Selected factors in assessment of a group designated as school malperformers

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This project was an exploratory study of malperformance among 60 children of the seventh grade of Creston Elementary School, Portland, Oregon. This class was described as an unusually disruptive group of students and was considered by the school as one of the most troublesome in the school's history. The study focused on the concept of malperformance itself and the reliability of its assessment. The major hypotheses were these:

A. Teachers are consistent among themselves in how they define malperformance and in whom they designate as malperformers.

B. Teachers' and students' estimation of the students' level of performance in the dimensions studied are positively related.

C. A student's self-estimate in the dimensions studied is related to his estimation of the teachers' reactions to himself and other classmates.
D. The label of malperformer is associated with lower ratings of personal behavior and school subject grades.

E. Factors of sex, age, and I.Q. are related to malperformance.

Each teacher was asked to define malperformance and to identify malperforming students in his class. Each student was asked if he felt the teachers liked him and if they were fair. The Pupil Behavior Inventory, a standardized rating scale dealing with five areas of student behavior, was administered to the teachers. A modified form of the Pupil Behavior Inventory was administered to each student to determine his assessment of his own behavior. Data was analyzed with the help of statistical tests of significance to evaluate the differences obtained.

Study findings did not support the hypothesis that teachers are consistent among themselves in how they defined malperformance and which students they designated as malperformers. Each teacher defined malperformance differently. Some definitions were difficult to interpret in terms of specific behavior traits. There was only 53% marginal probability that another teacher would agree when a particular teacher designated a student as a malperformer. However, there was no significant difference in the number of students designated as malperformers by each teacher.

Findings yielded evidence to support the hypothesis that there
is a positive relationship between the teachers' estimation of the level of the students' performance and the students' own assessment of his performance. Students designated as normals rated their own behavior very close to teacher ratings. In contrast, malperformers tended to rate their behavior much higher than did the teachers; however, malperformer self-ratings were lower than self-ratings of the other students.

Malperformers had lower personal behavior and school subject grades than normals. No significant differences were found in the I.Q. range for normals and malperformers.

This study indicated the need for more clarity and consistency in evaluating student behavior within the school system. Further research is needed in developing methods of identifying problem students and how to best help them.
SELECTED FACTORS IN ASSESSMENT OF A GROUP DESIGNATED AS SCHOOL MALPERFORMERS

by

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A GROUP PROJECT
submitted to
PORTLAND STATE COLLEGE

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

June 1968
APPROVED:

Associate Professor of Social Work

Dean, School of Social Work

Dean of Graduate Studies

Date thesis is presented March 1, 1968

Typed by Illa W. Atwood
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Creston Elementary School, Portland Public Schools, Oregon, had been concerned for several years about an unusually disruptive class of children which was considered by the school as the most troublesome class in the school's history. In the Spring of 1967 these students were in the seventh grade. All 38 boys in a class of 62 boys and girls combined were considered to be malperformers, many since kindergarten and primary grades. All but two of these children were Caucasian. The 38 boys were described as demonstrating underachieving, apathetic, immature, and, in some instances, delinquent behavior. They were also described as dependent, and very competitive among themselves, and apparently did not operate as a gang. The neighborhood in which the children lived was described as middle-class, but undergoing transition to lower class. The parents of these malperformers were perceived as being generally uninterested in their children's school behavior.

In the Spring of 1967, the principal of Creston Elementary
School approached the School of Social Work, Portland State College, for possible help in dealing with these children. A program was worked out for a research exploratory study to be conducted by four social work students. They were to study what influences were impinging on these boys that might have a relationship to their disruptive behavior. These graduate students were also to be placed in Creston School for their field work assignment, to work with the malperforming children. The study was arranged to test the children before and after social work services were provided, in order to test the effectiveness of the services.

This original research program was disrupted. The School Social Work Office of the Portland Public Schools could not provide supervision for the field placement due to a severe budget cut. As a result of the elimination of the student field work assignment at Creston School, the purpose of the study was reformulated as described in the following section.

**Purpose and General Approach**

The present study was an exploratory study of malperformance among the students of the 7th grade of Creston Elementary School, during Spring, 1967. The sample studied constituted 97% of the class at the cut-off date.

Malperformance is a complex and confusing concept. It is
difficult to identify the phenomena to which the concept relates. The term does not apply to an objective fact but, rather, is relative to the setting, the time, and the perceiver. Because of the difficulty in understanding what is meant when a child is designated as a school malperformer (or problem-child, behavior problem, misbehaver), the research group saw a need for a standardized way of measuring just what behavior was being manifested by the 7th grade students at Creston School.

The main purpose of this study was to determine the nature, extent, and degree of the malperformance in this group.

Another major purpose of this study was to explore relevant variables and to derive hypotheses for further investigation.

An attempt was made to determine the similarities and differences among the teachers in judging student behavior; to determine the similarities and differences between the students' views of their own behavior and the teachers' views of the students' behavior; and to discover if these similarities and differences were related to malperformance.

A standardized rating scale dealing with five areas of behavior (classroom conduct, academic motivation and performance, socio-emotional state, teacher dependence, and personal behavior) was administered to the teachers. A modified form of this rating scale was administered to each student to see how he rated his own
behavior. Also, each teacher was asked to define "malperformance" and to identify the malperforming students in his class. Results were analyzed and statistical tests of significance were used in evaluating differences obtained.

Background data on age, I.Q., behavior grades, and subject grades were gathered as possible associated factors.

Although it was recognized that innumerable and complex factors are involved in influencing behavior, the study of this group of children was limited to information related to, and obtained within the school setting.

Theory and Hypotheses

The study focus was guided by the general theoretical framework of Vinter and Sarri as expressed in their article, "Malperformance in the Public School: A Group Work Approach" (1). They make three important and basic points:

a. Standards for academic achievement and for desirable conduct vary among schools and even within the same school. These variations mean that such types of malperformance as underachievement, classroom misconduct, and failure to adjust are not identically defined since different standards and judgments are used.

b. Schools differ in regard to curricula, resources, teacher competencies, student bodies and school organization. This makes
for a wide variety in student learning environments, in opportunities for achievement or adjustment, and in conditions that shape the meaning of the school experience.

c. There are significant differences among schools with regard to their procedures for identifying and coping with student malperformance.

Malperformance should be viewed as resulting from the interaction of both student characteristics and school conditions. Malperformance does not inhere primarily in the attributes of pupils. Vinter and Sarri point out that once a student has been identified as an underachiever or as disruptive, this social recognition may significantly affect his public identity, his self-image, and his motivation to achieve. Such identification has important implications for how the student is subsequently dealt with by the school and for how his school career is shaped.

The hypotheses for the present study were formulated in conformance to the above theoretical framework. The guiding hypotheses of the present study were:

a. Teachers are consistent among themselves in regard to how they define "malperformance" and whom they choose as malperformers.

b. Teachers' and students' estimations of the students' level of performance in the dimensions studied are positively related.
c. A student's self-estimate in the dimensions studied is influenced by his estimation of the teachers' reactions to himself and to other classmates.

d. The label of "malperformer" is associated with lower ratings of personal behavior and subject grades.

e. Factors of age, I.Q., and sex are related to malperformance.

Because this was an exploratory study these hypotheses were subject to modification as new hypotheses emerged.

This type of study is important to the field of Social Work for several reasons: (a) Social workers in the school setting frequently work directly with the child who is considered to be a malperformer. (b) Social workers are increasingly called in as consultants to teachers and principals who are struggling to understand and deal with malperformers in their schools and classes. (c) Even in settings outside of the school, social workers deal with children whose problems are integrally related to school. (d) Social workers staff children's institutions and clinics where there is need for new knowledge about child behavior. (e) Social Work cannot be effective without reliable information about the people and institutions with which it is concerned.
Review of the Literature

The literature was explored especially for studies having to do with self-perception and self-concept and their relation to malperformance in the school setting. Most of these studies concluded that there was a relationship. Few, however, pointed to a simple causal relationship between the variables of self-perception or self-concept and malperformance. It should also be noted that the definitions of self-perception and self-concept varied with each study. The following review is not a full chronological or topical report of the literature covered but, rather, is limited to that most pertinent for this study.

Increased attention has been paid in recent years to the relationship between children's self-perception and their behavior and achievement in school. Wickman's study in 1928 was one of the first (2). He concluded that by counter-attacking the aggressive kinds of problem behavior which children present and by indulging the withdrawing types, the teacher further complicates and reinforces the undesirable expressions of social behavior. He pointed out the danger of a child identifying himself with his misconduct to the point where he no longer has confidence in his ability to meet the standards of behavior set for him.

Davidson and Lang concluded that (a) children's perceptions
of their teachers' feelings about them correlated positively and significantly with self-perception. (b) The more positive the children's perceptions of teachers' feelings, the better was their academic achievement. (c) Girls perceived their teachers' feelings towards them as more favorable than the boys did (3).

Studies by R. M. Roth (4), by Bruck and Bodwin (5), and by Fink (6), all found significant relationships between adequacy of self-concept and level of academic achievement. Fink found this relationship to be unquestionable for boys, considerably less certain for girls.

Brookover, Paterson, and Thomas, in a study devoted to the identification of students' self-concepts as learners in relation to their school achievement, concluded that there was a positive relationship (7). They also found that: 7th grade girls have significantly higher mean self-concept of ability than 7th grade boys; self-concept of ability is significantly related to the school achievement of 7th grade girls and boys; a student's self-concept of ability is positively related to the image he perceives significant others hold of him when parents, teachers, and peers are identified as significant others.

Malpass found a significant positive relationship between grades and how students view such specifics as teachers, discipline, school work, and peers, as well as a generalized concept of school (8).
Taylor and Combs attempted to demonstrate a relationship between the ability of a child to accept threatening statements about himself, and his adjustment (9). The better-adjusted group (as determined by scores on the California Test of Personality) checked significantly more items than did the poorer-adjusted group.

In a study by Yourman it was found that children identified as "problems" and who change teachers at the end of the term have twice the chance of being considered well-adjusted and less than half the chance of continuing as very serious "problems" the next term when given a different teacher (10). He concluded that the judgment of the teacher is vital to the actual adjustment of the child.

Torch, in her study, stated,

The pattern that emerged on the deviancy schema implies that perceiving oneself as others do, even if that perception is negative to one's self-esteem, produces a situation which has less damaging consequences for the individual than does a difference in perception of the individual's behavior by self and others. The perception of the deviancy by self and significant others should be thoroughly investigated (11).

This study, it should be noted, is not conclusive but it does demonstrate the complexities involved in the relationships between behavior and self-perception.

Vinter and Sarri, in presenting preliminary findings for their study, go beyond establishing a relationship between the variables of self-perception and behavior and spell out some of the processes
by which they have observed children to become more ingrained in malperforming patterns (12). This involves an interaction between student characteristics and teacher characteristics. It should be noted that these are observations obtained as a result of intensive group work services with school malperformers.

Many more studies have been conducted regarding the concepts of self-concept and self-perception. Ruth Wylie's book, *The Self-Concept*, includes an extensive bibliography of studies relating to these concepts (13).

The literature was also explored for studies of other relevant variables related to school behavior and achievement.

A study concerned with differences between boys and girls in the school setting tested students' perceptions regarding who received teachers' approval and disapproval. The results indicated that boys received more disapproval from teachers than girls. Meyer and Thompson concluded that teachers try to "socialize" the boys by means of dominating counter-aggressive behavior (14).

Peck observed that more boys than girls were reported as maladjusted in a ratio of 2 to 1 and fewer problems were necessary to cause a girl to be regarded as maladjusted (15).

Whittier found that in all of the subjects but reading comprehension and arithmetic reasoning, the majority of the efficient achievers were girls. He concluded, also, that inefficient achievers
were more self-accepting than the efficient achievers (16).

In an extensive developmental study of normal children, Macfarlane, Allen, and Honzik concluded that 27% of the normal boys "excessively demanded attention" at age 4. At ages 8, 9, and 10 they showed percentages of 22%, 23%, and 26% respectively. There was a significant difference at the 1% level of confidence between the sexes at 11 years when the boys stood at 18% and the girls at zero (17).

Baum's study dealing with age of entrance to school concluded that early entrance to school for boys resulted in their remaining behind the class all the way through elementary school, whereas this made little or no difference with girls who started to school at an early age (18).

The results and conclusions of the various studies reviewed lend support to the theoretical framework of Vinter and Sarri which holds that malperformance should be viewed as resulting from the interaction of both student characteristics and school conditions. The present study attempted to explore some of these student characteristics and school conditions, placing special emphasis on the judgments of the teachers and students about student behavior and the relationship between these judgments.
Chapter Notes


2. Wickman, E. K., Children's Behavior and Teachers' Attitudes (New York: The Commonwealth Fund, 1928). Many studies have been made since then in reaction to Wickman's conclusions that teachers were unable to properly identify serious problems but concentrated more on behavior disturbing to the classroom situation. Among these are the following:


12. Vinter and Sarri, op. cit.


CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Definitions

The terms used throughout the following chapters are defined at this point in order to avoid the confusion of repetition and lengthy descriptive phrases.

Class refers to the 60 students who were the subjects of this study. It includes two homerooms that comprised the entire seventh grade at Creston School in the Spring of 1967.

Malperformance refers to a judgment made by school personnel that certain pupil behavior does not meet the standards of the school or of the individual teacher.

Malperformer refers to a student designated by one or more teachers as a student who did not meet the standards of the teacher. The teacher selected the student as a malperformer by checking his name on a list of the students.

Normal refers to a student not checked by a teacher as a malperformer on the student check list.

Malperforming group refers to those students whom a majority of teachers designated as malperformers.

Normal group refers to those students whom a majority of
teachers did not designate as malperformers.

Standard PBI refers to the Pupil Behavior Inventory developed by Vinter and Sarri for teachers to use in rating student behavior (1). (See appendix.) Standard PBI may also refer to scores obtained from the use of the instrument.

Modified PBI refers to the altered form and procedures of the Standard PBI used to obtain student self-ratings of their own behavior. This alteration of the Standard PBI to produce the Modified PBI is explained in detail below. The term Modified PBI may also refer to the scores obtained from the use of this test.

Dimension refers to any one of the five categories of pupil behavior of the Standard PBI and Modified PBI. These five dimensions were: classroom conduct, academic motivation and performance, socio-emotional state, teacher dependence, and personal behavior.

Item refers to one of the 34 behaviors listed on the PBI.

Designing and Planning

In the beginning phase of the research project many questions were raised by the study group for possible exploration. These questions were related to the areas of student characteristics, peer relationships, the school setting, family characteristics and relationships, and socio-economic factors. All these factors could be considered
important in influencing student behavior. However, two broad areas requiring separate inquiry became apparent: (a) the factors outside the school system which were affecting these students, and (b) the relationship of the school setting to student behavior.

One of the influencing factors outside the school system that was considered for study was peer relationships. What did the students do after school and at night? To what membership groups did the students belong? With whom did the students participate in activities outside the school?

A second factor outside the school system considered for exploration was the home environment. What were the characteristics of the neighborhood? How permanent were the families in the community? What were the social and economic characteristics of the families? What were the parental attitudes toward and expectations of the students and the school? What value did parents place upon education? What responsibilities did the students have at home?

A third factor of concern outside the school system was the personal characteristics of the students: age, sex, I.Q., and level of maturity.

In the school system one area of influence on student behavior would be the classroom. Significant factors to be studied might be: the student social system, group cohesion, leadership, peer relationships, class spirit, and class values.
Second, the study group raised the question: Had there been any changes in the school system, such as curriculum or teachers, which might have had an adverse effect on this particular class?

A third factor in the school system considered for exploration was in the area of malperformance as observed by the teachers. What disturbing behavior did the students exhibit? What was the degree of malperformance? Did all the students demonstrate this behavior to the same degree? Were the teachers consistent in whom they chose as malperformers? Did the students see their performance and behavior in the same way that the teachers saw them? What guidelines were used for designating a student as a malperformer? Were the expectations of behavior communicated to the students, and was there a corresponding relationship to malperformance?

An initial objective of the study group was to explore what manifested behavior was perceived as malperformance and if there were any influential factors or traits.

While the objective of the study was to focus on the behavior of the students, it became evident that before this could be done, a knowledge was needed of the criteria used for judging malperformance and how these operated in the school system.

The literature on performance in the classroom and conceptions of malperformance led the study group to explore what effect
the self-conception of a student had on his behavior and performance and in what manner behavior and performance influenced the student's conception of how others perceived him in certain school relationships. To test this question, the study group formulated the hypothesis that the estimations by the teachers and by the students of the level of performance of the students are positively correlated. Psychological studies had shown that students tend to perform according to the expectations of the significant persons in their lives. Teachers have been shown through studies to be significant persons. Therefore, since the school system had described this particular class as malperformers, it would be expected that the students would tend to see themselves as their teachers saw them.

The corresponding hypothesis asserted that self-estimate by the student of his own behavior and performance is related to his estimation of the reaction of the teachers to himself and to other classmates. In the original plan not only reactions of teachers, but those of other significant persons were to have been explored.

There appeared to be general acceptance that this was a group of malperforming boys. Stated hypothetically, teachers are consistent among themselves in how they define malperformance, and whom they choose as malperformers.

It would be expected according to the fifth hypothesis, that the malperformers would be associated with lower ratings of personal
behavior and grades in school subjects.

Previous studies indicated that age, sex, I.Q., mobility, and attendance were significant variables in evaluating school performance. Accordingly, other hypotheses were formulated and explored with indices but not in detail: (a) earlier maturation and culturally influenced perceptions of girls will tend to produce a lower rating of malperformance in comparison with boys in the same grade; (b) younger children will be seen as more dependent and hence will be rated in greater proportion as malperformers; (c) malperformers will be associated with poor attendance records; (d) malperformance of students will be related to expectations based upon I.Q. scores.

An objective view of the class and a way to measure the nature of malperformance of the students were needed and an instrument to measure similarities and differences among the teachers in judging malperformance.

Therefore, related to the review of existing studies to determine what factors had been considered relevant to malperformance by other researchers, a search was made for a validated instrument that would provide a measure of current student behavior and would measure any changes that had occurred as a result of social work services. The PBI instrument was selected because it was judged to be sensitive in comparing staff perceptions of student behavior and performance and in measuring the effect of professional
services to malperforming students.

Vinter and Sarri state that: "This standardized form elicited observational information about classroom performance and behavioral patterns and was validated for use as a sensitive indicator of change"(2).

The PBI was developed by Vinter and Sarri in connection with the Neighborhood Service Organization and five public schools in Detroit, Michigan. The PBI began with 1,000 types of pupil behavior suggested by professional practitioners and teachers. It was reduced to 65 items which could be evaluated from the observations of teachers. The 65 items and a five-point scale, used for rating purposes, were refined after field test in the schools. The material was analyzed statistically to determine the general criteria used by the teachers for rating classroom behavior. Also, the items were organized according to a scheme that would be consistent with the teachers' perception of the classroom situation. Three factor analyses were made from which were derived the five PBI dimensions. The number of items was further reduced to 34, with improved efficiency of the measuring device. Other statistical analyses supported the claims of reliability and validity of the instrument (3). A copy of the PBI is included in the appendix.

The PBI was prepared for elementary and secondary school personnel for a systematic evaluation of judgments by teachers of
classroom behavior among malperforming pupils utilizing five dimensions of behavior which the teacher can observe. The first dimension, "classroom conduct," contains twelve items of student behavior between the student and peers and the student and teacher. This measures the adaptability of the student for classroom management. The second dimension, "academic motivation and performance," has nine items centered on the motivation toward and performance of academic tasks by the student. The third dimension, "socio-emotional state," having five items, focuses on emotional and social well being, the latter referring primarily to relations with peers. Dimension four, "teacher dependence," has two items for measuring the need of the student for teacher reassurance. Dimension five, "personal behavior," has six items for measuring the conformity of the student to community standards and values.

The original plan of the study called for a comparison of the self-concept of behavior and performance of the students before and after social work services. It was desirable to use the same instrument in testing the children. Since the PBI was designed for teachers, it was necessary to use language understandable to the children in a modified version. It was desired that the students and teachers would respond to each item of behavior with the same understanding of the intent of the statement. This was accomplished in modifying the PBI through pre-testing described below. A copy of the Modified
A tentative questionnaire to be administered to the students was developed, based on studies of students in junior high school. Thirty-six influential factors on school performance were incorporated in the development of the questionnaire. The questions were to help provide a broader description of the characteristics of the class in respect to their attitudes, self-images, commitment to educational objectives, school experiences, peer and family relations.

Because Creston School unexpectedly closed a week early, only the two questions which pertained to the current school situation were administered in addition to the Modified PBI:

(a) Do you feel that your teachers like you? Why?

(b) Do you feel that your teachers treat you the same as the other kids? Why?

The study group selected 11 students of junior high school age, to test for student understanding of the PBI instrument. These students were not from Creston School. No standardized instructions were formulated. It was agreed that the PBI items would be read and the understanding of the terms was to be stressed with the student. Necessary clarifications of the items used in this test were recorded and later refined by the study group for a uniform list of additions to the PBI which then was called the Modified PBI.

The study group adopted a standardized introduction and
instructions (see appendix) for administering the Modified PBI (34 items) and the questionnaire (36 open ended questions). Other students, not in Creston School, were selected for a pre-test. The Modified PBI, without the additions, was to be read to the student one item at a time. If the student asked for a definition or appeared to be troubled by an item, the additions were read to him. The questionnaire was also read by the interviewer and any problems with the questions on the part of the student were noted.

To assist the student in the pre-test of the Modified PBI, a continuum was drawn and labeled from "almost never" at one end to "almost always" at the other. The continuum line was divided into five parts and labeled "very infrequently," "infrequently," "sometimes," "frequently" and "very frequently." The student could point to the scale to indicate how much the behavior item applied to him. This continuum was adopted for the administration of the Modified PBI (see appendix).

**Sampling**

The seventh grade at Creston School was composed of two homerooms or classes. In this study, class refers to both homerooms and is the total number of students, excluding five students. Three students, although included in the testing, were not included in the data as they had entered Creston School after the arbitrary
cut-off date of May 5th. Teachers would not have had sufficient knowledge of these students to rate them. Two students who were not available to rate themselves on the Modified PBI also were excluded. The population studied numbered sixty.

Teachers rating the students included two homeroom teachers, a male and a female, a male physical education teacher for both sexes, a male industrial arts teacher for the boys, and a female home economics teacher for the girls. Each student was rated on the Standard PBI by each of his three teachers. The ratings by the principal of the limited number of students for whom he completed the Standard PBI were not included in the statistical data.

Collection of Data

The principal was given a supply of the Standard PBI forms. The teachers individually rated their students and the completed forms were returned to the study group.

Two weeks were allowed to pass and in the same manner all five teachers were provided a check list of all the students. The instructions printed on the list were: (a) please place a check after the names of the students you consider to be malperformers; (b) cross out the names of the students who are not in your classes; (c) give a brief definition of "malperformance" as you perceive it in the school setting.
From this check list, a list of designated malperformers was obtained. It provided a check of how consistently the teachers as a group saw each student as a malperformer. A comparison could be made for consistency in definitions of malperformance, in the selection of malperformers, and in the ratings of student behavior on the Standard PBI.

It was arranged to administer the Modified PBI and the two questions to the class at school at the end of the school year. Interviewing rooms were made available for the study group so that the students were seen individually. No student was to be interviewed outside the school setting. The standardized introduction and instructions were used.

The check list of students was divided in order to have an equal number of boys and girls for each interviewer. The interviewers were assigned at random to the groups of students. This method of assignment was to control any biases which might operate on the part of individual interviewers.

The principal sent the first students to each of the interviewers. Thereafter, the student returned to his classroom and informed the next student to be interviewed where to report.
Tabulation of Data

The Standard PBI was designed so that a hand-scoring method could be used. The manual for administering the instrument contained full instructions and materials for scoring. Positive behavior items were scored from one to five. The score of five was given when the desired behavior was observed very frequently in the student. When the trait was described in negative terms, the scale was inverted so that a rating of 5.0 would be the best score. An unrated item was not used.

The recording and calculation of scores was done by the study group in pairs for checking accuracy of data. Spot checks and certain rechecks were made to assure correctness. One tabulation of the scores from the Modified and Standard PBI's allowed for individual and group PBI scores by dimensions and total ratings. A second tabulation allowed for analysis of scores according to number of times the students were designated malperformers.

Statistical tests of significance were used to test hypotheses where appropriate as indicated in the findings chapter. Chi squares, correlations, ratios, percentages and descriptive tests were computed from the data.

The study group also tested a number of possible relationships not a part of the major hypotheses. These tests will be reported in the next chapter as they occur in association with the major hypotheses.
Chapter Notes


CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

In this chapter the findings from the study of malperformers in the Creston School seventh grade class are reported. Investigation was limited primarily to determining relationships between teacher designation of malperformance and scores on the Standard and Modified PBI. When appropriate, tests of significance of the observed relationships were performed. Because of the complexity of the data, necessary explanations of rationale and conclusions indicated by the data were included in the text of this chapter.

The teachers had been asked to write out a definition of malperformance as they perceived it in the school setting. Two teachers defined malperformance as performance not in the best interests of the individual or the group. One of these teachers specified that malperformance had nothing to do with ability, and he excluded those "unable to do class work."

One teacher said that malperformance was conduct below the expected standard, and he limited his definition to "social behavior."

Another teacher defined malperformance as having three aspects: emotional, social, and academic--and that a combination of these resulted in poor attitudes towards school and other people.

The other teacher defined malperformance in terms of more
specific behavior and stated that it included: "not wanting to comply with procedures and rules set up for everyone; not taking 'no' for an answer; trying to manipulate the teacher; disruptive in class; giving teachers trouble for attention; and students who cannot be controlled."

Thus, it was seen that the five teachers involved in this study varied in what they included in their definition of malperformance. Furthermore, such phrases as "best interests of the individual or the group" and "poor attitudes" were subject to misinterpretation when an attempt was made to determine the meaning of such phrases in terms of malperformance. This lack of clarity and consistency, and its effect, if any, on judgments about student behavior, were to be explored further in this study.

The teachers had been asked to put a check mark after the name of any student whom they considered to be a malperformer. Perfect consistency among the teachers would require that either no teacher or else every teacher would designate that a particular student was a malperformer. There was complete agreement among the teachers that 21 students were normals; there was also complete agreement that 3 students were malperformers. There was disagreement among the teachers about every other student in the class. For the entire class of 60 students, including normals, there was 70% agreement. There was 53% agreement for the 39 students whom one or more teachers designated as a malperformer.
As reported in Table I, ratios of agreement about every student were determined, and the number of students was tallied for each ratio. Table I shows there was a difference in the number of students for each ratio of agreement. However, there was no tendency for the number to increase or decrease as the ratio of agreement increased or decreased.

### Table I

**AGREEMENT OF TEACHER RATINGS ON MALPERFORMANCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratio of Agreement</th>
<th>Number Designated as Malperformers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.20 (1/5)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.25 (1/4)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.40 (2/5)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.50 (2/4)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.60 (3/5)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.75 (3/4)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.80 (4/5)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00 (4/4)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00 (5/5)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Numerator is number of teachers designating malperformer(s). Denominator is number of teachers judging a particular pupil.
In summary, when one teacher designated a student a malperformer, there was only 53% marginal probability that any other teacher would agree; and it was seen that the probability that the student would be designated a malperformer by any other teacher did not increase as the ratio of agreement increased.

Table II reports the total number of students designated as malperformers by each teacher. The null hypothesis would have asserted that the judgments between the teachers were not different from chance, and did not reflect a true difference. The obtained differences were tested against the null hypothesis, and the result of this test was:

\[ \text{Chi}^2 = 6.85, \ d.f. = 4, \ p. > .10 \] Null hypothesis not rejected.

The result of the test used indicated that the obtained differences could have occurred about 15 times in 100 by chance. Therefore,

**TABLE II**

**TEACHER DESIGNATION OF MALPERFORMERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Normals</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Malperformers</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
it was not demonstrated at the .05 level of confidence that there was a true difference among the teachers in the number of students each designated as malperformers. This test did not determine in any way whether the same individuals were designated as malperformers by the different teachers. It tested only the differences in the total number designated by each teacher.

Standard and Modified PBI scores were examined next to determine the relationships between the ratings of student behavior by the teachers, and the ratings by the students of their own behavior. As explained in Chapter II, Standard PBI scores were ratings of student behavior by the teachers. Modified PBI scores were the ratings by the students of their own behavior. The same rating scale of 1 to 5 was used for both teacher and student ratings.

The Standard PBI was designed to compare teacher ratings of behavior within a student group. Lower scores indicated that the teacher attributed a greater degree of malperformance to the student, while higher scores reflected an increase in desirable behavior traits. A particular score below a certain level did not indicate that the student was a malperformer, nor did a score above a certain level indicate that a student was a normal. However, scores could be compared with scores of fellow students, or of other student groups, or with an external criterion, such as the number of teachers who indicated on a check list that a student or a group of students
were malperformers.

For the purposes of this study, it was assumed that the Modified PBI could be used in the same manner as the Standard PBI in making comparisons of student self-ratings. It should be kept in mind in reading the following section, however, that the comparability of numerical scores between the Standard and Modified PBI was not established prior to this study.

Dimension scores on the Standard PBI and the Modified PBI were averaged to obtain the mean score for each test as a whole for every student. The range of the scores on the Standard PBI was 1.73 (2.88 to 4.61), while on the Modified PBI it was 1.76 (3.05 to 4.81). The distributions of the mean scores for both tests are reported in Figures 1 and 2. The medians and means are also reported.

It was seen that teacher ratings and self-ratings for the boys tended to cluster in the bottom half of the distribution while ratings for the girls on both tests tended to cluster in the top half. On the Standard PBI, the mean for the girls was .55 higher than the mean for the boys; on the Modified PBI the mean for the girls was .23 higher than the mean for the boys. Since the distribution of scores for the boys, girls, and the class as a whole were all bi-modal, the obtained means need to be interpreted with caution. However, there was a group tendency for boys to rate themselves lower than the girls
Figure 1
Distribution of standard PBI grand means

- **Girls** mean, boys: 3.41
- **Boys** mean, girls: 3.96
- **Mean, class:** 3.66
- **Median:** 3.59
- **Range:** 1.73
Figure 2

Distribution of modified PBI grand means

- **Modified PBI Scores**
  - **Girls**: Mean, boys 3.87
  - **Boys**: Mean, girls 4.10
  - **Class**: Mean, class 3.97
  - **Class Median**: 4.00
  - **Range**: 1.76
rated themselves. This tendency was consistent with the fact that teachers had rated boys as a group lower than they rated girls as a group.

Table III reports the mean scores for boys, girls, normals, and malperformers, compared on the same test. The term malperformer here refers to those students whom three or more teachers

**TABLE III**

**COMPARISON OF MEANS ON EACH TEST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Standard PBI</th>
<th>Modified PBI</th>
<th>Standard PBI</th>
<th>Modified PBI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Normals*</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td><strong>3.41</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.87</strong></td>
<td>Malperformers*</td>
<td><strong>3.19</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Three or more teachers designated student on checklist.

had designated as malperformers on the check list. Of the 28 students thus designated, 26 were boys, which could explain the obtained similarities between the boys and malperformers, and between the girls and normals. The interpretation of these similarities is discussed below.

Table IV reports the same means as Table III, but compares ratings of boys, girls, normals, and malperformers between the two
TABLE IV

SELF RATINGS COMPARED WITH TEACHER RATINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Entire Class</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Malperformers*</th>
<th>Normals*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modified PBI</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard PBI</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Three or more teachers designated.

tests rather than on the same test. Means of scores for the entire class on both tests are also reported in Table IV. It was observed that the differences between self-ratings and teacher ratings were identical and very small (.14) for the girls and normals. This indicated that ratings of their own behavior by girls and normals, as groups, were very close to teacher ratings of their behavior.

The differences between self-ratings and teacher ratings were quite large for boys and malperformers (.46 and .64, respectively). These differences indicated that boys and malperformers, as groups, rated their own behavior higher when compared to teacher ratings than did girls and normals. Although a factor analysis was not done, these differences indicated that much of the difference between self-ratings and teacher ratings for the class as a whole (.31) could be attributed to the malperformers and to the boys as groups.
For every group reported in Table IV, the means of Modified PBI scores were higher than the means of Standard PBI scores. There was a possibility that the consistent direction of these differences could be due to a lack of numerical comparability between the two tests. Therefore, the fact that Modified PBI scores were higher, on the average, than Standard PBI scores did not necessarily reflect a true difference in student and teacher ratings of student behavior.

In summary, the direction, size, and consistency of the differences obtained strongly indicated that the students designated as normals tended to agree with the teachers in rating their own behavior. Students designated as malperformers tended to rate their own behavior much higher than the teachers had rated it. Similarly, girls tended to agree with the teachers in rating their behavior, while boys tended to rate their own behavior much higher than teachers had rated it.

It had been thought that students with very high or very low teacher ratings would tend to rate themselves more toward the average. A preliminary test of this possibility was made by treating the top half of the class, the bottom half of the class, and the class as a whole as separate groups. The differences in the means for each group on both tests are reported in Table V. The differences in these means were in the same direction and almost identical, which indicated that there was no group tendency for Modified PBI scores to
TABLE V
DIFFERENCE OF MEANS OF STANDARD PBI AND MODIFIED PBI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Modified PBI</th>
<th>Standard PBI</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean, Top Half of Class</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>-.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean, Bottom Half of Class</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>-.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean, Total Class</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>-.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

regress toward the class mean of scores on the Standard PBI.

Rather, this finding indicated that not only was the spread of scores
on the two tests almost identical, but the distribution of scores on
the two tests were also very similar. This was not immediately
evident from a comparison of the histograms in Figures 1 and 2.

There was a possibility that teacher designation of a student
as a malperformer or a normal was reflected in Standard and Modi-
fied PBI scores. To determine whether this relationship was pres-
ent, students were grouped according to how many teachers had
designated each as a malperformer on the check list. The null
hypothesis states that the number of scores above and below the
class median are the same for each group on both tests. However,
it was observed that for students no teacher designated as a malper-
former, more scores fell above the median than below; for students
designated by at least three teachers as malperformers, more scores fell below the median than above; and scores of students designated by one or two teachers as malperformers were about equally divided above and below the median. This relationship was observed for both Standard and Modified PBI scores. The differences observed were tested for significance. For the Standard PBI the result of the test was:

$$
\text{Chi}^2 = 39.70, \text{ d.f.} = 2, \text{ p.} < .01 \quad \text{Reject null hypothesis}
$$

For the Modified PBI, the result of this test was:

$$
\text{Chi}^2 = 22.96, \text{ d.f.} = 5, \text{ p.} < .01 \quad \text{Reject null hypothesis}
$$

Thus, it was demonstrated at the .01 level of confidence that teacher designation of students as malperformers or normals was positively related to scores on both the Standard and Modified PBI's.

To obtain another estimate of the relationship between Standard PBI scores and Modified PBI scores, the correlation between self-ratings and ratings of students by one teacher on dimension 2 (academic motivation and performance) was determined. The coefficient of correlation obtained was:

$$
r = .32, \text{ d.f.} = 58, \text{ p.} < .01 \quad \text{Correlation significant}
$$

Therefore, in the academic motivation and performance dimension,
a low, positive relationship was demonstrated at the .01 level of confidence between student self-ratings and teacher ratings of student behavior. Limitations of time prevented determining correlations between self-ratings and teacher ratings for all the teachers in all dimensions of the Standard and Modified PBI's.

To test further the relationship between Modified PBI scores and teacher designation of students as malperformers, the percentage of scores above and below the median was determined for both malperformers and normals. These percentages are reported in Table VI. Reliability of the difference between these percentages was tested against the null hypothesis that there was no true difference in the percentage of scores below the class median for the two groups.

The difference in the percentages observed was tested by pooling the groups (1). The result of this test was:

\[ t\text{-score} = 2.00, \text{d.f.} = 58, p. < .05 \]

Since this test indicated that the observed differences would occur not more than 5 times in 100 by chance, it further supported the conclusion that student self-ratings of their own behavior were positively related to whether the teachers, as a group, had designated each as a normal or a malperformer.
TABLE VI
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NORMALS AND MALPERFORMERS
ON MODIFIED PBI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Total Scores</th>
<th>Scores Below Median</th>
<th>Percent Below Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normals</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malperformers*</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Two or more teachers selected as malperformers.

As reported above, when the teachers had designated by means of a check list which students were malperformers, there had been a high degree of disagreement among them. The possibility that the use of the Standard PBI would result in greater consensus among the teachers about student behavior was explored next. Ratings of the behavior of each student on two dimensions of the Standard PBI were compared for each teacher. The null hypothesis would have predicted that the number of ratings above and below the median of each dimension would be the same for each teacher. The differences observed among the teachers in ratings in the classroom conduct dimension were tested for significance, and the result of this test was:

\[ \text{Chi}^2 = 8.72, \text{ d.f.} = 4, \ p > .05 \]  
Null hypothesis not rejected

The differences observed among the teachers in ratings of student
behavior in the academic motivation and performance dimension were tested for significance, and the result of this test was:

\[ \text{Chi}^2 = 8.72, \ d.f. = 4, \ p. > .05 \]  Null hypothesis not rejected

Therefore, no true difference among the teachers in their ratings of student behavior on the Standard PBI was demonstrated at the .05 level of confidence. However, the extent of agreement among the teachers was not indicated by this test; it referred only to the fact that a statistically significant difference among them was not demonstrated.

Next, the possibility was examined that teacher ratings of student behavior on the Standard PBI could distinguish those students whom a majority of teachers had designated as malperformers from those students whom a majority of teachers had designated as normals. The null hypothesis would have stated that since the two groups are from the same population, there would be no difference between the mean scores for each group in each dimension of the Standard PBI. Tests of significance were run on the difference between the means of normals and malperformers in every dimension of the Standard PBI. Table VII (page 45) reports the results of these tests. A difference between the normals and malperformers significant at the .01 level of confidence was obtained in every dimension of the Standard PBI except the teacher dependence dimension.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Classroom Conduct</th>
<th>Academic Motivation and Performance</th>
<th>Socio-emotional State</th>
<th>Teacher Dependence</th>
<th>Personal Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normals</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malperformers</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Class</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean | S.D. | T-ratio | Confidence Level |
---|-----|--------|-----------------|
4.01 | .562 | 8.2    | .01             |
3.50 | .5255| 6.79   | .01             |
3.92 | .5551| 3.93   | .01             |
3.79 | .5239| 1.64   | .10             |
4.45 | .3678| 7.8    | .01             |
3.66 | N = 60|        |                 |

TABLE VII
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIFFERENCE IN STANDARD PBI
DIMENSION MEANS, NORMALS AND MALPERFORMERS
Therefore, teacher ratings of student behavior on the Standard PBI distinguished normals from malperformers in four of the five dimensions. Vinter and Sarri (2) had reported that the teacher dependence dimension was less reliable than the other dimensions, particularly for junior high school students. Therefore, the result obtained with the Creston students was not inconsistent with the results obtained by Vinter and Sarri with Detroit students.

Next, the dimension score means and the total scores on the Standard PBI for Creston students were compared with the means reported by Vinter and Sarri for groups of Detroit students (3). Table VIII (page 47) reports these mean scores for the entire groups, and for the normals and malperformers in each group separately. Malperformers at Creston had lower mean scores in every dimension than the Detroit junior high school malperformers. Scores for the normals at Creston were higher in every dimension except teacher dependence. The Creston class total score on the Standard PBI was slightly higher than the total score reported for the Detroit male students. This was noteworthy because the group of Detroit males included senior high school students whose scores on the Standard PBI are higher on the average than the scores of junior high school students.

The differences between the total Standard PBI scores for the groups reported in Table VIII were compared with the standard
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Normals</th>
<th>Malperformers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creston</td>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>Creston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Classroom Conduct</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Academic Motivation</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teacher Dependence</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Personal Behavior</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Standard PBI Score</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
deviations reported in Table VII. It was determined by inspection that there was not a statistically significant difference between the Creston and Detroit students. This was true for normals, malperformers, and the groups as a whole.

TABLE IX

GRADES RECEIVED, SPRING, 1967

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic Grades</th>
<th>Behavior Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normals</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malperformers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was observed that the students whom a majority of teachers had designated as normals had received a number of D and Incomplete subject grades in the Spring quarter of 1967; it was also observed that the students whom a majority of teachers had designated as malperformers had received a large proportion of satisfactory subject grades for the same grading period. The number of D and Incomplete grades received by the malperformer group was compared with the number received by the normal group. A test of significance of this relationship yielded:

$$\chi^2 = 10.91, \ d.f. = 1, \ p < .01 \ \text{Reject null hypothesis}$$
The direction of the difference observed indicated that the malperforming group did receive significantly more D and Incomplete grades than the normal group.

Behavior grades were also compared for the malperformer group and the normal group. A grade of U or N indicated unacceptable behavior, while a grade of E or S indicated acceptable behavior. The total number of U and N grades received by the malperformers was compared to the number earned by the normal group. By inspection it was determined that the difference between the groups in behavior grades was in the same direction and greater than for the subject grades. Therefore, no test of significance was performed, and it was accepted that malperformers received significantly more N and U behavior grades than did the normal group.

I.Q. scores were obtained from the school records. It was observed that the malperformers had more I.Q. scores below 100 than the normal group. This difference was tested for significance and the result of this test was:

\[ \chi^2 = 1.89, \text{ d.f.} = 1, \text{ p} > .10 \] Null hypothesis not rejected

A true difference between the normal and malperforming groups in I.Q. scores was not supported by the results obtained.

It was observed from a comparison of birthdates of normals and malperformers that the range in age did not appear to have a
relationship to malperformance. Therefore, this factor was not investigated further.

When the Modified PBI was administered to the students, two additional questions were asked: "Do you feel your teachers are fair?" and "Do you think your teachers like you?" Of the 60 students in the class, 51 said they felt the teachers were fair. Of the other 9, 4 had been designated normal by all the teachers, 3 had been designated malperformers by one teacher, and 2 had been designated malperformers by three or more teachers.

Forty-five of the students said they felt the teachers liked them. Of the other 15, 8 had been designated normals by all the teachers, 1 had been designated a malperformer by two teachers, and 6 were designated malperformers by three or more teachers.

Only 3 students said they felt their teachers neither liked them nor were fair. One of these had been designated a normal by all the teachers.

Thus, 85% of the class said the teachers were fair; 75% of the class said they felt their teachers liked them. Of the students who said they had doubts about whether their teachers liked them or were fair, about half had been designated normals by a majority of the teachers. Only 3 students out of the entire class responded negatively to both questions.
The broader implications of the findings set forth above for the fields of Social Work and Education will be discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter Notes


3. Ibid., p. 51.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Study

The 1966-67 seventh grade class at Creston School was described by the teachers, principal, and the School Social Work Department as a seriously malperforming group of students, in fact, it was described as the most difficult that the school had encountered. This malperformance was described primarily in terms of social behavior but also included underachievement. The original intent of this study was to explore the factors impinging on these students which could contribute to this malperformance.

The study group soon realized that the term malperformance, even when stated more specifically, as underachievement or behavior problem, was subjective and nebulous. It does not refer directly to the behavior of a student, but rather to a judgment about that behavior. It was noted that criteria for judging whether a student is or is not a malperformer vary both within a particular school and among schools. Standards for student performance, both academic and social, may also vary within the same school at different times. Therefore, it is difficult, and sometimes impossible, to know the type, extent and degree of behavior a student is exhibiting which
results in the teacher or the school considering his performance to be unacceptable.

Since these students were described as such a malperforming class, the study group decided that the class presented an excellent opportunity to examine what criteria were being used, how uniform these criteria were, and how the teachers applied these criteria in judging individual student behavior. Such a study could make significant contributions to the fields of Education and Social Work in understanding what is involved when teachers label a child a malperformer.

The fact that this class had such a large proportion of students who were described as malperformers also presented an unusual opportunity to examine how students designated as malperformers perceived their own behavior, and to compare their self-ratings with ratings by the teachers.

In attempting to determine the criteria used to judge a particular type of behavior, one can determine what the person who uses the criteria can verbally express about them. This description of the criteria, however, is not as important as how they operate in practice. Therefore, in this study, most of the emphasis was placed on exploring relationships between who was designated as a malperformer, how many teachers agreed, and whether the students judged their own behavior the same as the teachers rated their behavior.
The use of a standardized rating scale of student behavior, the Pupil Behavior Inventory developed by Vinter and Sarri (1), provided more than 10,000 ratings of behavior of this class on items which had been found reliable in distinguishing malperforming students from normal students. The use of a modified version of this scale, adapted to obtain student ratings of their own behavior, provided more than 2,000 self-ratings by students on the same items. These rating scales were referred to in this study as the Standard PBI and the Modified PBI, respectively.

The Pupil Behavior Inventory consists of 34 items, divided into five different dimensions of student behavior. These dimensions are: classroom conduct, academic motivation and performance, socio-emotional state, teacher dependence, and personal behavior.

The main questions explored in this study were:

1. How consistent are the teachers in their stated criteria for malperformance, and, more important, how consistent are the teachers in designating students as malperformers?

2. What is the relationship between teacher designation as a malperformer and teacher ratings of student behavior on the Standard PBI?

3. What is the relationship between teacher ratings of behavior on the Standard PBI and student ratings of their own behavior on the Modified PBI?
4. How do the Standard PBI scores of the Creston seventh grade class compare with the scores of the Detroit groups originally studied by Vinter and Sarri? (2)

5. Is the fact that a student is designated a malperformer reflected in his grades, both behavior and academic?

6. Is there a relationship between teacher designation of a student as a malperformer and the I.Q score of the students?

**Critique of Study**

The study group believed that this study about malperformers resulted in important findings for the fields of Education and Social Work. The findings were considered valid because the research method was cautious and as rigorous as field conditions would allow, and because the statistical procedures chosen yielded conservative estimates of population parameters. The findings in every case were supported solidly by the data obtained.

A source of frustration to the study group was the inability due to time limitations to explore all the relationships which the 12,000 behavior item ratings presented for possible examination. As the study progressed, more and more possible areas of inquiry became evident. In this respect, the project may have been overly ambitious, but the fact that further areas of examination became apparent fulfilled part of the purpose of the study.
There was no question that this class had been a very serious problem to the school. It was unfortunate that the study could not attempt to determine the possible factors impinging on the malperforming students, as originally requested by the school. However, the results of the study are pertinent to the school situation and, as discussed later, have implications for teachers and the school system.

**Summary of Findings**

The following are the major findings of this study:

1. Malperformance was defined quite differently by different teachers. All included unacceptable social conduct, some excluded underachievement, some included attitudes as well as performance. None specifically mentioned the degree of a certain trait as important for their criteria of malperformance, although with some teachers it was implied. Many of the phrases which the teachers used were difficult to interpret in terms of the specific behavior to which the phrases referred.

2. When one teacher designated a student as a malperformer, there was only a 53% marginal probability that some other teacher would agree. While they all agreed that 21 of the students were normals there was perfect agreement about only 3 malperformers. There were just as many students for whom the ratio of agreement
was low as there were for whom the ratio of agreement was high.

3. Although many different students were designated as malperformers by the different teachers, there was no significant difference (.05 level) in the number of students which each teacher designated as malperformers.

4. Students whom a majority of teachers had designated as normals rated their own behavior very close to teacher ratings; students whom a majority of teachers designated as malperformers rated their own behavior much higher than the teacher ratings. This same relationship was observed for girls and boys, respectively, as groups.

5. No group tendency was observed for students rated very high or very low by teachers to rate themselves more toward the average. In fact, the range and distribution of teacher ratings and self-scores were almost identical.

6. When a majority of teachers agreed that a student was either a normal or a malperformer there was a positive relationship, significant at the .01 level of confidence, between teacher designation and scores on the Standard PBI.

7. When a majority of the teachers agreed that a student was either a normal or a malperformer there was a positive relationship, significant at the .01 level of confidence, between this teacher designation and scores on the Modified PBI.
8. A correlation of .32 was obtained between the Standard and Modified PBI scores, in the academic motivation and performance dimension. This low, positive correlation was significant at the .01 level of confidence.

9. Teacher ratings of student behavior by use of the Standard PBI distinguished between normals and malperformers at the .01 level of confidence in all dimensions except teacher dependence.

10. There was no significant difference between the means of the Standard and Modified PBI scores of the Creston seventh grade class and the means of the scores reported for the Detroit group of students studied by Vinter and Sarri. Although the differences were not significant, it was observed that the malperformers at Creston had lower mean scores in every dimension of the Standard PBI than the Detroit malperformers, while scores for the normals at Creston were higher in every dimension except teacher dependence. The Creston class total score was slightly higher than the total score for Detroit male students. This was an unexpected result since the Creston class was reported to be such a seriously malperforming group.

11. Students designated as malperformers by a majority of teachers received a greater number (significant at the .01 level of confidence) of D and Incomplete subject grades than did the normal group.
12. Students designated as malperformers by a majority of the teachers received a greater number (significant at the .01 level of confidence) of grades which indicated unacceptable or undesirable social behavior than did the normal group.

13. There were no significant differences between the normal group and malperformer group in the number of I.Q. scores above and below 100.

14. A large majority of the students said they felt the teachers were fair (85%) and that the teachers liked them (75%). Of the other students, about half had been designated as normals by a majority of the teachers. Only three students stated the teachers neither liked them nor were fair, and one of these was designated a normal by all the teachers.

**Implications for Education and Social Work**

The findings of this study have important implications for both school personnel and social workers. Educators not only work within the school system but are also instrumental in determining its character. Social workers act as consultants to educators, and often work to improve the system itself, as well as the performance of the children within that system. This study did not attempt to examine the entire social system of the school. The fact that the study was limited to an examination of how teachers reacted to students and
how the students reacted to the teachers, provided valuable insight into one of the most important aspects of this social system.

The fact that the teachers in this school differ in their criteria for malperformance and in the students designated as malperformers reflected a difference in the standards that operated within the school system. It is important that students clearly understand what is expected in their immediate behavior and have a commitment to the long-range goals of the school. The fact that the malperforming students rated their behavior much higher than the teachers rated it could reflect this lack of clarity of expectations. Since earlier studies demonstrated that inefficient achievers are more self-accepting than efficient achievers, it is essential, particularly for malperforming students, that the school constantly maintain its efforts to develop consistency and clarity in its expectations on all levels.

On the other hand, the fact that the malperforming students, as a group, rated their own behavior lower than the other students rated their behavior indicated that even students reported to be serious malperformers are aware of expectations about their behavior. This is a hopeful sign, in that efforts to increase clarity and consistency of standards can be expected to be rewarded in terms of less distortion of these standards by malperforming students.

It was observed that teachers were not consistent in their
selection of which students were malperformers. Social workers, in their need to expend their time more efficiently, should utilize this information in determining which students to serve. It was demonstrated that when a majority of teachers agree about a student, more confidence can be placed in the reliability of these teacher judgments.

The one teacher (Industrial Arts) who taught only the boys in this class designated only 9 out of the 35 boys as malperformers. The other teachers indicated that from one-third to one-half of the entire class were malperformers. Prior studies have shown that boys exhibit a greater amount of disruptive behavior than girls, while teachers often expect the same conformity from boys that they do from girls. It would be difficult to determine with any degree of certainty whether more boys in this class actually exhibited unacceptable behavior, since the teacher who taught only boys indicated he considered only 9 of them to be malperformers. This finding highlights the general observation of this study that it was the expectations and standards of the individual teacher which determined whether a student was considered a malperformer, as much as, or even more than, the actual behavior of the students.

The Standard PBI can be a useful instrument for the school to use to determine more specifically what types of behavior a reported malperformer is exhibiting, thus enabling the school to more
carefully decide an appropriate course of corrective action for the student. It can be equally useful to social workers serving the schools, to help them determine the level of expectations within the school, and the types and extent of unacceptable behavior of particular students. It is relatively easy and quick to administer in terms of the amount of information obtained. The time involved in scoring can be more than balanced by the increased assurance that treatment time is expended on the most needful students. If the Standard PBI were used extensively, machine scoring should be considered.

The Modified PBI, as an instrument for measuring student self-ratings of their own behavior, demonstrated sufficient indications of validity to merit further study. The self-report approach is based on the fact that the subject has had an unusually good opportunity to observe himself in a variety of situations, so he can, if he wishes, give a helpful estimate of his behavior. The impression of the study group was that almost all the students were willing to give an honest picture of themselves as they perceived themselves. Distortion is always a problem in self-report tests, but a large part of the purpose of the Modified PBI was to determine the degree of distortion in student self-ratings. Thus, particularly when students feel free to give an honest picture of themselves, the Modified PBI could be a very useful instrument. Further studies of reliability could determine the stability of self-ratings over time, and establish
its usefulness in terms of comparing self-ratings to teacher ratings, and to the actual behavior of the student.

The reasons given by those students who said they felt the teachers did not like them or were not fair to them have implications for anyone responsible for controlling the behavior of students, at least of this age group. Many said the teachers were not fair because they were treated better than other students; girls, as well as boys, complained that teachers let girls get away with more than the boys. The boy with one of the highest I.Q scores felt teachers got more angry at other boys than at him although he did the same thing they did. Some said they did not think it was fair when they received higher grades than they had really earned. On the other hand, mal-performing students reported more expected reasons, such as the teachers "don't give me a chance to prove myself." The implication can be drawn that students desire impartiality.

Other complaints about teachers consisted mainly of comments about not enough discipline and not enough work expected of the students. Particular teachers were "too soft," "let kids do what they want," "kids are boss," "don't act the same all the time." Thus, inconsistent expectations and lack of firmness were the most frequent complaints of students from their point of view, which indicates that the students themselves, even though they may resist expectations, desire that they be clear, consistent, and enforced.
Suggestions for Further Research

Many of the areas which could be profitably studied further have been discussed in detail above and will not be repeated here.

The study in general supported the conclusion of Vinter and Sarri, that the standards and procedures of the individual school system are involved in the identification of malperforming students, and influence the corrective action undertaken, and may even help to perpetuate undesirable behavior. Studies of school malperformance, like studies of most human behavior, point to the fact that any behavior has multiple causes. For any single factor associated with undesirable behavior, such as social and economic background, divorced parents, working mothers, age of entrance to school, there will be those individuals who produce well despite the handicaps of one or several of these factors. It is the school system that must develop within itself the means to enable it to deal more effectively with whatever behavior and attitudes the student presents. Further studies of the standards and procedures for the evaluation of behavior were certainly indicated by this study.

More specifically, a demonstration research project as originally intended in this study, not only might identify factors associated with malperformance which are independent of the school system, but could help the school establish more consistency in evaluating
student behavior. Such a project might also assist the school in developing more effective methods of coping with such behavior within the classroom and the school.

The study group found that many preconceived ideas about mal-performance which they had were corrected in the process of this study. All profited from an increased appreciation of the many difficult problems faced by school personnel in their attempts to deal with underachievement and undesirable behavior. It also increased the group's awareness of the complex process involved in the identification of problem students and the variety of standards which inhere in the school system. Perhaps this study can be equally beneficial to both educators and social workers who work in these areas and desire to do a more effective job in assisting students to get the maximum from their potentials.
Chapter Notes


3. Ibid., p. 46.

3. Ibid., p. 6.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX
## MODIFIED PUPIL BEHAVIOR INVENTORY

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<tr>
<th>Pupil Name</th>
<th>Interviewer</th>
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- ___ Do you show initiative? (Do you start things without being told?) ___ 2
- ___ Do you blame others for trouble? ___ 1
- ___ Are you resistant to the teacher? (Do you oppose, balk at what the teacher wants?) ___ 1
- ___ Are you alert and interested in school work? ___ 2
- ___ Do you attempt to manipulate adults? (Do you use adults to get what you want?) ___ 1
- ___ Do you appear depressed (low)? ___ 3
- ___ Do you retain learning well? (Remember things well?) ___ 2
- ___ Do you have absences or truancies (skipping)? ___ 5
- ___ Are you withdrawn and uncommunicative? (Are you shy? Don't talk to people much?) ___ 3
- ___ Do you complete assignments? ___ 2
- ___ Do you influence others toward troublemaking? ___ 1
- ___ Do you have inappropriate (unsuitable) personal appearance? ___ 5
- ___ Do you seek constant reassurance? (Need to get teacher's assurance and approval?) ___ 4
- ___ Are you motivated toward academic performance? (Do you try to do well in school?) ___ 2
- ___ Are you impulsive? (Do you act without thinking?) ___ 1
- ___ Do you lie or cheat? ___ 5
Do you have positive (real) concern for your education? 2

Do you require continuous supervision? (Do you have to be continuously watched?) 1

Are you aggressive toward peers? (Do you start fights, arguments?) 1

Are you disobedient? 1

Do you steal? 5

Are you friendly and well-received by other pupils? 3

Are you easily led into trouble? 1

Are you resentful of (don't like) criticism or discipline? 1

Are you hesitant (afraid, uncertain) to try, or do you give up easily? 2

Are you uninterested in subject matter? (Do you lack interest in what is taught in classes?) 2

Do you disrupt (upset) classroom procedures? 1

Do you swear or use obscene (dirty) words? 5

Do you appear generally happy? 3

Do you have poor personal hygiene (cleanliness and health care)? 5

Are you possessive of the teacher? (Do you try to get a lot of the teacher's time and attention?) 4

Do you tease or provoke (stir up) students? 1

Are you isolated? Do you have few or no friends? 3

Do you show positive (good) leadership? 2
INSTRUCTIONS FOR INTERVIEWING

After general introductory remarks to set the student at ease, the Modified PBI was explained in the following standardized way:

I would like to explain what we are going to do today. I am going to ask you about some things that all students do or feel to some extent. I would like you to tell me how often each of these descriptions applies to you.

Your individual answers will not be shared with the school or your parents. There is no right or wrong answer. You will not be graded. On this rating scale, please point to the word which best describes you as I read each description. Feel free to stop me or ask any questions if something is not clear.

(Administer Modified PBI.)

Now I would like to ask you two questions which are a little different. You won't need to use the rating scale because we just want to know what you think. These questions are about your teacher.

(Ask two questions.)
Scale to Which Students Pointed in Rating Behavior

## IN SCHOOL

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<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Very Frequently</th>
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(Almost Never)   (Almost Always)
PUPIL BEHAVIOR INVENTORY

Pupil Name ____________________________ Teacher ____________________________

Please write in for each item the letter(s) of the rating chosen for this pupil (see alter­
natives in box). It is not necessary to spend a great deal of time in assessing the pupil. Please answer all items, even if you are uncertain or have little information. If you
cannot answer an item, please write in "don't know."

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