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 7. I find it very hard to talk in front of the class. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 8. I wish I were younger. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 9. There are lots of things about myself I'd change if I could. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 10. I can make up my mind without too much trouble. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 11. I'm a lot of fun to be with. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 12. I get upset easily at home. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 13. I always do the right thing. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 14. I'm proud of my school work. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 15. Someone always has to tell me what to do. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 16. It takes me a long time to get used to anything new. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 17. I'm often sorry for the things I do. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 18. I'm popular with kids my own age. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |
| 19. My parents usually consider my feelings. | <i>Like Me</i> | <i>Unlike Me</i> |

20. I'm never unhappy.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
21. I'm doing the best work that I can.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
22. I give in very easily.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
23. I can usually take care of myself.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
24. I'm pretty happy.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
25. I would rather play with children younger than me.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
26. My parents expect too much of me.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
27. I like everyone I know.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
28. I like to be called on in class.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
29. I understand myself.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
30. It's pretty tough to be me.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
31. Things are all mixed up in my life.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
32. Kids usually follow my ideas.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
33. No one pays much attention to me at home.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
34. I never get scolded.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
35. I'm not doing as well in school as I'd like to.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
36. I can make up my mind and stick to it.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
37. I really don't like being a boy—girl.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
38. I have a low opinion of myself.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
39. I don't like to be with other people.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
40. There are many times when I'd like to leave home.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
41. I'm never shy.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>

42. I often feel upset in school.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
43. I often feel ashamed of myself.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
44. I'm not as nice looking as most people.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
45. If I have something to say, I usually say it.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
46. Kids pick on me very often.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
47. My parents understand me.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
48. I always tell the truth.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
49. My teacher makes me feel I'm not good enough.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
50. I don't care what happens to me.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
51. I'm a failure.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
52. I get upset easily when I'm scolded.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
53. Most people are better like than I am.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
54. I usually feel as if my parents are pushing me.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
55. I always know what to say to people.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
56. I often get discouraged in school.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
57. Things usually don't bother me.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>
58. I can't be depended on.	<i>Like Me</i>	<i>Unlike Me</i>

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE MEASURE OF EMOTIONAL EMPATHY (QMEE)

Questionnaire for Parents

These questions are about you. We'd like to know how you feel about different situations.

Read each of the following statements and circle the choice that best describes how you feel about each particular situation. Your choices are:

- 4 = **very strongly disagree**
- 3 = **strongly disagree**
- 2 = **disagree**
- 1 = **somewhat disagree**
- 0 = **unsure**
- + 1 = **somewhat agree**
- + 2 = **agree**
- + 3 = **strongly agree**
- + 4 = **very strongly agree**

1. It makes me sad to see a lonely stranger in a group.
 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4
2. People make too much of the feelings and sensitivity of animals.
 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4
3. I often find public displays of affection annoying.
 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4
4. I am annoyed by unhappy people who just feel sorry for themselves.
 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4
5. I become nervous if others around me seem to be nervous.
 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4
6. I find it silly for people to cry out of happiness.
 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4
7. I tend to get emotionally involved with a friend's problems.
 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4
8. Sometimes the words of a love song can move me deeply.
 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4
9. I tend to lose control when I am bringing bad news to people.
 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4
10. The people around me have a great influence on my moods.
 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

- 4 = **very strongly disagree**
 - 3 = **strongly disagree**
 - 2 = **disagree**
 - 1 = **somewhat disagree**
 0 = **unsure**
 + 1 = **somewhat agree**
 + 2 = **agree**
 + 3 = **strongly agree**
 + 4 = **very strongly agree**

11. Most foreigners I have met seemed cool and unemotional.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

12. I would rather be a social worker than work in a job training center.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

13. I don't get upset just because a friend is acting upset.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

14. I like to watch people open presents.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

15. Lonely people are probably unfriendly.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

16. Seeing people cry upsets me.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

17. Some songs make me happy.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

18. I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

19. I get very angry when I see someone being treated badly.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

20. I am able to remain calm even though those around me worry.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

21. When a friend starts to talk about his problems, I try to steer the conversation to something else.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

22. Another person's laughter makes me feel like laughing.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

- 4 = **very strongly disagree**
- 3 = **strongly disagree**
- 2 = **disagree**
- 1 = **somewhat disagree**
- 0 = **unsure**
- + 1 = **somewhat agree**
- + 2 = **agree**
- + 3 = **strongly agree**
- + 4 = **very strongly agree**

23. Sometimes at the movies I am amused by the amount of crying and sniffing around me.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

24. I am able to make decisions without being influenced by people's feelings.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

25. I cannot continue to feel OK if people around me are depressed.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

26. It is hard for me to see how some things upset people so much.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

27. I am very upset when I see an animal in pain.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

28. Becoming involved in books or movies is a little silly.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

29. It upsets me (makes me sad) to see helpless old people.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

30. I become more irritated than sympathetic when I see someone's tears.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

31. I become very involved when I watch a movie.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

32. I often find that I can remain cool in spite of the excitement around me.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

33. Little children sometimes cry for no apparent reason.

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

APPENDIX C
CHILD DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions honestly. If you have any questions, please ask your teacher or another adult in the room.

1. I am a ☐ girl
☐ boy
2. How old are you? _____

3. Choose all that apply.

I am:

- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ African-American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Other (please explain): _____

APPENDIX D
PARENT DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions.

1. What is your age in years? _____
2. What is your gender?
____ male
____ female
3. What is your ethnicity? (Choose all that apply).
____ African American
____ Asian American
____ Caucasian
____ Hispanic
____ Native American
____ Other (please specify): _____
4. What is your current marital status?
____ single
____ married
____ divorced
____ separated
____ widowed
____ other (please specify): _____
5. How many children (adopted or biological) do you have?
____ boys
____ girls
6. Have you lived with your children since birth?
____ yes
____ no (If no, how long? _____)

7. What is the estimated yearly (annual) earned income for your entire household in the calendar year 1999? (Please include all sources of income in your estimation.)

☐ \$0 to \$9,000
☐ \$10,000 to \$19,000
☐ \$20,000 to \$29,000
☐ \$30,000 to \$39,000
☐ \$40,000 to \$49,000
☐ \$50,000 to \$59,000
☐ \$60,000 to \$69,000
☐ \$70,000 to \$79,000
☐ \$80,000 to \$89,000
☐ \$90,000 to \$99,000
☐ \$100,000 or over

7. How many hours do you work out of the home each week?

☐ 0-5
☐ 6-15
☐ 16-25
☐ 26-35
☐ 36-45
☐ 46 or more

8. What is your highest level of education?

☐ some high school
☐ GED
☐ high school diploma
☐ some college
☐ 2-year college degree
☐ 4-year college degree
☐ some grad school
☐ Master's degree
☐ Ph.D. degree
☐ Other (please explain): _____

APPENDIX E
PARENT LETTER

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

College of Family and Consumer Sciences
Department of Human Development
and Family Studies
4380 Palmer Building, Room 2330
Ames, Iowa 50011-4380
515 294-6316
FAX 515 294-2502
<http://www.fcs.iastate.edu/hdfs>

Date _____

Dear Parents:

I am a graduate student in Human Development and Family Studies at Iowa State University currently working on my Master's thesis under the guidance of Dr. Sedahlia Jasper Crase. I am concerned with how children view themselves and how interactions between parents and children influence family relationships. To learn more about these interactions, I will be administering questionnaires to children and their parents.

I have spoken with (name), the principal, and he and your child's homeroom teacher have agreed to let me use 20 minutes to administer a questionnaire to the children in the class. The questionnaire will measure how your child views himself or herself, specifically in areas such as school, home, and friends. Your child will be free to choose whether or not he or she wants to complete the questionnaire. Your child's name will not be on the questionnaire and all responses will be completely anonymous.

In addition, enclosed with this letter is a brief parent questionnaire requiring about 10 minutes from each of you. Once completed, each questionnaire should be placed in the provided stamped, return-addressed envelope and sent to me at Iowa State. Parents' responses will also be completely anonymous. All questionnaires will be coded and no information from either the children's or parents' questionnaires will be considered on an individual basis. Following the study, all questionnaires will be destroyed. All parents completing and returning their questionnaires by October 20, 2000 will be pooled in a drawing for a \$25.00 gift certificate at a local grocery store.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have concerning this project. Feel free to call me at home (572-4612), at my office (294-3042), or email me (jriday@iastate.edu). Should you not want your child to participate, please sign and return the attached form to your child's homeroom teacher by _____.

Approved by:

Sincerely,

Sedahlia Jasper Crase, Ph.D.
Major Professor

Jennifer D. Riday, B.A.
Master's Student

_____ I do not want my child to participate.

Name of child _____
Parent Signature _____ Date _____

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jennifer Dawn Riday was born January 9, 1975 in Atlantic, Iowa. She received the Bachelor of Fine Arts from Grinnell College in 1993 with a major in Psychology. She was awarded a PACE Scholarship, the Damaris Pease Scholarship, and the Alice Ford Scholarship at Iowa State University. Jennifer is a member of Phi Kappa Phi, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences. She has served as a teaching assistant in the Iowa State University Child Development Laboratory School, working in the kindergarten and older children's laboratory programs.