CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
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The survey of pertinent literature covered investigations carried out approximately in the past thirty years with more focus on studies carried out in the recent past. Only the most relevant studies could be included in the review presented below owing to space constraints. The investigations reviewed have been sorted into the following sections 2.1 to 2.9 for the sake of clarity.

2.1 Studies on relations between human-figure drawing and cognitive style (field – dependence – independence):

Most of the investigations in this area have highlighted the close and positive relation between human-figure drawings of children and adolescents and their cognitive style. For instance, Ward and Eliot (1987) carried out a study on 204 children (7 – 12 years old) using Children's Embedded Figures Test and Goodenough Harris Drawing Test and found out that there was a significant relationship between field –dependence – independence and human-figure drawings. The findings seem to be reliable because the sample size was adequate. Cox et al. (2001) in a cross-cultural investigation involving 120 British and 120 Japanese 7 and 11 year olds found that older children constructed more complex human figures than younger children indicating cognitive development (greater field – independence). The merit of the study is that it involved cross-cultural comparison. From the results of this study it seems that improvement in human – figure drawing performance with age cuts across culture. Chemey et al. (2006) worked on 109 five to thirteen year old subjects. The results revealed significant gender and age differences in the subjects' field - dependence –
independence. There was also significant difference between boys’ and girls’ human - figure drawings. The results suggested the contribution children’s drawings can make to the study of cognitive development and vice – versa. The study covered a wide age range and focused on the gender and age differences in human – figure drawing and cognitive style.

Similarly, an Indian study (Dey and Ghosh, 2007) compared the relationship shared by human – figure drawing performance and cognitive style (field – dependence – independence) of seventy 10 to 12 year old children and seventy 13 to 15 year old early adolescents. The Goodenough – Harris Human – Figure Drawing Test and the Group Embedded Figures Test were administered and positive, significant relations between the variables were found for both the age groups. This study is relevant because it was carried out in the Indian context and because it highlighted the close relation between human – figure drawing and cognitive style across age – groups. Lange Kuttner et al. (2002) carried out a longitudinal (spanning ages 6 to 10 years) and two cross – sectional studies (covering ages 5 to 11 years) examining the emergence of realistic contours in human - figure drawings. They found gradually improving attention to detail and conceptual processing (age related increase in field - independence) to be responsible for realistic contouring. The investigation by Lange Kuttner et al.(2002) reported results after combining the outcomes of longitudinal and cross sectional studies thereby bringing together the advantages of both approaches to the study of human development. So the investigation can be considered to be thorough.

Baillargeon et al. (1998) had concluded that field – independent subjects possessed higher attentional capacity than field – dependents (sample – 239 nine to thirteen year olds). The Children’s Embedded Figures Test was used. The findings can be relied upon because the sample size was large. Makkan et al. (1999) confirmed that field – independents have better cognitive strategies and mental imagery. Akira et al. (2001) had revealed in a study that field – dependent
independent tasks primarily reflects the operations of the visuospatial and executive components of working memory. These are the probable reasons for richer details in drawing of field-independent children.

It is widely known that orientation in space is also closely related to cognitive style. Lange Kuttner (2004) worked with drawings of 7 to 12 year olds and concluded that size reduction of figures was more prominent among older children possessing more complex axes systems (indicating greater field-independence). The result is congruent with that of Cox et al. (2001). In a study undertaken by Lurcat (1971-1972) on 68 children of three age groups it was revealed that subjects progressively established benchmarks exterior to the person being drawn and orientation to the total person preceded orientation to parts of the body. This reflected the age related development from less field-independent to more field-independent cognitive style. Although the sample size was small yet the results are in line with those of Cherney et al. (2006), Lange Kuttner et al. (2002) and Lange Kuttner (2004). Morra (2002) carried out a study (Sample – 119 five to eight year olds) and found out that greater the field-independence, the better the execution of drawings with partially hidden parts. The finding seems dependable as the sample size was adequate. The noteworthy feature of the study is its adoption of the neo-Piagetian model of field-independence. The result is in agreement with those of Lange Kuttner (2004) and Lurcat (1971-1972).

2.2 Researches on relations between human-figure drawing and self esteem:

Investigations generally reveal strong and positive association between human-figure drawing and self esteem scores. Coopersmith et al. (1976) found out that expressions of self esteem were greatly associated with figure drawings of 97
fifth and sixth grade boys. The Self Esteem Inventory developed by the lead investigator was used for assessing self esteem. The sample size was, however, not large enough. Burkitt et al. (2004) worked with 253 four to eleven year olds and concluded that the children increased the sizes of and used most preferred colours for drawing positively characterized figures, did not decrease the sizes of negative figures but used least preferred colours to draw them. The finding seems to be reliable because the sample size was large and a wide age-range was covered. In an Indian study, Bardhan Roy (2005) found that human-figure drawing and self esteem were positively and closely related for 80 (40 boys and 40 girls) students of 9 and 10 years. This investigation is relevant because it was carried out in India. Although the sample was not large yet both the genders were equally represented. A study by Wood et al. (1996) on 109 male and 95 female (8-10 years) school students confirmed that children's figure drawings demonstrated a significantly higher body dissatisfaction in girls and lower levels of self-esteem than boys. The sample sizes were adequate and the two gender groups were compared. Dey and Ghosh (2007) found out in their study on random samples of seventy 10 to 12 year old and seventy 13 to 15 year old adolescents that there was a positive and significant relation between human-figure drawing and self esteem for both age-groups. The study is pertinent because it was carried out in India and manifested the close association between the two variables across age-levels.

In an Indian investigation, Sinha (1977) worked with two groups of 360 and 597 ten year olds and found that correlations between the Draw-Yourself scores and self concept scores were significant. The sample sizes were large enough so the results may be relied upon. However the variable of self concept rather than self esteem was assessed. In a study done by Prytula and Thompson (1973) on 20 male and 20 female 5th and 6th graders, though the subjects did not differ in terms of drawn size of self image, subjects low in self esteem drew significantly more transparencies in human figures. The investigation suffers from the obvious limitation of small sample sizes.
Disability impairs self esteem. Lev Wiesel et al. (2005) worked with matched samples of stutterer (n=20) and non-stutterer (n=20) adults. Self-figure drawings of stutterers manifested their disability. The ears, eyes and throats of the figures drawn by them were distinctive. They tended to add collars/lines at the necks of the figures. The investigation involved small sample sizes but the analyses were intensive. Emotional problems also lower self esteem. Veltman and Browne (2003) studied six physically abused (4 to 8 years) and 12 control children. Abused children showed higher omission of details and tended to draw distorted figures. The investigation was clinical in nature and intensive. Hence the number of subjects were limited. Zalsman et al. (2000) examined figures drawn by 39 suicidal and 51 non-suicidal adolescents. The drawing indicators correlated significantly with measures of suicidal behaviour (low self esteem). The Human – Figure Drawing Test was used for assessment. The study was clinical in nature. Earwood et al. (2004) presented Draw – A – Story tasks to 30 aggressive and 181 non-aggressive children. Drawings of aggressives revealed higher self image. The finding would have been more dependable had there been more children in the aggressive group. The two groups - the aggressive and the non aggressive are extremely mismatched in terms of sample sizes.

Self esteem also has social aspects. Lim and Slaughter (2008) conducted a study on 29 children with Asperger’s syndrome and a matched sample of 28 typically developing children. The human – figure drawing scores of children with Asperger’s syndrome were significantly lower than those of the typically developing children. But there were no differences between the two samples on the tree or house drawing scores. It appears that the selective deficit in generating human – figure representations may derive from a relative lack of interest in the social world. This investigation suggests the use of human – figure drawing tests in clinical assessment of the children. But its drawback is small sample sizes. Madigan et al. (2003) studied 123 seven year olds. Children having resistant infantile attachment drew more overlapping and encapsulated
figures. Although the sample size was adequate yet only seven year olds were studied. So the result has limited generalizability. Holt and Kaiser (2001) point out that children of alcoholics suffer from problems like low self esteem; depiction of isolation of self and those of other family members were frequent in their drawings. The study was an intensive one.

Findings of some investigations suggest that size of human figures drawn by children and adolescents were not associated with their self esteem. In a study conducted by Prytula et al. (1978) results indicated that when groups (120 in study 1 and 150 in study 2 of 5th and 6th graders ) were differentiated significantly on either self concept or self esteem, the size of the figure drawn was not related to the level of self concept or self esteem. The tools used included Draw – A – Person Test and Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory. The sample sizes were adequate. The finding is congruent with that of Prytula and Thompson (1973). Dalby and Vale(1977) also confirmed that self esteem was not related to the size of the human figures drawn by comparing children’s human – figure drawings with their Self Esteem Inventory scores. Paine et al. (1985)studied matched samples of twelve pediatric oncology patients, twelve school children and twelve general surgery patients aged 6years 11months to 9years 6months. The tool used was Goodenough Harris Drawing Test. It was hypothesized that anxiety lowered self esteem. The human - figure drawings of the oncology patients were significantly smaller in height , width and area compared to those of the other two groups. Though the sample sizes were small yet the result is valuable because the study involved samples of gravely ill children and assessed the impact of their health conditions on their drawings. Delatte and Hendrickson (1982) in a study on 38 male and 38 female high school seniors found out that there is a significant linear relationship between self esteem and width of human - figure drawings in males but there is a curvilinear relationship between height and area of human - figure drawings with self esteem. Such relationships did not emerge for the girls. The investigation involved small sample sizes. So the findings are limited in generalizability.
2.3 Investigations on relations between cognitive style (field – dependence – independence) and self esteem:

A study (Bosacki et al., 1997) investigated the relationship between field-dependence – independence and self esteem in preadolescent girls and boys. 63 Grade 6 students (33 girls, 30 boys) completed the Group Embedded Figures Test and the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory. Field independence and self esteem correlated negatively for girls and positively for boys. Thus it emerged that gender mediated the relationship between cognitive style and self esteem. However, the pitfall of the study is its small sample sizes. Riding and Al-Hajji’s (2001) investigation on 207 Kuwaiti secondary school students highlighted the relation between cognitive style and self perception (self esteem) in influencing school performance. The result seems to be reliable because the sample size was adequate. Tinajero and Paramo (1998) in a review concluded that field-independent students outperform field-dependents in school. So this may boost their self esteem. In an Indian study on seventy children (10 to 12 years) and seventy adolescents (13 to 15 years), Dey and Ghosh (2007) also confirmed that youngsters who have tendencies of being more field-independent possess higher self esteem whereas those who display greater field-dependence have lower self esteem. The outcome of this study is significant because it was conducted in the Indian milieu.

In an investigation on clinical samples, Lata et al. (2005) found out that individuals who rate their parents as abusive and neglectful reported a greater degree of depression (hence low self esteem) and the relationship was mediated by dysfunctional cognitive style. Thus the relation between perceived faulty child rearing and low self esteem appeared to be influenced by cognitive style. Gamble and Roberts (2005) found out in a study on 134 high schoolers that
adverse parenting tends to have a more negative effect on cognitive style among girls as compared to boys. Association between parenting and cognitive style is largely mediated by attachment insecurity which also contribute to low self esteem. The sample size was adequate. The results of the investigations by Lata et al. (2005) and Gamble and Roberts (2005) are congruent. However the merit of the latter study is that gender groups were compared. Creed et al. (2005) confirmed in a study on 130 high school final year students that cognitive style would predict both internal (self esteem) and external career related barriers. Results demonstrated that cognitive style would predict self – efficacy in males but not in females. The sample size was adequate. Comparison between the gender groups was undertaken.

Hutchinson and Skinner (2007) utilized the construct of adaption – innovation in probing the relation between self awareness and cognitive style. They opined that adaption - innovation refers to a dimension of preferred problem – solving style; adaptors work best within clear guidelines and prefer to ‘do things better’, whereas innovators bridle at structures and prefer to ‘do things differently’. The investigation involved a sample of 55 undergraduate students (48 females and 7 males). It was found that higher adaption – innovation scores were significantly and positively associated with higher self - monitoring scores. Multiple Regression Analysis indicated that the facets of self consciousness as well as self monitoring significantly predicted adaption – innovation. In this piece of research the dimension of field – dependence – independence was not used but adaption seems to have some overlap with field – dependence while innovation appears to be somewhat overlapping with field – independence. The study involved subjects who were older in age than that planned for the present study. Besides, too few males were included in the sample. Keeping these limitations in mind the study is important because it pointed out that cognitive style bears some similarity to self monitoring and self consciousness.
2.4 Studies on age-related changes in human-figure drawing:

A survey of relevant literature highlights that human-figure drawing skills improve with age. Polyanov's (1981) analysis of the Goodenough – Harris Drawing Test performance of 70 preschoolers and 150 elementary school children revealed that older subjects exhibited artwork that could be fitted into the category of integrated artwork featuring unified depictions of the figures' essential characteristics (i.e. individuality, function and meaning). Results indicate that the integrity of children's artwork reflects the level of their thought development which is generally associated with age. Golomb (1973) concluded from a study on 105 three to seven year olds that the pictorial representations executed by children varied as a function of many factors including children's developmental levels. Polyanov's (1981) and Golomb's (1973) researches focused on the improvement of the quality of drawings of small children with age. The sample sizes of both the studies were adequate.

Ter Laak et al. (2005) concluded from a study on 115 seven to nine year old students that the older students received significantly higher scores when students' human-figure drawings were rated on developmental and personality variables. The investigation also examined the reliability and validity of Goodenough Harris Draw – A Man Test. In a study by Cox et al. (2001) 120 participants from Japan and 120 participants from U.K with equal number of boys and girls of seven to eleven years were included. The tool used was Draw – A – Man Test. Results of the study revealed that older children constructed the human figure in a more complex way than the younger children. The findings of the investigation are significant because cross-cultural comparisons were undertaken, a wide age-range was covered and members of both genders were equally represented. Abraham (1982) suggested that children's skill in drawing reaches its peak by 12 years of age. Her study was based on 926
drawings of 463 Israeli school children, twelve to sixteen years of age. The analysis of the drawings revealed that thirteen to sixteen year olds were undergoing a process of individualization which is reflected in their art work. Younger children concentrated more on drawing whole figures whereas older subjects tended more towards portraiture, expressing their own image. The drawings of the older subjects exhibited greater individuality of representation reflecting the uncertainty of adolescence. The skill level in drawing tended to be refined with increase in age. The investigation involved a large sample and the analysis was intensive. So the results are valuable.

After conducting an investigation on 580 students in Classes I through XI in three schools, Abraham (1972) concluded that there was small difference between age groups – six to nine years and ten to twelve years in respect of Draw – A – Person Test scores. But large differences emerged when Draw – A – Person Test scores of six to nine year olds were compared with thirteen to sixteen year olds. Similarly, large differences in scores were obtained when the age groups of ten to twelve years and thirteen to sixteen years were compared. These findings were in line with Abraham’s (1982) finding that onset of adolescence brings about significant changes in human figure drawing performance. Abraham’s (1972) study was based on a large sample covering a wide age – range. So the results are considerably generalizable.

2.5 Researches on age – related changes in cognitive style:

Studies reveal that with age, there is a progression from field – dependence to field - independence. In a study by Chynn et al. (1991) on 27 boys and 24 girls (aged 3.7 to 5.8 years) results revealed that boys between the age group of 3.7 to 5.3 years were less field – independent than girls however after 5.3 years boys as a group surpassed the girls on field – independence. Thus the study proved...
that with age boys tended to become more field-independent. The interaction between age and gender of the subjects with respect to cognitive style was probed in the investigation but the limitation of the study was that small sample sizes were involved. Chemey et al. (2006) carried out an investigation on 109 five to thirteen year old subjects. The results revealed significant age differences in the subjects' field-dependence—Independence scores. This piece of research was carried out on a sample of adequate size. A study on 2400 three to five year olds by Saracho (1996) investigated the relationship between cognitive style and play behaviour and the effect of age on the relationship. A significant interaction was found between the age and cognitive style. Since the study was conducted on a very large sample so the findings may be relied upon. A study (Black, 1978) was conducted in the U.S.A. on a random sample of 179 sixth graders, 150 of whom (79 boys and 71 girls) were retested again in the eleventh grade. The results revealed that as a group, the sample became significantly more field-independent over time but their ranks relative to one another in field-dependence—Independence remained consistent. The study had adopted the longitudinal approach to a limited extent and had yielded evidence in support of the contention of Witkin et al. (1971) regarding developmental changes in field-dependence—Independence discussed earlier in section 1.5.

2.6 Investigations on age-related changes in self-esteem:
The majority of the relevant investigations bring out the changes in levels of self esteem with increase in age. Hoare et al. (1993) in a study on 8 to 15 year old Scottish school children concluded that children rated themselves higher in self esteem indicating that they have a positive regard for themselves. Self esteem scores tended to decline with increase in age specially for girls. This study covered a wide age range. It not only examined the impact of age on self esteem of children but also probed the influence of gender in this regard. Kagan et al. (1982) had clarified that children's self esteem was either really inflated (in
comparison with that of adolescents) because of immaturity or they typically reported more positive self image than they actually felt. This investigation indicated the difference between children's and adolescents' self esteem and brought some coherence in the field. The clarification by Kagan et al. (1982) resolved the apparent conflict between the findings of different investigators in the area. In an Indian investigation (Dey and Ghosh, 2007) results revealed that the sampled children (seventy 10 to 12 year olds) possessed higher self esteem than the sampled adolescents (seventy 13 to 15 year olds) mainly because the children's self esteem was inflated in comparison with that of the adolescents. The finding was congruent with those of Hoare et al. (1993) and Kagan et al. (1982). However the sample sizes of the Dey and Ghosh's (2007) investigation were not large enough.

Karren and Roberts (2004) in a study on 66 children aged 5 to 12 years found out by administering Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory that younger children used more of primary control and less secondary control than older children. However self esteem predicted subjective quality of life for children of all ages. The shortcoming of the study was that the sample size was not large. However, the usage of primary and secondary controls were differentiated in the investigation. According to Rothbaum et al. (1982) in primary control individuals try to influence existing reality by changing other people, circumstances or events. In secondary, control individuals try to accommodate to external reality by changing their own perceptions, goals or desires. Thus Karren and Roberts' (2004) study indicated the greater maturity of older children. Cole et al. (2001) undertook a four year longitudinal investigation of 631 elementary school children. The study revealed that self appraisal increased as children grew older and self perceived competence was negatively related to levels of self reported depressive symptoms (indicating low self esteem). Being a longitudinal study conducted on a sample of large size, the outcome of the study seems dependable. In an investigation by Fichman et al. (1996) on students aged eight to fourteen years it was found out that social problems and perceptions of low
self esteem troubled subjects who tended to criticize themselves. But self criticism was found to decrease with age. A wide age – range was covered in the study. The findings are in line with those of Cole et al. (2001).

Nekol et al. (2003) examined the quality of parent – adolescent relationship across three age groups, younger (12 to 14 years), mid range (15 to 16 years) and older (17 to 18 years) adolescents. Results revealed that mid range adolescents had significantly poor relationship with their mothers than older adolescents. It also indicated that self esteem partially mediated the parent - adolescent relationship. The merit of the study is that three discrete age – levels were covered. The study highlighted the role of self esteem as a moderating variable. In a longitudinal study (Schmalz et al., 2007) 197 non – Hispanic, white girls comprised the sample. The study was conducted in the U.S.A. Significantly greater physical activity at ages 9 and 11 years were found to predict higher self esteem at ages 11 and 13 years respectively. The results suggest that participating in physical activity can lead to positive self esteem among adolescent girls, particularly the younger girls. The study is significant because it is longitudinal in approach but it suffers from limited generalizability because only one of the genders was considered.

Among a minority of investigations which deny the significant relationship between age level and self esteem is a study by Earwood et al.(2004) on 30 students with histories of aggressive behaviour and 181 students without such histories. It was found out that age differences was not significantly related to self esteem. The drawback of the study is that it included very few aggressive subjects. So the sizes of the two samples were grossly mismatched. Therefore, the finding reported by Earwood et al. (2004) must be considered with caution.
2.7 Studies on gender differences in human-figure drawing:

Delatte (1985) had reported in a study on 36 sixteen to eighteen year old adolescents that boys tended to project their feelings of self esteem in human figure drawings by varying their sizes and girls tended to project their feelings of self esteem in figure drawings by varying the femininity of the figures drawn. The obvious limitation of the study is it's small sample size. In a study on 257 boys and 296 girls (aged 5 – 11 years) Brown (1990) found out significant gender differences between the human figures drawn by 5, 6 and 9 year old boys and girls. Girls were developmentally able or willing to include more characteristics in their drawings than boys. There were significant differences in the boys’ and girls’ drawings at all ages. The investigation has been carried out on samples of large sizes. Both genders were represented. However the gender groups were not matched in sizes.

Chemey et al. (2006) in a study on 109 five to thirteen year old children confirmed that there was significant gender difference in the number of details depicted in the drawings of families. There were significant differences between girls and boys in stereotyped drawings, usage of proportionality and clothing in their drawings of family and school. A wide age range was covered. The sample size was adequate. In a study by Benziman and Marodes (1997) nineteen emotionally disturbed boys with feminine gender identity were compared with twenty-one control boys. The Draw – A – Person Test was used. It was found out that the boys with feminine identity drew the female figures with greater care. They had difficulty in identification with the male figures. The female figures drawn by them earned higher ratings than the male figures they had drawn. The study was a clinical one. The merit of the study is that boys with feminine gender identity were included.
However, there are research findings which deny the existence of gender differences in human-figure drawing e.g., in an investigation (McNamara and Porterfield, 1969) carried out on a sample of 78 five to six year old Black, disadvantaged children using the Human Figure Drawing Test, it was concluded that there were no gender differences in human-figure drawings. However, the sample size was not large enough and children much younger than those proposed to be studied in the present investigation comprised the sample. Similarly, Flannery and Watson (1995) worked with 114 elementary students and found no differences in the level of expressiveness or actual artistic skill in human-figure drawings of boys and girls. The sample size was adequate. Cox (1993) examined the human-figure drawings of 118 five to six year old, 127 seven to eight year old and 99 nine to ten year old British children. No significant gender difference was found in contouring or the amount of profiling used in the drawings. The merit of the study is that different age-groups of children were studied which widened the generalizability of the investigation. However, the samples differed in size. Again, Cox et al. (2001) drew samples of 120 British and 120 Japanese children of two age-groups: 7 years and 11 years. It was found that the human-figures drawn by the girls and the boys did not differ in the basic construction. This investigation is significant because it involved cross-cultural comparison.

2.8 Researches on gender differences in cognitive style:

Chynn et al. (1991) undertook a study on 27 boys and 24 girls (aged 3.7 to 5.8 years) using tools including the Preschool Embedded Figures Test and reported that boys were significantly less field-independent compared to girls and they were significantly more sex-role stereotyped. Same-sex typing in boys and cross-sex typing in girls were predictors of field-independence. The study was conducted on a sample of children much younger than those proposed to be included in the present study. Moreover, the sample sizes were small. So the
findings can not be relied upon much. In an Indian investigation (Sharma and Ahuja, 1982), the subjects were 120 tenth grade students. It was found that the boys were more field-independent than girls. The sample size of the study was adequate. So the finding seems to be dependable. Besides, being an Indian investigation, it is pertinent in the present context. Wang et al. (2003) in a study on 251 Chinese 11th graders using the Chinese Group Embedded Figures Test found that cognitive style significantly affected the dynamics problem solving performance of boys but not that of girls. Thus a gender differentiated impact of field—dependence— independence on problem—solving was identified in the Chinese context. Bosacki et al. (1997) found that field-independence and self esteem correlated negatively for girls but positively for boys (sample — 33 girls and 30 boys of 6th grade). So field independence—self esteem relation seems to be influenced by gender. However, since the investigation was conducted on small samples so the outcomes cannot be generalized much.

But there are certain research findings which rule out the existence of gender difference in field—dependence— independence. For instance, Howe and Doody (1989) concluded that gender difference was non-significant for samples of 28 male and 28 female 10th graders in cognitive style. The short coming of the study is its small sample sizes. Similarly, in an Indian investigation, Pushpavathamma (1980) found non—significant gender difference in field—dependence— independence for a sample of 265 subjects aged 5 to 13 years. The sample size is large enough. A wide age—range had been covered. Besides, the finding of the study is important because it was carried out in the Indian context.

In view of the conflict between whether or not gender differences exist in field—dependence— independence, Rittschof’s (2008) opinion appears valuable. He had suggested that misleading or inconsistent discussions about cognitive styles stem from the fact that field—dependence— independence is conceptualized as a cognitive style but actually measured by instruments such as the Group
Embedded Figures Test as a cognitive ability. According to Rittschof (2008) the confusion between whether field—dependence—independence is a style or an ability has to be first removed and then the outcomes of the past investigations have to be reinterpreted.

2.9 Investigations on gender differences in self esteem:

A survey of pertinent literature revealed that, generally boys possessed higher levels of self esteem than girls because of gender differences in socialization. In an Indian investigation (Rao, 1978) carried out on 220 subjects (mean age—around 14 years) studying in different high schools, gender difference in self esteem was substantiated. An adaptation of the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory suitable for the Indian context had been done by the investigator. This tool was used for data collection. The sample size was large. The result seems dependable. In another Indian study (Tiwari et al., 1979) carried out on a sample of 150 fifteen to eighteen year olds, it was found that the boys had higher self esteem than girls. Although the age level of the sample was older than that envisaged for the present study yet the investigation is relevant as it was conducted in an Indian context. In a large scale study, Maykel and Jochem(2004) collected data from early adolescents of Netherlands studying in 182 classes of 82 schools. Results indicated that boys had more positive self esteem than girls. The sample size was large and representative enough. So the outcome of the study can be relied upon. Hoare et al. (1993) performed an investigation on 8 – 15 year old Scottish school children. Results revealed that boys tended to rate themselves higher than girls in self esteem. A wide age – range was covered. The outcome of the research appears to be dependable.

In a study by Lavitt(1992) on 24 boys and 24 girls results indicated that boys and girls reported high levels of self esteem but various components of self perception were strongly interrelated for girls and not for boys. Furthermore girls did not value the competencies they possessed and held high regards for those
they lacked which confirmed that self concept in girls is more tenuously constructed than in boys. However, the study was conducted on samples of small sizes. So the findings suffer from limited acceptability. Wood et al. (1996) in an investigation on 109 male and 95 female elementary school students (aged 8 – 10 years) found out that girls demonstrated significantly higher levels of body dissatisfaction and thereby lower self esteem compared to boys. The tools included Child Figure Drawings. The result indicated that girls’ self esteem depended more on physical appearance than that of boys. Schmalz et al. (2007) in a study on 197 non – Hispanic, American white girls aged between 9 and 13 years found that participating in physical activity can foster positive self esteem among adolescent girls. The necessity of promoting physical activity among adolescent girls for improving self esteem was advocated. The sample size was adequate but the result can only be generalized to the population of non – Hispanic, American white girls. Earwood et al. (2004) found out that there is significant gender differences in self image after carrying out an investigation on 30 aggressive and 181 non – aggressive students. The pitfall of the study is that the sizes of the two samples are greatly mismatched. Elrod and Crax (1980) in a study on 49 boys and 45 girls concluded that behaviours of mothers is significantly related to high self esteem in girls while similar or same behaviours of the fathers was significantly related to low self esteem of boys and girls. It was reported that boys had higher self esteem than girls. The investigation suffers from limited generalizability because the sample sizes were relatively small. An investigation (Osarenren et al., 2008) found a significant gender difference in young adults’ self esteem (sample 200 college students). Although the subjects were much older than the subjects of the present study yet the recommendation of the investigation by Osarenren et al., (2008) seems relevant because it has been implied that preferential treatment with respect to gender must be avoided by parents so that the self esteem of children of a particular gender are not undermined.
But there are evidences which deny the existence of gender difference in self esteem. Ketcham and Morse (1965) found non-significant gender difference in self esteem for a sample of 484 third, fifth, seventh, ninth and eleventh graders. Donaldson (1974) also did not find support for gender difference in self esteem for a sample of 643 third through eighth graders. In both the studies (Ketcham and Morse, 1965; Donaldson, 1974) the sample sizes were large and the samples were representative of different age- and grade- levels. Similarly, Bosacki et al. (1997) reported that girls did not have lower self esteem than boys for a sample of 63 sixth graders (33 girls, 30 boys). But the limitation of the study is its' small sample sizes. An extensive investigation (O'Malley and Bachman, 1979) was conducted on a sample of 3183 high school senior boys and girls drawn from all over the U.S.A. It emerged that the boys and girls were very similar in the levels of self esteem. The finding seems to be reliable because the sample was large and representative.

It is evident from the above review of literature that there is a dearth of Indian investigations in the area hence the need for carrying out the present study. The survey of literature will help in the selection of the variables and tools; the formulation of the objectives and hypotheses and the choice of the techniques of statistical analyses of the present study. These methodological details appear in the next chapter.