

**Brutsaert, H. (1990, January, 1). Changing sources of self-esteem among girls and boys in urban education. *Education Journal*, 24 (i), 432-439.**

**OVERVIEW**

Brutsaert, over the past ten years, has conducted longitudinal studies in different western countries. The studies explore some of the reasons an urban adolescent girl's self-esteem is effected negatively during early and middle adolescence.

**DESIGN**

The present analysis was developed as a research project regarding the influence of educational innovations in Belgium upon pupil behavior (Brutsaert, 1986). The data was collected from students attending private single-sex high schools (two girls and two boys), that had comparable student population and curriculum characteristics. There were 162 boys and 196 girls interviewed at three different points in their secondary school career: in their first year, at ages 12-13 (1979-1980); in their third year, at ages 14-15 (1981-1982); and in their fifth year, at ages 16-17 (1983-1984).

**FINDINGS**

Several findings were discovered through this study. In this review, the only data considered are from the first year (ages 12-13), and the third year, (ages 14-15):

- During early adolescence, a girl's self-esteem will become more dependent upon the extent of emotional support they get from significant others.
- During a young girl's early adolescence, they are much more dependent upon emotional support: the higher the perceived support from the parents, the more likely the girls scored high on self-esteem.

**CONCLUSIONS**

- Adolescent girls begin to realize that traits valued in males are accorded higher status than those valued in females; they perceive themselves as receiving less favorable appraisals from others (Rosenkrant et al., 1968; Simmons and Rosenberg, 1975). Therefore, girls are not content with their sex role, and they develop a less positive attitude toward being female (Musa and Roach, 1973) and a lowered sense of self-esteem.
- Early adolescence implies a transition into biological maturity and the drawing of sharper lines between the roles of boys and girls. Independent and reciprocal influences between both processes result in a striving for acceptance among girls (Gordon, 1976).
- Parents do have a positive effect on early urban adolescent girls' self-esteem. Self-esteem can be tied to achievement. Female school teachers can join parents in being role models for these adolescent girls whenever possible.

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

- How important is a female role model in the life of an urban adolescent girl? How important is a male role model? What about a married couple?
- What would be the importance of teaching a parent or parents their role in building their urban adolescent daughter's self-esteem?
- What is a youth worker's role when the parent or parents are not giving positive support to their daughter? How can a youth worker fill in where the parents are lacking?

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The self-esteem of early adolescent urban girls depends strongly on parental support and the emotional support of others around her, whether it be parents, teachers, or youth leaders. Youth leaders can powerfully influence an urban adolescent girl's life, so that she can grow into a young woman who can feel good about herself and build healthy relationships.

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