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We Suggest

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WE SUGGEST

Eleanor Buelke

Hamachek, Don E., Editor, *The Self in Growth, Teaching, and Learning*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965, Pp. xi-576.

What reader, at some time, has not felt, with Ralph Ellison, that he ached with the need to convince himself that he does exist in the real world, that he is, "a part of all the sound and anguish . . .?" Who has not agreed with the thesis which says, ". . . without the possibility of action, all knowledge comes to one labeled 'file and forget' . . .?" He is, indeed, fortunate who has convinced himself of his reality and has discovered the potentialities of involved action. Then, with the "Invisible Man," he can say, ". . . my world has become one of infinite possibilities . . . the world is just as concrete, ornery, vile and sublimely wonderful as before, only now I better understand my relation to it and it to me."¹ *The Self in Growth, Teaching, and Learning* may help openly perceptive individuals to be able to say just that.

Selections in this book have been chosen and compiled with a view to their relationship to an examination of "the self as it is influenced by growth, teaching, learning, and perception." These readings report research, discuss theory and philosophy, and analyze trends and issues pertaining to the self as a theoretical construct. They are arranged in nine parts: the self as a frame of reference; theoretical issues and the self; perceptual processes and the self; how the self is formed; personality development and the self; growth processes and the self; teaching and the self; learning and the self; and toward understanding self. Each part contains a group of readings, each one by a different author, or authors, although a number of writers have articles in more than one part. In each part, at the conclusion of the readings, is a list of "Questions for discussions." These might serve equally well to stimulate individual thinking and cognition, or to provoke group discussion and ideation.

Where research has been described, important implications for readers, especially teachers, have been noted. In Part IV, self-concepts in early childhood are found to be the forerunners of self-concepts of adolescence and maturity. In many cases this means that negative self-

1. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*. New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1952.

concepts deteriorate with the approach of maturity, while positive self-concepts improve. A plan whereby *irresponsible* adults can *enforce* morality in their children is unnecessary. Rather, *responsible* morality on the part of adults, paired with an *informal* attitude toward development of moral values in children, becomes imperative. In Part VII, other variables in the learning situation are discovered, besides skills, knowledges, attitudes, and appreciations commonly expected as outcomes of teaching. One of these variables is probably self-concept. Consequently, teaching goals and methods should be modified to include awareness of significance of self. Such significance of self is produced in group situations. Goals expressed in terms of the self appear to lead to as good academic results as goals expressed in terms of subject matter emphasis. In Part IX, it is contended that an individual's understanding and acceptance of himself and a reality situation is a valid predictor of his future adjustment and that the most powerful determinant of a person's behavior lies in the attitudes of the person himself. These findings lead to the implications that there need to be revision of methods of dealing with problems of learning behavior and more direct approaches in education, as in society as a whole, to the problems of changing children's attitudes toward themselves and their social adjustment.

If the teacher-reader of this book is essentially interested in and intrigued by the "gamesmanship" aspect of teaching, in parallel with Berne's "gamesmanship" of human relations, the scholarly and creative efforts of the authors will have little or no meaning for him. If he possesses a compulsion for playing such classroom, pseudo-pedagogical games as "Gold Star Pasting," "Robins, Bluebirds, and Sparrows," "If You'd Only Try Harder," "Sit Down and Keep Quiet," "I Want You To," or "Quote Me," he may already, in a great measure, have rejected his own self. He may have lost the ability to regulate his own emotions, unable to develop or release the three capacities which lead to personal autonomy: awareness, spontaneity, and intimacy.² There is little likelihood that these articles will provoke thought, or raise questions, in minds cluttered with reasons to avoid confrontation with reality, to conceal hidden motives, to rationalize behavior, or to escape genuine personal involvement in life—and teaching. For, as Moustakas says, "The real self is the central core within each individual which is the deep source of growth."

2. Eric Berne, *Games People Play*. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1964.