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**An Exploration of the Relationship  
Between  
School Setting and the Self-Esteem  
of  
Grade-Six Girls**

By:  
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B.A.(Psych), Waterloo, 1983  
B.Ed., Brock, 1997

THESIS

To be submitted to the Faculty of Social Work  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
Master of Social Work  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
1999

Maureen Kropf 1999©



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*Dedicated in Loving Memory of my Dad*

**James Thoroughgood**

*This gentle and quiet man passed away during the first week of MSW classes,  
September 11, 1997.*

*He instilled in me the passion for higher education  
through his ever-constant love of learning.*

*His spirit has guided me through my educational journey,  
and his presence remains with me always.*

## Abstract

Kropf, Maureen E.T. An Exploration of the Relationship Between School Setting and the Self-Esteem of Grade-Six Girls. Wilfrid Laurier University, M.S.W., April 1999. Carol Stalker, Ph.D., Research Advisor.

This study had three purposes: 1) to explore the relationship of school setting and the self-esteem of grade-six girls, with setting defined in terms of elementary (K-6), middle (6-8) and combined (K-8); 2) to explore the relationship of school setting and the self-esteem of grade-six girls, with setting defined in terms of urban and rural; 3) to contribute Canadian knowledge to the predominantly American research on the relationship between self-esteem of students and school settings and transitions. Two major theories from this literature emerge. The first, a cumulative change theory, suggests that the cumulative effects of developmental changes and the stress of making transitions are responsible for the drop in girls' self-esteem. The second, a mismatch theory, points to the mismatch of middle school environments and practices with the developmental stages of youth as the cause of lowered self-esteem. Using an informal questionnaire and the standardized School Form of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, this study examined the self-esteem of 130 grade-six girls in samples across the three school settings in each of the rural and urban settings. The design used a single time-point assessment at the end of the grade-six year. Results of the statistical analyses did not support the hypotheses. However, a trend in the data did support the hypothesis that grade-six girls in the middle (6-8) school setting may have lower self-esteem than girls in the other two settings. This study suggests that further research including larger

samples and multiple sources of data is indicated. A significant relationship was found between girls' self-esteem and the experience of changing schools, as well as self-esteem and the employment status of girls' fathers. There was also a significant relationship between school setting and girls' reports of being in a couple relationship, although not in the direction expected.



## **Acknowledgments**

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I would like to thank the Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University, and the Waterloo Region District School Board for their financial support in acquiring testing materials for this research. I also gratefully thank the Bettina Russell Foundation for their generous support of this research through the Bettina Russell Memorial Fund.

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This project could not have been accomplished without the cooperation and support of the principals, teachers and guidance counsellors of the eleven schools from which the participants were acquired, and I gratefully acknowledge their contribution.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND STUDY QUESTION**

### **Introduction**

The development and preservation of self-esteem is an area of study that has attracted extensive interest and is the topic of volumes of literature. High self-esteem in children and adolescents has been linked not only to positive confidence levels in social and academic domains (Fenzel, 1989; McCown, Driscoll, Roop, Saklofske, Kelly, Schwean, & Gajadharsingh, 1996), but also to more positive evaluations of one's physical appearance (Fenzel, 1989). In addition, as Fenzel (1989) notes in reference to research by Compass (1987) and Garmezy (1983), "personal resources such as high self-esteem, an internal locus of control, and a sense of autonomy have been shown to serve as moderators of the stress process in children and adolescents" (p.5). Gloria Steinem, in a quote cited by Notar, Wagler-Martin, & Gould (1996), considers high self-esteem to be a "social vaccine" against an epidemic of self-destructive behaviours (p. 6).

In contrast, low self-esteem is associated with a variety of self-harming attitudes and activities (Notar et al., 1996) such as poor school performance and social difficulties (Fenzel, 1989; McCown et al., 1996). In addition, correlates of low self-esteem include such destructive behaviours as substance abuse, high risk sexual activity (Fenzel, 1989; Notar et al., 1996), increased school drop out rates, suicide attempts (Notar et al., 1996), and victimization through abusive relationships (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1990; Canadian Women's Foundation, 1998), as well as illnesses including eating disorders and depression (Notar et al., 1996).

Girls in particular are at higher risk for low self-esteem than boys. Mikel Brown & Gilligan (1992) note that, while the early developmental years seem to show similar

rates of growth in self-esteem among girls and boys, as children reach puberty, girls' self-esteem begins to drop while their male counterparts continue on a positive growth pattern.

Since children and adolescents spend a good portion of their day in the school environment, this study attempts to explore whether certain aspects of that environment may be associated with levels of self-esteem in girls. The following discussions will forward three purposes for this research, the first two of which include hypotheses for investigation.

### **Developmental Issues Leading to the Study Purposes**

A review of relevant developmental issues and research suggests that the period during the twelfth year, generally during grade six, is a significant period in which girls experience a number of transitions in physical, cognitive and social development that may affect or alter their level of self-esteem. Due to a variety of reasons, including available school space and funding issues, grade six is an academic level that can be placed generally in one of three school settings: elementary school (generally K-6\* ), middle school (6-8), or a school encompassing both of these levels (K-8).

The first purpose of this study, then, formulated from the developmental issues, is an investigation as to whether the experience of a different school setting is associated with differences in the self-esteem of grade-six girls. The study will specifically test the hypothesis that the self-esteem of grade-six girls in an elementary setting will be higher overall than that of those in a middle school setting.

---

\* Here, and throughout the paper, K signifies Kindergarten, whereas the number signifies the grade level.

The physical changes associated with puberty in girls occurs over a period of about three to four years, characterized by increased production of hormones and visible transformations in body shape and appearance (Nevid, Fichner-Rathus & Rathus, 1995; Atwater, 1992). While many of the changes, such as the growth of pubic hair and breast buds, begin to occur around the age of ten, menstruation, the “major marker event in the girl’s passage to womanhood” (Atwater, 1992, p. 61), occurs relatively late in the sequence of development, with the average age reported at around twelve and a half years (Nevid et al., 1995; Atwater, 1992). Additionally, an increase in body fat, along with weight gain and a growth spurt in body height occur during the puberty process (Nevid et al., 1995; Atwater, 1992).

The perceptions and reactions of girls during this period of body change can affect their self-esteem, particularly in response to the influence of social factors such as peers and media expectations (Atwater, 1992). Girls in grade six, just at the beginning stages of puberty, may therefore be affected by their school’s social environment. It is possible that grade-six girls in an elementary setting may not experience the sense of immaturity, and self-consciousness of their child-like body image, that their middle school counterparts may perceive as they compare themselves to their grade seven and eight school mates. Research by Blyth, Bulcroft, and Simmons (1981, cited in Atwater, 1992), supports this possibility, with results showing that early-maturing girls in grade six reported greater satisfaction with their physical appearance than did their late-maturing peers. The changing body and the stresses of competing in an environment where most grade-six girls have not gone through puberty, but the grade-seven and eight girls have, may influence how girls view themselves in relation to the image of others. Grade-six



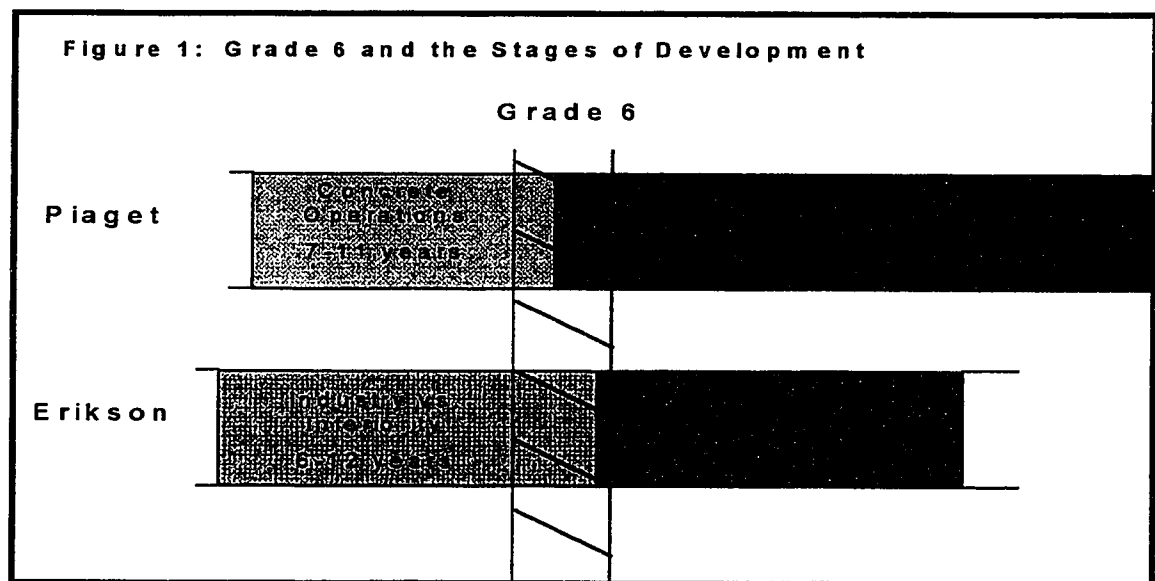
girls in middle school may view themselves as not meeting the standard of that image, resulting in lowered self-esteem.

Influencing the perceptions of girls, as well as the response of peers, is the effect of the media in terms of projecting the expectation of perfect female body image. Striegel-Moore, Silberstein, and Rodin (1986) note that, as girls gain weight at puberty as a result of increased fat tissue, their body esteem lowers as they develop farther away from what is considered beautiful. Boys, however, gain more muscle and lean tissue at puberty, which brings them "closer to the masculine ideal," (p. 249). A recent cross-cultural study by Lintunen, Leskinen, Oinonen, Salinto & Rahkila (1995) confirms that, by age twelve, the perceptions of appearance were more negative for girls, while boys reported increased positive perception of their body image. The findings also noted parallel findings for self-esteem, where it declined for girls and increased for boys as early as age twelve.

Disorders associated with low self-esteem, such as bulimia, have also been linked to the image of females in the media, as pertaining to body image. Stice, Schupak-Neuberg, Shaw, and Stein (1994), for example, formulated this eating disorder as being the end result of a series of occurrences. According to these researchers, "repeated exposure to the thin ideal portrayed in the media leads (girls) to internalize the thin ideal stereotype" (p. 836). This, in turn, leads to increased gender-role endorsement, which then creates heightened ideal body stereotype internalization. The resulting increased body dissatisfaction, as it "sets unrealistic body-dimension goals," (Stice et al., 1994, p. 839) culminates in a higher incidence of eating disorders such as bulimia, as well as the low self-esteem that accompanies it. In other words, girls who are repeatedly exposed to

the thin, impossible body dimensions of female figures in the media often develop poor body self images, as well as poor self-esteem. The media “teach girls a singular feminine ideal of thinness, beauty, and youth, set against a world in which men are more competent and also more diverse in appearance. Girls appear to internalize readily these societal messages on the importance of pursuing attractiveness.” (Striegel-Moore et al., 1986, p. 249). It follows, then, that girls in grade six, who see many of their older school mates valuing the feminine ideal, may experience a greater drop in self-esteem, despite the fact that they cannot alter the rate at which their bodies mature.

Several theorists have described developmental stages that place transition points around the eleven to twelve-year age range, suggesting that this time of transition is crucial in the development of children. Piaget and Erikson, in particular, indicate stage transitions that occur during the grade-six school year (See Figure 1).



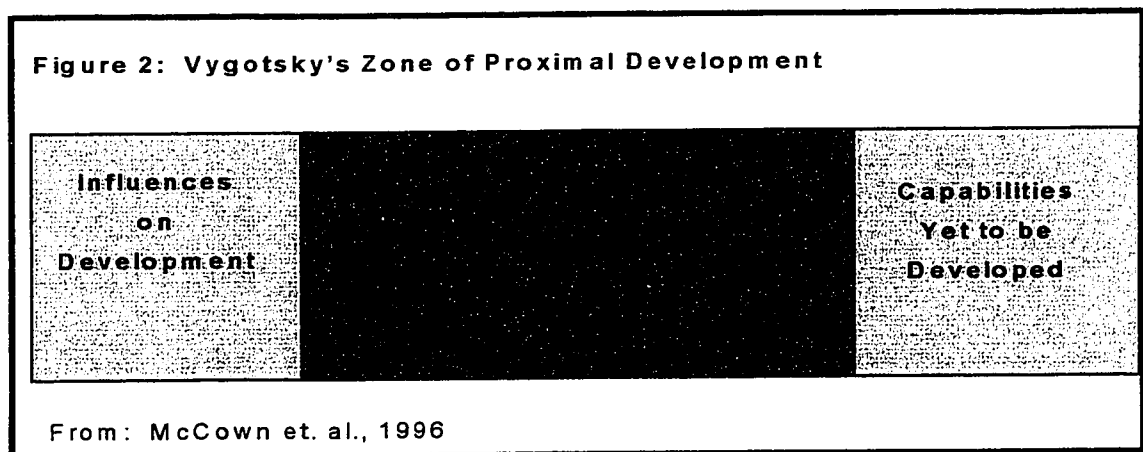
Noting that extensive testing has determined the age range of the given stages (Atwater, 1992), and Bill 160 (1997; formerly the Education Act of Ontario) has defined the age at which children attend school, grade-six students appear to be on the cusp of the adolescent stage, but they have generally not completely mastered the tasks for successful completion of their current stage. In considering Piaget's theory of cognitive development, many grade-six students would still be functioning at the concrete operations stage, where their ability for abstract thought and reasoning is limited by their need for physically oriented concepts (Atwater, 1992; McCown et al., 1996). With environment playing an important part in Piaget's theory of development, it follows that those students placed in an elementary setting would have increased opportunity to accomplish their stage-related tasks, given the concrete orientation of this setting, as opposed to those in an environment where the rest of the students have already mastered these tasks and are engaging in much more flexible, hypothetical thinking. Not only do grade-six students who have been moved to a new middle school setting have to adjust and fit into that new environment, but the successful mastery of their cognitive developmental stage may become compromised, as they are pulled into interactions with older students who are working on different developmental issues, and where the environment is geared towards the majority adolescent population. The various perspectives and multiple understandings characteristic of formal operations thinking may be a struggle for those not yet ready for this stage (McCown et al., 1996). The consequences that may result could include confusion, frustration, or inappropriate interactions, culminating in feelings of inadequacy, leading to lowered self-esteem.

The failure to adequately resolve the developmental crisis defined in Erikson's psycho-social stages of development can also have a detrimental effect on the self-esteem of students. During the grade six year, the main focus of development is to gain a sense of industry, generally through successful accomplishment, and receiving encouragement and recognition for their performance. As leaders in an elementary setting, the increased opportunities to achieve success in leadership roles, as well as in academics and social interactions without the adolescent peer pressure associated with the next stage, may produce students much more capable of resolving the developmental crisis and gaining a sense of self-efficacy. McCown et al. (1996) notes that, during the industry-versus-inferiority stage of development, "children need to gain self-confidence through successful performance. Self-confidence grows through others' recognition of successes based on personal effort, productivity, and persistence" (p. 75). It follows, then, that children placed in a middle school setting, where they are no longer the leaders of the school, but are still working on issues of industry, may not gain recognition of their successes from older school mates, which may in turn inhibit their ability to seek out experiences that will earn them the success and recognition they need. Because Erikson believed that relationships with others directly influence the search for, and resolution of, the developmental crisis (McCown et al., 1996), the interactions grade-six students in a middle school setting may experience with the older students would be an important element in the search for resolution. However, now viewed as immature youngsters in a new school, the older students may respond to grade-six efforts for recognition as unworthy or intrusive, complicating achievement of successful crisis resolution. The

consequence of unsuccessful resolution of the developmental crisis is that the student will develop a sense of inferiority, and therefore a lowered sense of self-esteem.

By placing grade-six students in a middle school setting in which they are the only grade level working on developmental issues continued from elementary school, it is possible that these students may be prematurely pulled into developmental tasks or crises for which they are not yet ready, or which they may be incapable of addressing.

Whether it is the tasks involved in the stages according to Piaget or Erikson, it is useful to examine the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development offered by Lev Vygotsky (Figure 2). Vygotsky not only believed that learning pulled development, but that social interactions were vital in the learning process (McCown et al., 1996). While most learning occurs within the zone of developing capabilities, pulling students too far into territory beyond the zone would result in frustration and confusion, and a lowered perception of their own capabilities. In addition to being a fundamental aspect of successful classroom teaching, this philosophy can be extended to the discussion of grade-six school placement. If children who are pulled into academic situations beyond their zone of development find that success is limited or unattainable, placing students in



social situations beyond their capabilities may also predict inadequate resolutions to developmental tasks, resulting in frustration and failure, and detrimental effects on the development and maintenance of their self-esteem.

The contributions of Carol Gilligan to the knowledge of girls' development cannot be ignored, particularly since this study specifically involves the exploration of female students' self-esteem. Uncovering the bias in previous developmental theories that generalized male development to both genders, Gilligan pursued the quest to discover the differences in male versus female maturation (Luepnitz, 1988; Gilligan, 1993). While it is important to note that a girl's experience, for example, may interweave Erikson's stages of industry and intimacy (Luepnitz, 1988), rather than proceeding one after the other as for boys, it should also be considered that, in a middle school setting, the older girls may have still worked further through the industry stage, and may not be willing to accept younger girls still struggling with those issues. In addition, if girls do indeed struggle with the multiple issues of dual stages, as Gilligan suggests, then the added pressure to resolve the crises may make resolution more difficult, and further have an effect on self-esteem. Mary Pipher, in Reviving Ophelia -- Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls (1994) reflects this possibility, noting that, "something dramatic happens to girls in adolescence... they lose their resiliency and optimism... their assertive, energetic and 'tomboyish' personalities and become more deferential, self-critical and depressed" (Pipher, 1994, p. 19). While not diminishing the developmental needs of boys, this research reflects the need to discover and "begin to cultivate different qualities" (Luepnitz, 1988, p. 45) in the quest to understand the lives and needs of females. Pipher's (1994) observation that many girls in middle school become sad, angry failures

despite entering the school as confident, well-adjusted students, compared to the male trend to positive esteem development, speaks to this need to explore issues in girls' school experience.

The size and diversity of Waterloo Region, the geographic location of this research, suggests a second purpose to this study. With this author having resided in both urban and rural settings within the region, it is an observation, confirmed by Board of Education enrollment statistics (Waterloo County Board of Education, 1997) and discussions with a board planner, that rural school settings, overall, possess a more stable enrollment of students, whereas the enrollment in urban schools, overall, tends to show more movement. It should be noted that, while the statistics only reflect pupil population, and do not follow specific students, (i.e. the numbers could remain the same from year to year, while in actual fact there could be a high turnover of students), discussions with the board planner confirm the relative stability of rural student populations. In addition, within the urban settings, some schools, particularly those outside of the core areas, also have relatively stable enrollments, but overall, the urban schools show a higher population turnover (personal communication with K. Dietrich, Planner, Waterloo Region District School Board, April 1, 1998).

Children in rural settings may have the opportunity to experience longer relationships with peers than those in urban settings in general. The familiarity and longevity of these relationships may contribute to a broader social support system, and in turn, an environment that may be more risk-free in terms of trying out new behaviours, as well as more forgiving of those actions resulting from poor choices (Griffin, 1993), than one in which children must search for acceptance and develop trust with ever-changing

peers. Fahey (1993) contends that, not only are the bonds of community stronger in the countryside and small towns, but this sense of community is a frame of mind that encompasses the acceptance and worth of each member, a concept not as apparent in large urban settings where neighbours tend not to know, or want to get to know, each other. McCown et al. (1996) also identify students who move to new areas and attend new schools as temporarily “at risk” for lowered self esteem, with its accompanying poor school performance and behaviour choices, as well as difficulty in forming new friendships. These students remain “at risk” until satisfactory adjustments have been made, which take varying amounts of time, depending on the child.

The second purpose of this study, then, given the opportunity presented by the nature of the geographical area, is to explore whether differences in self-esteem exist in the grade-six female subjects in rural versus urban schools. Specifically, with direction from the above discussion, the hypothesis is presented that rural grade-six girls will have higher self-esteem overall than their urban counterparts.

A third and final purpose of this research reflects the lack of Canadian literature in the area of grade six placement. Although an examination of current literature is presented specific to the inquiry focus, it is noted by this author that the studies reviewed are primarily American in nature. With a researcher bias that reflects the belief that Canadians and Americans can differ in values and policies, it is the position of the author that Canadian research, data and conclusions are necessary for the advancement of knowledge concerning our Canadian school children.



## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

An examination of current literature specific to the inquiry focus of this study reveals a significant body of research involving self-esteem in the grade-six age group. However, this literature is primarily concerned with issues related to the students' transition to middle school (Grades 7-8) and the difficulties experienced following this transition. Few researchers specifically address the issue of school setting with respect to the grade-six age group, except to compare pre- and post-transition students from elementary to middle schools. Since two of the three proposed groups for this study include a pre-transition group (K-6) and a post-transition group (6-8), a discussion of this area of research is relevant to understanding the different school settings as they apply to these groups. It is noteworthy to recognize that all of the research cited is American, suggesting the third purpose of this study, which is to contribute a Canadian perspective in understanding a specific area of children's self-esteem.

Two specific theories addressing declining female self-esteem within the literature on the transition to middle school, coupled with the developmental concerns specifically related to the grade-six population discussed earlier, justify the supposition that those grade-six students placed in a middle school setting will have more difficulty, given their stage of development. The first theory, termed the 'cumulative change theory', looks at the effects of the transition itself, and includes comparisons between the elementary and middle school settings in explaining lowered self-esteem. It also addresses how certain student populations and attitudes are affected once the transition has occurred. The 'mismatch theory', which argues that middle school practices are

incongruent with adolescent developmental needs, comprises the second body of information. In addition to discussing these two theories and the literature supporting them, this chapter will review research suggesting that transition to middle school is often accompanied by a decrease in girls' physical activity and involvement in extracurricular opportunities, and that such decreased participation in these areas is associated with lower self-esteem. As well, research indicating an association between academic performance and a decline in self-esteem will also be addressed. Finally, a brief discussion of the protective nature of self-esteem will be offered as it relates to the purposes of this research.

### **Cumulative Change Theory**

School setting and its impact on self-esteem have been studied and augmented by a group of researchers led by R.G. Simmons and D.A. Blyth (in Seidman, Allen, Aber, Mitchell & Feinman, 1994; Anderman & Maehr, 1994), in which students who moved into a middle school in seventh grade were compared to those remaining in a K-8 setting. The results demonstrated that the self-esteem of girls who experienced transition to new schools declined, whereas those remaining in K-8 did not (Anderman & Maehr, 1994). In addition, this disadvantage continued to be present for the transitional girls even after entering high school (Anderman & Maehr, 1994). Previous studies also uncovered evidence that the negative effects on girl's self-esteem was particularly significant if the transition occurred concurrently with the early onset of puberty or other negative life events such as death, divorce or geographic mobility (Simmons, Burgeson, Carlton-Ford & Blyth, 1987). In a cross-cultural study, Simmons, Black, & Zhou (1991) indicate a parallel decline in self-esteem for both white and African-American populations

following transition to middle school. Other longitudinal research, however, while indicating that self-esteem then tends to rise across adolescence, documents one notable exception: white girls who make the transition to middle school show consistent evidence of declining self-esteem (Wigfield & Eccles, 1994).

Several authors identify aspects of the middle school environment as influential in the decline of self-esteem. Whereas elementary schools are characterized as smaller, less formal, with single, supportive teachers who are familiar with each child's strengths (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Seidman et al., 1994; Cotterell, 1992), middle schools are reported as having more emphasis on teacher control and discipline, less opportunity for student decision making, and less student contact time with teachers who are generally subject matter specialists and who, because of a rotary system, see students for significantly less time during the day (Wigfield & Eccles, 1994; Seidman et. al, 1994; Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Eccles, Wigfield, Midgley, Reuman, Mac Iver & Feldlaufer, 1993; Cotterell, 1992). The larger populations of middle schools, stemming from the influx of several feeder schools, means that transitional students must adapt to new peers in addition to the changed physical and academic environment. In a study by Wigfield, Eccles, Mac Iver, Reuman & Midgley (1991), the observed decline in self-esteem immediately following the transition to seventh grade middle school is explained in terms of status and familiarity of environment. The authors note that, in sixth grade, when self-esteem is high, the children are the oldest students in school and therefore have more status. After moving to the unfamiliarity of a middle school, where children become the youngest, self-esteem drops.

### **Mismatch Theory**

The mismatch theory of lower self-esteem in middle schools relates to the incongruence of the middle school environment, characterized by the previously cited decreased opportunity for student decision-making, excessive rules and discipline, poor teacher-student relationships, as well as stricter grading practices (Anderman & Maehr, 1994), and the developmental needs of this particular age group. These needs, “best nurtured by a strong sense of autonomy, independence, self-determination, and social interaction” (Anderman & Maehr, 1994, p. 294; Eccles et al., 1993; Seidman et al. 1994), are undermined by the documented practices of middle schools. Developmentally, these seventh grade students may experience increased difficulty in resolving the tasks required of them to successfully master their developmental stage. Specifically, their sense of identity is at risk, with the result that lower self-esteem may ensue (McCown et al., 1996).

In addition to the practices of the middle school, Cotterell (1992) offers a variation to the mismatch theory, by stating that, in addition to the various practices cited, the difference is school size across the transition “may accentuate the degree of discontinuity” (p. 42). His findings suggest that the degree of adjustment was greater for students transferring to larger middle schools than for those whose transfers involved less of a size change. While the research indicates that most traditional middle schools exhibit characteristics detrimental to transitional students’ developmental needs and self-esteem, the effects may be lessened if the school is of a smaller size.

### **Physical Activity, Extracurricular Involvement, and Self-Esteem**

The disruption of social networks experienced in the middle school environment is linked to decreased participation in physical activity and extracurricular involvement for girls (Wigfield & Eccles, 1994, Seidman et al., 1994), impacting on self-esteem, as well as becoming a predictor of early school drop-out. Bunker (1991) emphasizes the importance of physical activity in the positive development of self-esteem, but notes that many teachers and parents convey to girls low expectations for performance through cultural stereotypes that boys are more competent. In addition, parental attitudes that influence the value of sport to children often reinforce this outlook through their actions. Bunker (1991) notes that, while fathers take on the responsibility to develop physical or athletic skills in sons, they rarely take that responsibility for girls. Mothers, on the other hand, seldom initiate activity with either gender, although this could be a reflection of their own socialization and upbringing.

Attitudes about changing body appearance due to puberty and media influence on perceptions of what is ideal can also influence girls' declining involvement in physical activity. In research by Wood, Becker & Thompson (1996), results indicate that, not only do girls demonstrate higher levels of body dissatisfaction and lower levels of self-esteem than boys, these feelings of inadequacy begin much earlier than the previously reported middle adolescence. In fact, the authors report that by age ten, girls already display lower self-esteem than boys, and indicate desires to be thinner than their current figures. The influence of media ideals are incorporated into girls' perceptions of beauty (Atwater, 1992; Striegel-Moore et al., 1986; Stice et al., 1994), and the resulting social

comparisons increase feelings of self-consciousness (Wigfield et al., 1991) which can translate into reluctance to participate in physical activity.

A third explanation for decreased physical activity in transitional environments is the suggestion that early adolescence is a time of gender-role intensification, in which “males and females adopt more extreme differences in their activities and self-perceptions” (Lintunen, et. al, 1995). The trend to conforming to more gender-role stereotypes can influence involvement in activities, resulting in less involvement in activities perceived as inappropriate for their gender (Wigfield et al., 1991). For girls, this translates into less physical activity and its correlate, lower self-esteem.

Whether due to a disruption of social networks, increased self-consciousness about body appearance, or gender-role intensification, the drop in participation in physical and extracurricular activity following girls’ transitions to grade seven in middle school (Seidman et al., 1994) can have other detrimental effects, not only on self-esteem. In a recent conference presentation, Diane Elze and Arlene Rubin Stiffman (unpublished) presented results of their research which showed that the most significant protective factor against school drop-out is students’ participation in activities, which in turn enhances self-esteem through successful experience and feedback, as well as providing increased social networks (Bunker, 1991).

### **Academic Performance and Self-Esteem**

While the social and physical domains of self-esteem have been discussed, the academic component is also considered in the literature around post-transitional self-esteem decline. Research has shown that academic grades consistently decrease following the transition to seventh grade (Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Seidman et al., 1994),

both across ethnic lines (Simmons et al., 1991; Seidman et al., 1994) as well as urban versus suburban settings (Seidman et al., 1994), although reference to rural settings was not indicated. This is particularly evident in research describing the challenges of gifted girls (Randall, 1997), which noted the significant drop in performance through the transition year to junior high school. Gifted girls were more likely to deny their ability in order to conform to gender-role stereotypes where girls' intelligence is seen as detrimental to forming adequate social networks and threatening potential relationships with boys. The resulting lower self-esteem is particularly significant in those gifted girls who scored high in expressive or undifferentiated traits (Randall, 1997).

### **Self-Esteem as a Protective Factor**

Self-esteem as a protective factor has been discussed by several authors. Whether high self-esteem is seen as enhancing the effects of other factors, such as parental nurturance and autonomy-supporting family environments (Zimmerman, Copeland, Shope & Dielman, 1997; Lord et al., 1994), or as a protective factor that limits the effects of negative influences including peer pressure and school transition (Zimmerman et al. 1997; Notar et al., 1996), the high self-esteem attained by some children limits susceptibility to negative influences (Zimmerman et al., 1997).

### **Summary**

It is important to recognize that all of the literature cited, except for Seidman et al. (1994) and Fenzel (1992), defines transitional students as those moving from grade six elementary to grade seven in the middle school. Seidman and his colleagues (1994) included school samples with transitions from both K-5 to 6-8, as well as from K-6 to

7-9. Although they found similar effects on self-esteem as other research, they note that these effects were independent of age or grade of transition. While this observation may be due to the sample being primarily poor urban youth, the authors note that a post-transitional year data point could provide further evidence that might clarify the influence of developmental issues.

The many detrimental effects of the transition to junior high school explored in the literature indicate that transitions pose difficulties for even the most solidly developed student entering middle school. One wonders if the effects on the younger children making transitions after grade five, who are working on earlier developmental stage issues, will suffer greater effects and therefore sustain greater damage to their self-esteem. Fenzel (1992), studying the effect of relative age on self-esteem, used grade five subjects who subsequently attended a middle school in grade six. He found that the effects of being relatively younger than most classmates appears to be detrimental to academic and social adjustment in the new school, with the additional finding that the relative age effects do not tend to disappear as they do for the older transitional students (Lord, Eccles & McCarthy, 1994; Wigfield et al. 1991; Cotterell, 1992). While older students may, through the grade seven year, recapture some of their lost self-esteem through adjustment or the development of abstract thinking, younger students, and particularly girls, who experience transition sooner, appear to suffer prolonged effects that lower their self-esteem.

Although the literature on the effects of school transitions focuses primarily on the transition between grade six and grade seven in American schools, it is relevant to this study in that it suggests that school transition effects the self-esteem of students and



that the effects on younger girls may be greater and longer lasting than the effects on older girls. This study investigated the self-esteem of grade-six girls in three types of schools across both rural and urban settings. The study's subjects were in effect pre-transitional, post-transition and non-transitional in nature. The study also addressed the conspicuous absence of a Canadian perspective in the previous research.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

### Purposes and Hypotheses

**To review, the three purposes of this study are:**

1. To explore the relationship between school setting and the self-esteem of grade-six girls, with school setting defined in terms of elementary, middle, and combined.
2. To explore the relationship between school setting and the self-esteem of grade-six girls, with school setting defined in terms of rural and urban.
3. To contribute Canadian research to enhance our knowledge of Canadian school children's issues and needs.

**The two hypotheses derived from the purposes are:**

1. Grade-six girls in an elementary school setting will show higher self-esteem overall than grade-six girls in a middle school setting.
2. Grade-six girls in a rural school setting will show higher self-esteem overall than grade-six girls in an urban setting.

### Definition of Self-Esteem

The conceptual definition of self-esteem used in this study is that provided by McCown et al. (1996), who made a distinction between self-concept and self-esteem. While self-concept is defined as a person's description of themselves in term of roles, attributes, or characteristics, self-esteem "refers to a person's evaluation of his or her self-concept and the feelings associated with that evaluation" (p. 68).

Several authors further define self-esteem as consisting of the dimensions of social self-esteem in peer relationships, academic self-esteem, physical self-esteem and self-esteem as it relates to relationships with parents and the home (Coopersmith, 1981;

Seidman et al., 1994; Wigfield et al., 1991; McCown et al., 1996). While social self-esteem incorporates the complexities of peer friendships, same-sex and opposite-sex relationships, and the development of a social network, parent-home self-esteem refers to relationships with parents and the home environment. School subjects, in particular reading and math, as well as developing career concerns, constitute academic self-esteem, and physical self-esteem involves not only appearance and attractiveness to others, but also physical ability (Berk, 1994). The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, which is used in this study, operationally defines all of these conceptual elements in the definition of self-esteem.

### **Selection of Schools**

The participants for this study were girls enrolled in grade six within the Waterloo Region District School Board during the months of May and June in the 1997-1998 school year. The student samples were selected from the three grade-six settings, specifically K-6, 6-8, and K-8, as well as from both rural and urban settings. Since relative demographic homogeneity was desired across the samples, schools known to have high recent immigrant enrollments, as well as those with a predominance of low socio-economic status or families on social assistance were excluded from consideration. New immigrants may be at a disadvantage with the English-only assessment measures, while the negative effects on self-esteem of poverty and stigmatization associated with social assistance have been documented in an in-depth Canadian study (Offord & Boyle, 1989). Table 1 illustrates the schools that were proposed as setting for recruitment of participants.

**Table 1: Proposed Schools for Recruiting Participants**

<u>Urban</u>	<u>Rural</u>
<u>K-6</u>	<u>K-6</u>
Franklin Lexington Meadowlane**	Bridgeport Heidelberg*
<u>6-8</u>	<u>6-8</u>
Doon Westheights**	Wilmot Senior
<u>K-8</u>	<u>K-8</u>
Northlake Woods Lincoln Heights**	Forest Glen Breslau**

\* This is a grade 1-6 school, not K-6

\*\*These are back-up schools in case numbers are not met in the others.

With full co-operation from the school board, these schools were sent an outline of the study along with a request for their participation from Dr. Jim Dudeck, chair of the Research Committee at the board. A sample copy of this letter appears in Appendix A.

### Selection of Subjects

In order to recruit participants, a brief presentation of the study was made by the researcher to all grade-six classes in the participating schools. The presentation included information on the different types of grade-six school settings, and that American research has indicated that there may be differences in the way kids not only get involved in various activities and interactions in relation to the setting they are in, but that there may be a relationship between the type of setting and how they view themselves, particularly for girls. The students were informed of the selection process for being involved in the study, that although they may be willing to participate, they may not be

chosen in the end, as well as the requirements for consent, both from their parents/guardians, and themselves. The girls were offered the opportunity to be involved in this study as part of their respective school settings, and had the opportunity to have any of their questions addressed. A letter explaining the research (see Appendix B), as well as a consent form for parents/guardians allowing their daughter's participation in the study (see Appendix C), was offered to each grade-six girl to take home to their parents. An important message contained within these forms was that the confidentiality of all participants would be strictly protected.

### **Sample Size**

The guidelines selected for this study involved obtaining a random sample from the returned consent forms of not less than 20 girls, and not more than 30 girls, selected from each of the six school settings as defined in the study purposes and hypotheses, for a total sample size of 120 to 180 participants. In order to negate specific effects related to teacher or teaching style, which may influence development of self-esteem in students (McCown et al., 1996; Coopersmith, 1981), girls from all grade-six classes within the school had the opportunity to listen to the presentation. As a result, where possible, participants were distributed across these classes, provided parental consent had been received. Prior to beginning assessment, the consent of the students themselves was obtained (see Appendix D).

### **Measures**

Participants were asked to complete two instruments to gather information about the students and to measure self-esteem. With both of these tools, the confidentiality of each participant was ensured through anonymity, as names were not requested. The only

partially identifying information was school and birth date, used to code the forms in order to match the two instruments should they become separated, as well as to match them for analysis purposes.

The first instrument is an informal questionnaire that includes not only demographic information, but also seeks information such as involvement in extracurricular activity, social networks and self-evaluations (See Appendix E).

The second instrument, a standardized measure of self-esteem, is the School Form of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) (Coopersmith, 1981), which was developed and tested on school children, including those in grade six. As mentioned earlier, this measure supports the same conceptualization of self-esteem as has been used for this study. While it can be argued that the Coopersmith's short form can be a satisfactory substitute for the longer form in scoring overall self-esteem (Chiu, 1985), the desire of this study was to look at the differing dimensions of self-esteem in addition to overall self-esteem. Since the short form does not provide such information, the longer school form was employed.

The school form contains fifty-eight items which participants indicate are either "like me" or "unlike me." Fifty of these items are scored for an overall measure of self-esteem, and can be further broken down into sub-scales of General Self, Social Self-Peers, Home-Parents, and School-Academic. The higher the score, the higher the self-esteem of the child. The remaining eight items are not included in the self-esteem score, but constitute the Lie Scale, a measure to determine students' test wiseness or defensiveness in responding.

Witt, Heffer and Pfeiffer (1990) reported that the internal consistency for the SEI was .80-.92, and test-retest reliability was .88 over five weeks and .64 over one year. Hains (1994) also reports reliability estimates in excess of .80, stating that the instrument can be used with confidence, while Zimmerman et al. (1997) claim an internal reliability of the measure for sixth grade students at .73.

A search of the literature establishes that a number of researchers have in recent years used the Coopersmith SEI in assessing grade-six children (Zimmerman et al., 1997; De Luca, Hazen & Cutler, 1993; Hains, 1994; Shechtman, 1993; Lawrence & Bennett, 1992; Chiu, 1985). Coopersmith (1981) conducted and reviewed several studies with regard to the validity of the Coopersmith self-esteem scores and reports that a significant relationship between its self-esteem scores and creativity, academic achievement, resistance to group pressures, willingness to express unpopular opinions, perceived popularity, effective communication between parents and youth, and family adjustment, among others, was found.

### **Data Analysis**

The two independent variables, school setting defined in terms of elementary (K-6), middle (6-8), and combined (K-8), and school setting defined in terms of rural versus urban, are nominal variables. The dependent variable is self-esteem, an interval variable.

The appropriate statistic for testing the two hypotheses was factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA). These tests allowed investigation as to whether school setting (K-6, 6-8, K-8) has a main effect on the self-esteem of grade-six girls, and whether rural or

urban school setting has a main effect on the self-esteem of grade-six girls. It also allowed for examination of interactive effects between the two independent variables.

One-way ANOVA and independent t-tests were utilized to examine whether significant relationships existed between self-esteem and variables including family structure, parents' employment status, extracurricular activities and being in a couple relationship.

The girls from different school settings in both rural and urban areas of the region were also compared in terms of single-parent versus two-parent family, parents' employment status, involvement in extracurricular activities and sports, report of a couple relationship, and presence of a boyfriend, using chi-square tests.

Finally, correlations between the dimensions of self-esteem, as well as self-esteem and age, were examined.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents a profile of the participants who agreed to be involved in this research, and the results of tests of the study hypotheses. The schools from which the subjects were recruited, and observations made during the research presentations will be described. Subsequent sections will outline characteristics of the sample, and the findings produced by the analysis of the data.

### **School Participation**

In response to the invitation to participate in the research, the principals of several schools initially contacted declined to be involved in the study. These schools were Franklin, Lexington, Meadowlane, Doon, and Forest Glen. As a result, either the alternate school, or in some cases, a school other than those initially proposed, was contacted regarding participation. These schools were selected using the same criteria as the initial school list. Two new schools (Elizabeth Ziegler and Keatsway) were acquired in the urban K-6 setting, as all three of the originally proposed sites declined participation, while a school was added in each of the rural K-6 (Little's Corners) and K-8 (St. Jacobs) settings to increase the participant number. Table 2 shows the schools which agreed to participate in the study.

**Table 2: Schools Participating in the Research**

<b><u>Urban</u></b>	<b><u>Rural</u></b>
<b><u>K-6</u></b>	<b><u>K-6</u></b>
Elizabeth Ziegler Keatsway	Bridgeport Heidelberg* Little's Corners*
<b><u>6-8</u></b>	<b><u>6-8</u></b>
Westheights	Wilmot Senior
<b><u>K-8</u></b>	<b><u>K-8</u></b>
Lincoln Heights Northlake Woods	Breslau St. Jacobs

\*This is a grade 1-6 school, not K-6

### **Presentation Observations**

As noted in the methodology, a brief presentation about the research was given to grade-six students in order to describe the study process and purposes, and generate interest about being involved in the study. As these presentations progressed, it was observed that the students, in all but two notable cases, responded to the presentation in similar fashion, both in behaviour and types of questions.

With the exception of the two cases, to be described later, the girls at each site appeared, overall, not only interested in the study, but excited to be considered for participation. They were attentive throughout the presentation, and readily asked a number of questions to gain deeper understanding of both the research and its purposes. Interestingly, the questions from the girls were quite similar over each of the settings.

The following are types of questions the girls asked:

Why did you pick only girls for the study?

How did you think of this idea?

How long will it be when it is done?

How long has it taken so far, and how long until it is finished?

What happens when the study is finished? Where does it go?

Who is going to read it?

Why can you have only some of us and not everyone who wants to do it?

Can you please pick me for the study?

Two instances are noteworthy in their differences to the observed similarities across settings, noted above. In the first case, the teacher of one of the classes was not aware that the study was for girls only, and allowed the boys to remain for the presentation. While the boys expressed interest in the research, and asked similar questions to those above, it was observed by the researcher that the girls in the class remained, for the most part, quiet, and seemed reluctant to risk asking questions in the presence of the opposite gender. Judging from the consistency of the questions across settings, it was determined that most of the information they would likely want to know was answered through the boys' questions. The girls, as were students in all settings, were encouraged to use the telephone numbers on the Information Form for Parents if they had further inquiries.

The students at another school were also observed to have a markedly different response to the presentation. In this class, which also included both boys and girls, there were no questions at all, from either gender. Although the students sat quietly and

respectfully throughout the presentation, it was difficult to judge their interest due to the absence of any verbal interaction. Interestingly, this same class, when the time came to administer the questionnaires, was the only sample of girls that did not have to be admonished for talking during the data gathering process.

### **Questionnaire Administration**

As a practice run, the researcher administered the questionnaires to her own grade-six daughter, and several issues came to light that were incorporated in the verbal instructions to the study sample. First, the girls were reminded that their name was not to appear on the forms. Secondly, instruction was given regarding the placing of marks on the standardized form, in order that marks were to appear inside a box, and not between boxes if they were unsure of the answer. The girls were referred to the written instructions that stated they were to answer how they usually felt in the particular situation. Finally, the girls were assured that every family type was both important and relevant, but that space only permitted a small selection of family constellations. They were encouraged to use the “other” section if they thought their family make up did not fit the offered examples.

As the girls completed the questionnaires, one question was consistently asked across the settings. This referred to the meaning of the word “scolded” as used in the standardized form. The researcher was careful to give the same answer to every student who asked (someone giving you heck for something), thereby ensuring that all students understood the word in a similar fashion.

### **Sample Size**

While the original design involved randomly selecting subjects in order to achieve a sample size within the guideline of 20-30 girls in each setting, the number of girls volunteering to participate fell naturally between these guidelines, therefore random sampling did not need to occur.

The school, number of grade six girls, number who participated, and the percentage of participation is depicted in Table 3.

In the process on entering the data, two cases were deleted from the final total of 132, bringing the total number of cases used for analysis to 130, with 69 girls participating from the urban settings, and 61 girls from the rural settings. The first case was deleted because the participant did not complete the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, and thus no self-esteem data was available. The data from the second participant was deleted for two reasons. In reviewing all the data, it appeared that the answers this student gave on the informal questionnaire were out of the ordinary compared with other students, depicting a rather flippant tone, and thereby implying that the student did not approach this task with the appropriate seriousness. For example, when asked about her previous school, the answer given was “a lousy” school; when asked about siblings, the respondent answered “two lousy sisters.” Secondly, the lie score on the standardized questionnaire was high (5 out of 8). Coopersmith (1981) indicates that the instance of a high lie score may indicate that the inventory is invalid when further observational reports are considered. In the case of this student, the high lie score coupled with the inappropriate responses on the informal questionnaire gave the researcher sufficient cause to question the validity of the data.

**Table 3: Subject Participation**

<b>School</b>	<b>Date Presented</b>	<b>Date of Data Collection</b>	<b>Number of Gr. 6 Girls Overall</b>	<b>Number of Gr. 6 Girls Participating</b>	<b>Percentage of Participation</b>
<b><u>Urban Schools:</u></b>					
Elizabeth Ziegler	June 2, 1998 June 4, 1998*	June 10, 1998 June 15, 1998*	27	18	67%
Keatsway	May 28, 1998	June 10, 1998	33	13	39%
Westheights	June 10, 1998	June 15, 1998	30**	19	63%
Lincoln Heights	June 10, 1998	June 16, 1998	17	7	41%
Northlake Woods	May 26, 1998	June 2, 1998	22	13	59%
<b>Total Urban Participation:</b>			<b>129</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>54.3%</b>
<b><u>Rural Schools:</u></b>					
Bridgeport	June 2, 1998	June 8, 1998	14	5	36%
Heidelberg	May 27, 1998	June 3, 1998	4	4	100%
Little's Corners	June 2, 1998	June 8, 1998	14	8	57%
Wilmot Senior	May 26, 1998 May 27, 1998*	June 3, 1998	56	23	41%
Breslau	May 26, 1998	June 8, 1998	25	13	52%
St. Jacobs	June 4, 1998	June 10, 1998	16	9	56%
<b>Total Rural Participation:</b>			<b>129</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>Total Participation:</b>			<b>258</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>51.2%</b>

\* Two dates are listed to accommodate the number of students and/or classes, or for the convenience of the teachers.

\*\* Due to the high number of grade-six girls in this school (84), the guidance counsellor chose to present a general outline of the study to the girls, and those interested came to the presentation.

**With the exception of overall totals, all percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.**

It should be noted that, while some other girls obtained high lie scores, examination of the informal questionnaire responses by the researcher in those cases did not suggest that the data might be unreliable. To be clear, the criteria for excluding the second case was 1) a high lie score; 2) the informal questionnaire responses were out of the ordinary compared to the responses of other participants; and 3) the researcher's subjective impression that this participant was motivated by a wish to defy authority in answering her questions.

### **Characteristics of the Sample**

#### **Demographics**

As noted above, 132 girls participated in the study, with the data collected from 130 accepted for analysis. The girls ranged in age from 11 years, 5 months to 12 years, 6 months, with a mean age of 11 years, 11 ½ months. Of those girls who responded (N=127), 79 (62.2%) indicated they lived in the city, 37 (29.1%) lived in a rural town, and 11 (8.7%) lived on a farm. One hundred and twenty one (96%) of responding girls (N=126) lived in a house, while five (4%) lived in an apartment.

Fifty (40.7%) respondents who indicated their previous school (N=123) had experienced a transition from their fifth to sixth grade of school, while 73(59.3%) did not.

Within the family, 111 (85.4%) girls lived in a household with two biological parent, while 19 (14.6%) indicated other constellations: 9 (6.9%) with a mother only, 4 (3.1%) with a mother and step-father, 4 (3.1%) with a father and step-mother, 1 (0.8%) in a joint custody arrangement, and 1 (0.8%) in foster care. Of 126 girls responding, 13 (10.3%) said they had no siblings, while 113 (89.9%) indicated siblings were present in the home. The type of siblings were somewhat evenly split, with 38 (30.2%) of the girls

responding having same gender siblings, 41 (32.5%) having opposite gender siblings, and 34 (27%) indicating siblings of mixed gender. Forty-eight (36.9%) girls responded that their siblings were older than they were, 36 (27.7%) girls were the eldest child, while 23 (17.7%) indicated they had both older and younger siblings. The remaining 23 (17.7%) were only children (12) (9.2%) or their birth order was unclear to the researcher from their responses (11) (8.5%). It should be noted that one participant listed herself as having siblings, but they resided in another home.

Over three-quarters of the 130 respondents indicated they had at least one pet in or around their home. While 29 (22.3%) girls did not indicate having a pet at home, 101 (77.7%) girls, consisting of 43 (33.1%) with one pet, 24 (18.5%) with two pets, and 34 (26.2%) with three or more pets, stated they did.

With regard to parent employment status, it appears that more mothers either work part-time or stay at home than do fathers. Of 129 girls responding, 26 (20.2%) reported that their mothers stayed at home, 34 (26.4%) worked part-time, while 69 (53.5%) mothers were reported as working full-time. Responding to paternal employment status (N=125), only 2 (1.6%) fathers were reported to stay home, 8 (6.4%) worked part-time, while 115 (92%) worked full-time. Parental volunteerism appears similar between mothers and fathers, with 11 (8.5%), (N=129) mothers and 5 (4.0%), (N=125) fathers reported as participating in volunteer work, while 118 (91.5%) mothers and 120 (96%) fathers did not volunteer.

### **Participation**

Almost two-thirds of the respondents reported participating in some type of extracurricular activity. Forty-seven (36.2%) (N=130) girls indicated participation in one



activity, 27 (20.8%) in two activities, and 9 (6.9%) in three or more extracurricular activities, while 47 (36.2%) girls either indicated no participation or did not respond. Two-thirds (56) of the 83 girls who indicated participation in at least one activity did so within a religious environment. Overall (N=130), the participation in religious activity was more evenly split, with just under half, 56 (43.1%) girls, indicating participation in religion-based activity, while 74 (56.9%) girls were deemed as not involved in this area.

The majority of the total sample size (N=130) responded that they participated in at least one type of sport activity. While 19 (14.6%) girls indicated that they did not involve themselves in athletic activities, 111 (85.4%) girls reported sports involvement. These included 41 (31.5%) girls who said they participated in one sport, 35 (26.9%) in two sports, and 35 (26.9%) girls who participated in three or more sports activities. Of these 111 students, 42 (37.8%) participated exclusively in individual-type sports activities such as dance, skating and track, 25 (22.5%) participated only in team sports, such as basketball and volleyball, and 44 (39.6%) were involved in a combination of the two types.

Approximately three-quarters of all respondents participated in formal lessons, such as music, dance or sport. Fifty-five (42.3%) girls indicated involvement in one formal lesson, 28 (21.5%) girls participated in two lessons, and 14 (10.8%) girls responded they were involved in three or more formal lessons, for a combined total of 97 (74.6%) of all 130 students participating in at least one or more formal lessons.

### **Media**

Of 129 girls responding, 120 (93%) stated they liked to watch television, whereas only 9 (7%) girls indicated a dislike for television viewing. One hundred and fifteen

participants responded with a wide variety of viewing hours per week. Condensing the number of television hours watched per week to workable categories, it was found that 105 ( 91.3%) girls indicated viewing hours of 25 or less in a week, while only 10 (8.7%) watched more than 26 hours of television weekly. Broken down further, 66 (57.4%) of the girls stated they watched ten hours or less of T.V. per week, 39 (33.9%) indicated viewing hours between 11 and 25, 3 (2.6%) responded between 26 and 40 hours, and 7 (6.1%) girls stated their television viewing hours exceeded 41 per week.

When asked what television shows were their favourite, the girls identified a total of 77 shows (see Appendix F). In order to reduce the number of categories for analysis, the shows were classified into one of 10 designations, which are listed in Table 4.

A table summarizing each of the three responses separately can be found in Appendix G. It is clear that, for these respondents, the most popular type of show is the Teen genre. Fifty (42.4%) of the 118 girls responding with a first choice, 43 (37.4%) of the 115 girls responding with a second choice, and 33 (31.7%) of 104 girls responding to the third choice preferred this show type.

A multiple response analysis of the three choices the girls indicated demonstrates the preferences overall. As noted with the individual choices, the most popular type of show for these students was the Teen genre, with 126 (37.4%) of responses assigned to this category. The least chosen type of show was Educational, with just 7 (2.1%) responses. Table 5 outlines the summaries for the show types.

**Table 4: Classification of Television Shows**

<b>Teen</b>	<b>Adult Cartoon</b>	<b>Children's</b>	<b>Drama</b>
Dawson's Creek	Simpsons	Flintstones	Party of Five
Breaker High	King of the Hill	Rugrats	Highway Patrol
Saved By the Bell	South Park	Space Goofs	Ally McBeal
Student Bodies		Arthur	e.r.
Hang Time		The Jetsons	Diagnosis Murder
California Dreams		ScoobyDoo	
Clueless		Country Mouse,	
Sabrina the Teenage Witch		City Mouse	
Sweet Valley High		Doug	
Boy Meets World		Life with Louie	
Ready or Not		Dexter's Lab	
The Secret World of Alex Mack			
<b>Science Fiction</b>	<b>Sitcom</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Educational</b>
Star Trek	Frasier	Touched by An Angel	Came Show
X-Files	Seinfeld	Kids Say the Darndest Things	Art Attack
Freaky Stories	Drew Carey	Emily of New Moon	The Magic School bus
Buffy the Vampire Slayer	Friends	Seventh Heaven	Figure It Out
Are you Afraid of The Dark?	Mad About You	Shirley Holmes	What Would You Do?
Goosebumps	Dharma & Greg		Kratt's Creatures
	Fresh Prince		Incredible Story Studio
	Caroline in the City		
	Full House		
	Home Improvement		
	2 Guys, a Girl and a Pizza Place		
	Blossom		
	Family Matters		
	Damon		
<b>Extreme</b>	<b>Miscellaneous</b>		
90210	Daytime Soap		
Baywatch	Much Music		
	Sports		
	Sportsdesk		
	Daytime Talk Show		
	Movies		
	Hit List		
	Jerry Springer		
	Jonovision		
	Wild Things		
	Cavana		
	The Torkelsons		
	Flash Forward		

**Table 5: Summary of Multiple Responses for Show Types**

<b>Show Type</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent of Responses</b>
Teen	126	37.4
Adult Cartoon	41	12.2
Children's	17	5.0
Drama	11	3.3
Science Fiction	17	5.0
Sitcom	46	13.6
Family	14	4.2
Educational	7	2.1
Extreme	16	4.7
Miscellaneous	42	12.5
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### **Social**

When offering information regarding the number of friends they had, the girls gave a wide variety of answers. As a result, the numbers were condensed by the researcher to five categories. Of the 111 girls who listed the number of friends they had, 13 (11.7%) indicated they had between 0-10 friends, 34 (30.6%) gave numbers between 11 and 20 friends, 51 (45.9%) stated 21-50 friends, 7 (6.3%) girls had from 51-99 friends, and 6 (5.4%) girls gave amounts over 100 as the number of friends they had. It was apparent during the data gathering process that girls were interpreting this question in different ways. For example, some girls counted only their closest friends, some included those only from school or sports, while other included everyone they knew. This data, therefore, can not be interpreted accurately. However, it is noted that all girls reported friendships to some degree.

The participants responded with a variety of activities that they like to do when they get together with their friends (Appendix H). It is noteworthy that the most popular pastime for all three responses was talking, with 32 (24.7%) first choice responses, 15

(11.6%) second choice responses, and 20 (15.4%) third choice responses. Shopping also appeared to garner interest among the girls, and was the second most indicated response in both first and second choices, 19 (14.6%) and 10 (7.7%) responses respectively.

Just over half of the 125 girls who responded regarding “couple” relationships reported having been involved in such a relationship in their current school year, with 66 (52.8%) girls indicating couple involvement, while 59 (47.2%) girls said they had not been involved in a couple relationship in the current school year. Twenty-seven (40.9%) of the 66 girls acknowledging a couple relationship stated that they currently had a boyfriend, whereas 39 (59.1%) girls indicated that although they had been in a couple relationship in their current school year, they did not have a boyfriend at the time of data collection.

### **Attributes**

In describing strengths for themselves, the participants offered a wide variety of responses, which were then reduced to several more manageable categories by the researcher. The frequency tables for each of the three choices is shown in Table 6. Responses that indicated strengths in athletics dominated all three choices, with 43 (33.1%) first choice responses, 41 (31.5%) second choice responses and 28 (21.5%) third choice responses, while body image was the least mentioned strength in any of the choices, with only 1 (0.8%) first choice response, 1 (0.8%) second choice response and 2 (1.5%) third choice responses. Academic strengths were indicated in 23 (17.7%) first choice responses, 22 (16.9%) second choice responses and 12 (9.2%) third choice responses. As well, strengths in arts and music were favoured by 25 (19.2%) girls in their first choice, 21 (16.2%) girls in their second choices and 19 (14.6%) girls in their

**Table 6: Girls' Self-Identified Strengths**

<b>Type of Strengths Girls Stated They Had – Choice 1</b>			
	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	7	5.4
	Academic	23	17.7
	Arts/music	25	19.2
	Athletic	43	33.1
	Body image	1	.8
	External	3	2.3
	Internal	13	10.0
	Miscellaneous	1	.8
	Non-traditional	8	6.2
	Social	6	4.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<b>Type of Strengths Girls Stated They Had – Choice 2</b>			
	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	9	6.9
	Academic	22	16.9
	Arts/music	21	16.2
	Athletic	41	31.5
	Body image	1	.8
	External	2	1.5
	Family	1	.8
	Internal	19	14.6
	Miscellaneous	3	2.3
	Non-traditional	1	.8
	Social	10	7.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<b>Type of Strengths Girls Stated They Had – Choice 3</b>			
	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	15	11.5
	Academic	12	9.2
	Arts/music	19	14.6
	Athletic	28	21.5
	Body image	2	1.5
	External	8	6.2
	Internal	23	17.7
	Miscellaneous	9	6.9
	Social	14	10.8
		<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>

third choices. It is also notable that the number of absent responses increased from the first choice to the third choice, with 7 (5.4%) girls not indicating a strength in the first choice, 9 (6.9%) for the second choice and 15 (11.5%) for the third choice.

When asked to describe strengths they thought their friends would say of them, again, athletics was the dominant strength in all three choices (Table 7). Thirty-four (26.2%) girls in their first choice believed their friends thought they had strengths in athletics, 32 (24.6%) second choice responses indicated athletic strengths as did 29 (22.3%) third choice responses. A slightly higher percentage of girls chose not to answer this question, with the number of response omissions again increasing over the three choice areas. Thirteen (10.0%) girls did not indicate a first response, while 15 (11.5%) second choice and 25 (19.2%) third choice response area were left blank.

While not seen by most participants as a strength, body image type responses, along with internally oriented attributes, were prevalent among the girls' answers regarding what they liked about themselves (Table 8). Forty-three (33.1%) participants chose body image as their first response, while 34 (23.8%) and 27 (20.8%) body image responses made up the second and third choices, respectively. Internally oriented attributes, like creativity, honesty and kindness, accounted for 37 (28.5%) first choices, 29 (22.3%) second choices and 28 (21.5%) third choices.

When asked what they thought their friends liked about them (Table 9), body image was no longer considered important for the majority of girls. Only 18 (13.8%) girls made it their first choice, while 9 (6.9%) girls in each of the second and third choices considered body image as what their friends liked about them. Overwhelmingly, internally oriented attributes were seen by the participants as important in what they

**Table 7: Strengths Girls Stated Their Friends Would Say of Them****Type of Strengths Girls Thought Their Friends Would Say They Had – Choice 1**

	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	13	10.0
	Academic	16	12.3
	Arts/music	24	18.5
	Athletic	34	26.2
	Body image	3	2.3
	External	2	1.5
	Internal	19	14.6
	Miscellaneous	4	3.1
	Non-traditional	4	3.1
	Social	11	8.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Type of Strengths Girls Thought Their Friends Would Say They Had – Choice 2**

	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	15	11.5
	Academic	21	16.2
	Arts/music	18	13.8
	Athletic	32	24.6
	Body image	2	1.5
	External	4	3.1
	Internal	21	16.2
	Miscellaneous	4	3.1
	Non-traditional	1	.8
	Social	12	9.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Type of Strengths Girls Thought Their Friends Would Say They Had – Choice 3**

	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	25	19.2
	Academic	23	17.7
	Arts/music	6	4.6
	Athletic	29	22.3
	Body image	1	.8
	External	2	1.5
	Internal	21	16.2
	Miscellaneous	7	5.4
	Non-traditional	1	.8
	Social	15	11.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>



**Table 8: What Girls Like About Themselves**

<b>What Girls Like About Themselves – Choice 1</b>			
	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	12	9.2
	Academic	9	6.9
	Arts/music	4	3.1
	Athletic	7	5.4
	Body image	43	33.1
	Family	2	1.5
	Internal	37	28.5
	Miscellaneous	8	6.2
	Non-traditional	1	.8
	Social	7	5.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>What Girls Like About Themselves – Choice 2</b>			
	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	17	13.1
	Academic	9	6.9
	Arts/music	3	2.3
	Athletic	10	7.7
	Body image	31	23.8
	External	1	.8
	Family	2	1.5
	Internal	29	22.3
	Miscellaneous	16	12.3
	Non-traditional	1	.8
	Social	11	8.5
		<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>What Girls Like About Themselves – Choice 3</b>			
	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	28	21.5
	Academic	3	2.3
	Arts/music	3	2.3
	Athletic	9	6.9
	Body image	27	20.8
	External	1	.8
	Family	2	1.5
	Internal	28	21.5
	Miscellaneous	9	6.9
	Non-traditional	4	3.1
	Social	16	12.3
		<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>

**Table 9: What Girls Thought Their Friends Liked About Them**

<b>What Girls Thought Their Friends Liked About Them – Choice 1</b>			
	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	13	10.0
	Academic	2	1.5
	Arts/music	2	1.5
	Athletic	1	.8
	Body image	18	13.8
	External	6	4.6
	Internal	73	56.2
	Miscellaneous	5	3.8
	Social	10	7.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<b>What Girls Thought Their Friends Liked About Them – Choice 2</b>			
	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	17	13.1
	Academic	8	6.2
	Athletic	3	2.3
	Body image	9	6.9
	External	4	3.1
	Internal	68	52.3
	Miscellaneous	7	5.4
	Non-traditional	2	1.5
	Social	12	9.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<b>What Girls Thought Their Friends Liked About Them – Choice 3</b>			
	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	26	20.0
	Academic	4	3.1
	Athletic	2	1.5
	Body image	9	6.9
	External	4	3.1
	Internal	50	38.5
	Miscellaneous	15	11.5
	Social	20	15.4
		<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>

thought their friends liked about them, with over half of the first and second responses in this area. Seventy-three (56.2%) girls responded in their first choice that internally oriented attributes were what their friends liked about them, 68 (52.3%) girls chose this area for their second choice, and 50 (38.5%) responded with an internally oriented attribute in their third choice. Interestingly, athletics was not considered important in what the girls thought their friends liked about them, with only 1 (0.8%) first choice response, 3 (2.3%) second choice responses, and 2 (1.5%) third choices in this area.

While body image was cited by participants as an element of what they liked about themselves, shown earlier, it was also the most predominant feature that girls indicated they would like to change (Table 10). Seventy-three (56.2%) respondents indicated in their first choice that they would like to change something about their body, while 45 (34.6%) second choice and 32 (24.6%) third choice responses indicated the desire for a body-based change. A number of girls either did not respond to the question, 9 (6.9%) in the first choice, 26 (20.0%) in the second choice and 38 (29.2%) in the third choice, or responded that there was nothing, 12 (9.2%) in the first choice, 14 (10.8%) in the second choice, and 15 (11.5%) in the third choice, that they would like to change about themselves. Combined, with the assumption that the lack of a response might indicate no changes were desired, 21 (16.1%) girls did not wish to make any changes as a first response, 40 (30.8%) girls did not indicate second choice changes, while over two-fifths of girls, 53 (40.7%) responses, did not see a need to make a third choice for change.

In looking at whether the girls' change choices were attainable, the researcher looked at three options. The first was whether the change could be accomplished by the girl, such as the way she fixed her hair, what clothes were worn, how lazy she was at

**Table 10: What Girls Would Like to Change About Themselves****What Girls Would Like to Change About Themselves – Choice 1**

	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	9	6.9
	Academic	7	5.4
	Athletic	2	1.5
	Attitude	15	11.5
	Body	73	56.2
	Health	5	3.8
	Miscellaneous	7	5.4
	Nothing	12	9.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**What Girls Would Like to Change About Themselves – Choice 2**

	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	26	20.0
	Academic	6	4.6
	Athletic	4	3.1
	Attitude	24	18.5
	Body	45	34.6
	Health	6	4.6
	Miscellaneous	5	3.8
	Nothing	14	10.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**What Girls Would Like to Change About Themselves – Choice 3**

	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	38	29.2
	Academic	6	4.6
	Athletic	8	6.2
	Attitude	10	7.7
	Body	32	24.6
	Health	2	1.5
	Miscellaneous	19	14.6
	Nothing	15	11.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

home, or her attitude towards others. These were categorized as changeable.

Categorized as unchangeable were choices where either other interventions, such as surgery, would be required, or the change was completely unattainable. Examples of these changes included changing the shape of one's body, stopping a sore ankle from hurting, altering the shape of a nose or other body part, changing one's height or age, or altering the fact that a participant had health problems such as diabetes or poor eyesight. Over half of the 121 identified first responses to desired change, 64 (52.9%), were not changeable. Forty-five (37.2%) responses were changeable, with the remaining 12 (9.9%) categorized as not applicable (respondent answered "nothing"). Second choice changes showed slightly more changeability. Of the 104 second choice responses, 43 (41.3%) were not changeable, whereas 47 (45.2%) responses were changeable and 14 (13.5%) were not applicable. Following in this trend, the 92 third choice change responses showed the most ability for change of the three responses, with 44 (47.8%) responses categorized as changeable, and 33 (35.9%) as not able to change. Fifteen (16.3%) responses were not applicable.

In offering descriptions of themselves, the girls' responses were condensed to five categories (Table 11 ). Predominantly, the girls who responded offered descriptions of themselves in terms of either personality or physical characteristics. Seventy-three (56.2%) out of all 130 participants chose personality descriptives as their first response, while 40 (30.8%) responded with a physical representation. For the second response, 60 (46.2%) girls offered personality descriptives, whereas 44 (33.8%) responses were classified as physical. Finally, the third response indicated that 62 (47.7%) responses

**Table 11: Type of Participants' Self-Descriptions****How Girls Described Themselves – Choice 1**

	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	5	3.8
	Athletic	3	2.3
	Intelligence	6	4.6
	Miscellaneous	3	2.3
	Personality	73	56.2
	Physical	40	30.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**How Girls Described Themselves – Choice 2**

	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	7	5.4
	Athletic	5	3.8
	Intelligence	12	9.2
	Miscellaneous	2	1.5
	Personality	60	46.2
	Physical	44	33.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**How Girls Described Themselves – Choice 3**

	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	No response	10	7.7
	Athletic	6	4.6
	Intelligence	10	7.7
	Miscellaneous	9	6.9
	Personality	62	47.7
	Physical	33	25.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

were personality characteristics and 33 (25.4%) responses consisted of physical descriptives.

### **Concerns**

Almost half of the sample (N=130) stated that they had concerns or worries in their lives at the time of data collection. Sixty-one (47.3%) of 129 subjects who responded indicated concerns, whereas 68 (52.7%) girls responded that they had no concerns at that time. The specific concerns of the girls are too numerous and wide-ranging to mention, and classifying them proved not only too difficult, but did not do justice to the diversity of concerns expressed by the girls. As a result, these concerns were not subjected to analysis.

### **Self-Esteem**

#### **Total Self-Esteem**

The Total self-esteem scores (N=130) ranged from 28 to 98, with the most common score being 80, and a median score of 77. The mean of the sample was 72.38 (s.d.=17.61).

#### **Sub-Scale Data**

The General self-esteem sub-scale scores ranged from 6 to 26, with the most common score being 21, and a median score of 19. The mean score was 18.31 (s.d.=4.61).

The Social self-esteem sub-scale scores ranged from 1 to 8, with the most common score being 8, and a median score of 6. The mean score was 6.12 (s.d.=1.84).

The Home self-esteem sub-scale scores ranged from 0 to 8, with the most common score being 8, and a median score of 7. The mean score was 6.04 (s.d.=1.92).

The School self-esteem sub-scale scores ranged from 1 to 8, with the most common score being 8, and a median score of 6. The mean score was 5.80 (s.d.=1.90).

#### A Comparison with Normative Data

In looking at the normative data for the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, it is interesting to note that, with the exception of grade six girls in the rural middle (6-8) school setting, the mean self-esteem score for girls in this study was higher than the norms given. Trowbridge (1972, as cited in Coopersmith, 1981) administered this assessment tool to 3789 male and female students aged eight to fourteen, who resided in both urban and rural communities. The mean self-esteem score for girls with all ages included was 71.9, while the mean self-esteem score for grade-six students with boys and girls combined was reported as 68.8. Unfortunately, there is no normative data for grade-six girls specifically.

#### Tests of Hypotheses

##### Interaction and Main Effect

A 3x2 ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effects of school setting defined in terms of elementary (K-6), middle (6-8), and combined (K-8), and school location defined in terms of urban and rural on total self-esteem, as well as for each of the four sub-scales (general, social, home and school). A summary of the descriptive information for each of the self-esteem scales appears in Table 12.

For Total self-esteem, the ANOVA indicated no significant interaction between the three types of school settings and the urban and rural school location,  $F(2, 124) = 0.09, p > .05$ . Nor was there a significant main effect for either school settings,  $F(2, 124) = 1.10, p > .05$ , or school location,  $F(1, 124) = 0.02, p > .05$ .



**Table 12: Effects of School Setting and School Location on Self-Esteem Scales**

<b>Mean Total Self-Esteem</b>			
	<b>K-6</b>	<b>6-8</b>	<b>K-8</b>
<b>Urban</b>	74.07 (s.d.=16.62)	70.00 (s.d.=17.68)	73.40 (s.d.=17.49)
<b>Rural</b>	73.76 (s.d.=17.87)	67.91 (s.d.=20.01)	74.64 (s.d.=17.24)
School Setting	F (2,124)=1.10, non-significant, p=.34		
School Location	F (1,124)=0.02, non-significant, p=.90		
Setting x Location	F (2,124)=0.09, non-significant, p=.91		

<b>Mean General Self-Esteem</b>			
	<b>K-6</b>	<b>6-8</b>	<b>K-8</b>
<b>Urban</b>	18.63 (s.d.=4.39)	17.47 (s.d.=4.44)	18.70 (s.d.=4.78)
<b>Rural</b>	19.00 (s.d.=4.69)	16.96 (s.d.=5.39)	19.05 (s.d.=4.05)
School Setting	F(2,124)=1.71, non-significant, p=.19		
School Location	F(1,124)=0.01, non-significant, p=.94		
Setting x Location	F(2,124)=0.12, non-significant, p=.88		

<b>Mean Social Self-Esteem</b>			
	<b>K-6</b>	<b>6-8</b>	<b>K-8</b>
<b>Urban</b>	6.27 (s.d.=1.89)	6.32 (s.d.=2.08)	6.00 (s.d.=1.45)
<b>Rural</b>	6.24 (s.d.=1.99)	5.32 (s.d.=1.81)	6.59 (s.d.=1.71)
School Setting	F (2,124)=0.86, non-significant, p=.43		
School Location	F (1,124)=0.20, non-significant, p=.66		
Setting x Location	F (2,124)=1.98, non-significant, p=.14		

Table 12 continued...

<b>Mean Home Self-Esteem</b>			
	<b>K-6</b>	<b>6-8</b>	<b>K-8</b>
<b>Urban</b>	6.23 (s.d.=1.50)	5.79 (s.d.=1.62)	6.25 (s.d.=2.17)
<b>Rural</b>	5.82 (s.d.=1.55)	5.77 (s.d.=2.37)	6.23 (s.d.=2.29)
School Setting	F (2,124)=0.57, non-significant, p=.57		
School Location	F (1,124)=0.19, non-significant, p=.67		
Setting x Location	F (2,124)=0.14, non-significant, p=.87		

<b>School Self-Esteem</b>			
	<b>K-6</b>	<b>6-8</b>	<b>K-8</b>
<b>Urban</b>	6.07 (s.d.=1.89)	5.42 (s.d.=2.09)	5.75 (s.d.=2.24)
<b>Rural</b>	5.82 (s.d.=1.63)	5.91 (s.d.=1.77)	5.64 (s.d.=1.87)
School Setting	F (2,124)=0.27, non-significant, p=.76		
School Location	F (1,124)=0.02, non-significant, p=.90		
Setting x Location	F (2,124)=0.43, non-significant, p=.65		

For General self-esteem, the ANOVA indicated no significant interaction between the three types of school settings and the urban and rural school location,  $F(2, 124) = 0.12, p > .05$ . Nor was there a significant main effect for either school settings,  $F(2, 124) = 1.71, p > .05$ , or school location,  $F(1, 124) = 0.01, p > .05$ .

For Social self-esteem, the ANOVA indicated no significant interaction between the three types of school settings and the urban and rural school location,  $F(2, 124) = 1.98, p > .05$ . Nor was there a significant main effect for either school settings,  $F(2, 124) = 0.86, p > .05$ , or school location,  $F(1, 124) = 0.20, p > .05$ .

For Home self-esteem, the ANOVA indicated no significant interaction between the three types of school settings and the urban and rural school location,  $F(2, 124) = 0.14, p > .05$ . Nor was there a significant main effect for either school settings,  $F(2, 124) = 0.57, p > .05$ , or school location,  $F(1, 124) = 0.19, p > .05$ .

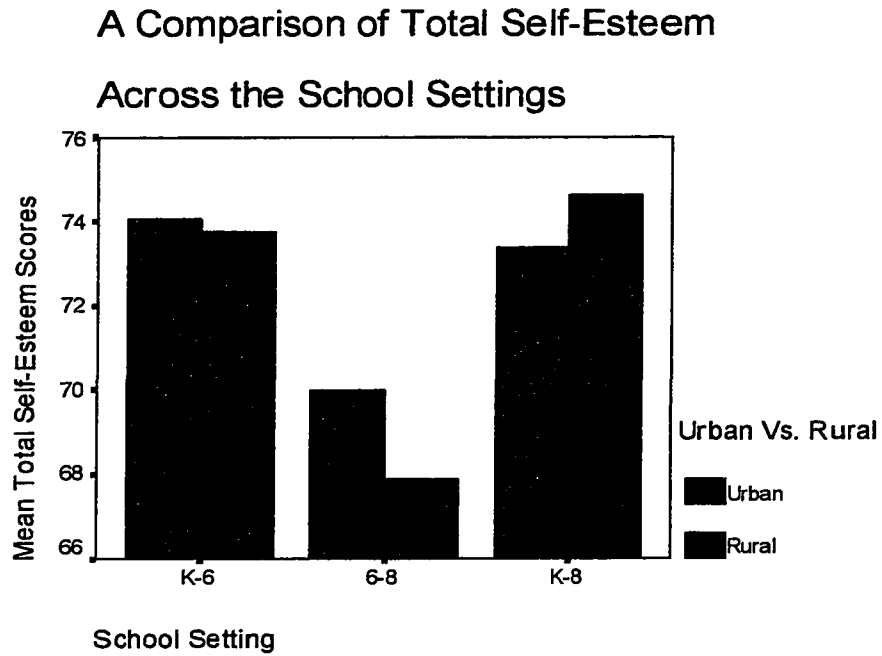
For School self-esteem, the ANOVA indicated no significant interaction between the three types of school settings and the urban and rural school location,  $F(2, 124) = 0.43, p > .05$ . Nor was there a significant main effect for either school settings,  $F(2, 124) = 0.27, p > .05$ , or school location,  $F(1, 124) = 0.02, p > .05$ .

Consequently, neither hypothesis is supported: The self-esteem of grade-six girls in an elementary setting is not significantly higher overall than that of those in a middle school setting; and the self-esteem of grade-six girls in a rural setting is not higher than that of grade-six girls in an urban setting.

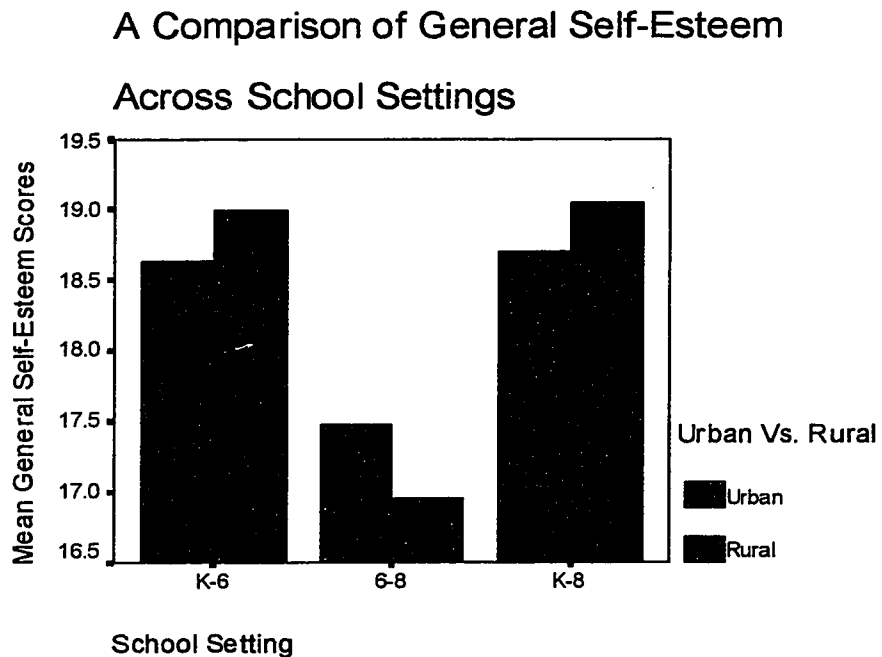
#### **Visual Display of Self-Esteem Findings Across the School Settings**

Figures 3 through 7 give a visual representation of the self-esteem findings across the school settings. While no significant findings were found in the differences of self-

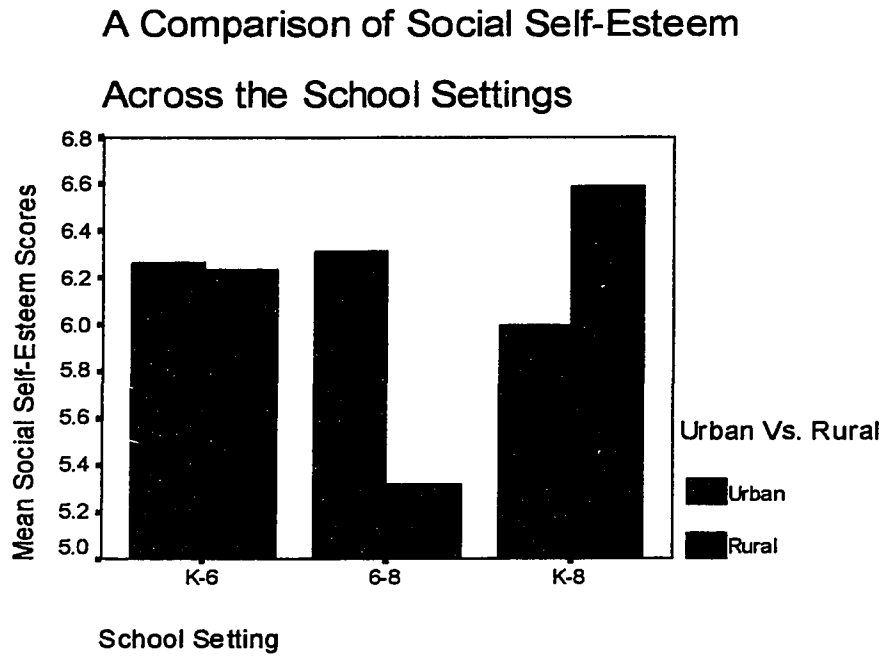
**Figure 3: A Comparison of Mean Total Self-Esteem Scores Across the School Settings**



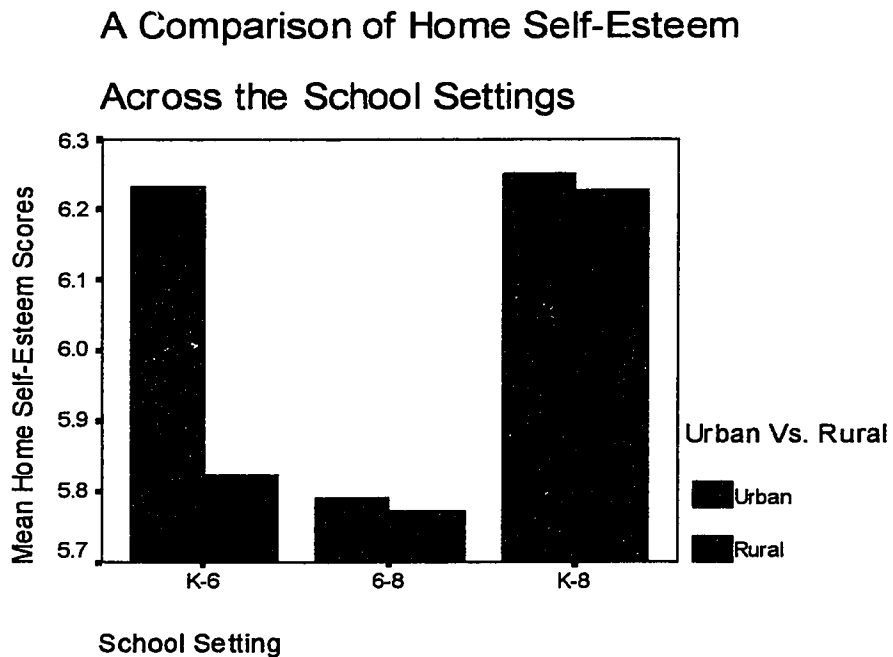
**Figure 4: A Comparison of Mean General Self-Esteem Scores Across the School Settings**



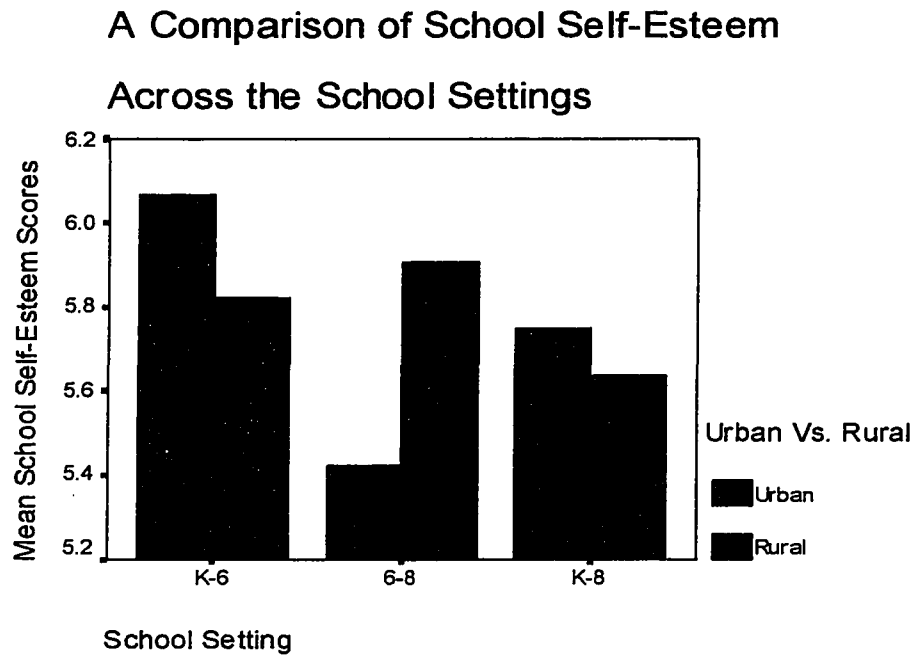
**Figure 5: A Comparison of Mean Social Self-Esteem Scores Across the School Settings**



**Figure 6: A Comparison of Mean Home Self-Esteem Scores Across the School Settings**



**Figure 7: A Comparison of Mean School Self-Esteem Scores Across the School Settings**



esteem scores between settings, observed differences will be considered in the discussion with respect to the study hypotheses. Please note that the graphs are for demonstration purposes only. The intervals for the subscale scores vary from .1 to .5, and the reader's attention is called to this.

### **Tests of Other Associations with Self-Esteem**

Independent t-tests or one-way ANOVAs, where appropriate, were used to explore whether single parent versus two parent family structure, birth order, mother's employment status, participation in extra-curricular activities, sports, formal lessons, or religious-based activities, type of sports, hours of T.V. viewing, or the presence of a boyfriend were related to total self-esteem. Also explored for a relationship to total self-esteem were type of television shows girls indicated they preferred, and the variables including categories of what girls liked about themselves, what they thought their friends liked about them, what they would change about themselves and whether that desired alteration was changeable. No significant relationship was found between any of these variables and self-esteem scores.

It was noted that 11 girls in the K-6 and K-8 school settings reported that they had changed schools in the year prior to grade six. Therefore, these 11 girls were combined with the girls in the 6-8 school settings, and the total self-esteem of all the girls who had experienced a school transition were compared with the girls who had not. A significant difference was found between the two groups with the group who had not changed schools having the higher mean total self-esteem scores.

A significant difference,  $t(121) = -2.56, p = .012$ , was found between the mean total self-esteem scores of grade-six girls who had experienced a transition to a new

school in their current year (mean=67.92, s.d.=19.20) and grade-six girls who had not changed schools for their grade-six year (mean=75.95, s.d.=15.48).

There was a significant difference,  $F(2, 115)=3.33$ ,  $p=.039$  between the average total self-esteem scores of grade-six girls whose fathers worked full-time, and that of girls who reported that their fathers worked part-time, or were not employed outside the home. The Tukey HSD procedure was used to follow up this finding. The results of this analysis indicate that there is a significant difference in the self-esteem of girls whose fathers worked full-time, and that of girls whose fathers were not employed outside the home. There was no significant difference between the mean self-esteem scores of girls whose fathers worked part-time, and that of girls whose fathers were not employed outside the home, nor was there a significant difference between the mean self-esteem scores of girls whose fathers worked full-time and that of girls whose fathers worked part-time.

Since previous research (Fenzel, 1992) indicated that relative age within a single grade may be a factor in the self-esteem scores of students, analysis using the self-esteem data obtained in this study was correlated with the age of participants. No significant correlations were found.

#### **Variables Associated with School Setting**

Chi-square tests of associations between school setting and family structure, parents' employment status, participation in sports, formal lessons, or religious-based activities, type of sports, hours of T.V. viewing, or the presence of a boyfriend, revealed no significant associations.



A chi-square test did reveal that there was a significant association,  $\chi^2(6) = 15.18, p = .019$ , between school setting in terms of elementary (K-6), middle (6-8) and combined (K-8), and participants' involvement in extracurricular activities. Girls in the middle school setting were more likely to participate in three or more activities than those girls in the other two settings. The magnitude of the relationship between the variables was also significant,  $\phi = 0.34, p = .019$ . Table 13 illustrates the differences. When recategorizing participation in extracurricular activity into the two classifications of participation and no participation, however, no significant differences were found among the three school settings.

A chi-square test also revealed a significant association,  $\chi^2(3) = 16.23, p = .001$ , between school location in terms of urban and rural, and participants involvement in extracurricular activities. The magnitude of the relationship between the variables was also significant,  $\phi = 0.36, p = .001$ . Table 14 illustrates the differences.

A significant difference,  $\chi^2(2) = 17.96, p < .001$ , was found between school setting and girls' reports of being in a couple relationship in their current school year (Figure 8). Girls in the elementary (K-6) school settings were more likely to report a couple relationship than girls in the other two school settings. The magnitude of the relationship was also significant,  $\phi = 0.38, p < .001$ . A chi square test between urban and rural school settings and report of a couple relationship revealed no significant associations.

**Table 13: Differences in Extracurricular Activities Between School Settings**

Extracurricular Activity	School Setting		
	K-6	6-8	K-8
1	22	14	11
2	7	7	13
3+	1	7	1
None	17	13	17

$\chi^2 = 15.18, p=.019$

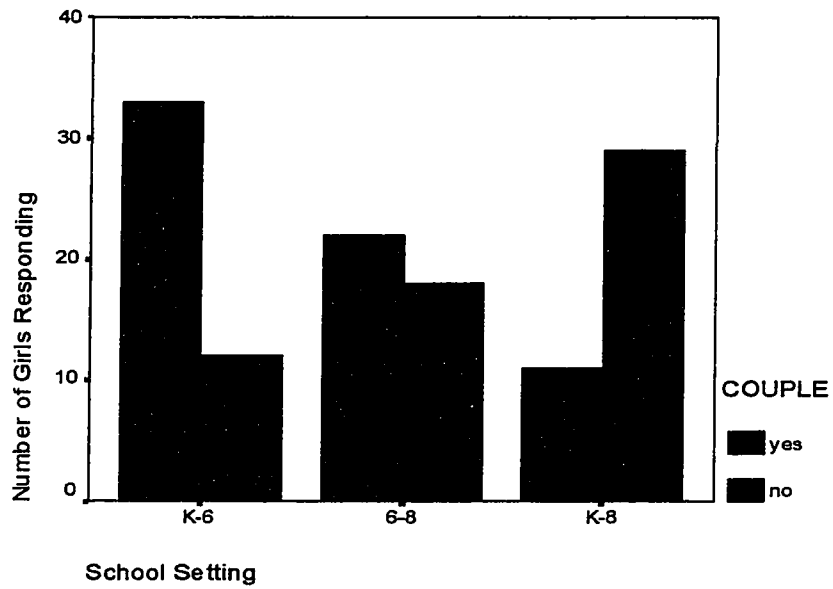
**Table 14: Differences in Extracurricular Activities Between Urban and Rural School Settings**

Extracurricular Activity	School Setting	
	Urban	Rural
1	33	14
2	9	18
3+	1	8
None	26	21

$\chi^2 = 16.23, p=.001$

**Figure 8: A Comparison Across Settings of Girls Having Couple Relationships**

### A Comparison Across Settings of Girls Involved in Couple Relationships



$\chi^2 = 17.96, p < .001$

### **Correlational Data for Self-Esteem Scores**

All sub-scale scores of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory were found to be significantly positively correlated with the total self-esteem score, and with each other, at the .001 level (see Table 15). In addition, the total self-esteem score and the general self-esteem score were slightly positively correlated with the lie score.

To investigate this finding further, a comparison of self-esteem scores was completed using an independent t-test, where girls scoring low on the lie sub-scale (0-3) were compared with those who scored high (4-8). Results indicated no significant difference,  $t(128) = -1.67, p > .05$ , between the average total self-esteem scores of girls with low lie scores (mean=71.01, s.d.=18.29) and those with high lie scores (mean=77.17, s.d.= 14.26). There was also no significant difference,  $t(128) = -1.85, p > .05$ , between the average general self-esteem scores of girls with low lie scores (mean=17.91, s.d.=4.76) and those with high lie scores (mean=19.69, s.d.=3.75).

**Table 15: Correlations for Self-Esteem Scores**

		<b>Total</b>	<b>General</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Home</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Lie</b>
<b>Total</b>	Pearson Correlation	<b>1.000</b>	<b>.949**</b>	<b>.768**</b>	<b>.819**</b>	<b>.747**</b>	<b>.178*</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.043
	N	130	130	130	130	130	130
	Magnitude		Extremely High	High	High	High	Slight
<b>General</b>	Pearson Correlation		<b>1.000</b>	<b>.690**</b>	<b>.694**</b>	<b>.600**</b>	<b>.183*</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.	.000	.000	.000	.038
	N		130	130	130	130	130
	Magnitude			Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Slight
<b>Social</b>	Pearson Correlation			<b>1.000</b>	<b>.520**</b>	<b>.411**</b>	<b>.166</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.	.000	.000	.059
	N			130	130	130	130
	Magnitude				Moderate	Moderate	
<b>Home</b>	Pearson Correlation				<b>1.000</b>	<b>.604**</b>	<b>.138</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.	.000	.119
	N				130	130	130
	Magnitude					Moderate	
<b>School</b>	Pearson Correlation					<b>1.000</b>	<b>.056</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.	.524
	N					130	130
<b>Lie</b>	Pearson Correlation						<b>1.000</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)						.
	N						130

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION**

### **Introduction**

While the hypotheses of this study were not supported by the results of statistical analyses, the data, as illustrated in Figures 3 through 7, lend themselves to a discussion of observed trends. Each of the two hypotheses will be addressed, followed by a discussion of how the results suggest further investigation of a possible relationship between school setting and the self-esteem of grade-six girls. The limitations of this research will be discussed, followed by consideration of the methodological issues to be considered in future studies.

### **Hypothesis I**

While not statistically significant, the differences in mean self-esteem scores across school settings (K-6, 6-8, K-8) as graphically displayed in Figures 3 and 4 (total self-esteem and general self-esteem, respectively) suggest a trend in support of the first hypothesis, that middle school girls would exhibit lower self-esteem than their elementary and combined school counterparts. This trend is important to note for two reasons.

First, given the participation rate of 51.2%, the girls who chose to participate in the study may generally have higher self-esteem than their classmates who chose not to participate, thereby creating a sample biased towards higher self-esteem. When recruiting participants from the grade-six classes, some girls exhibited body language and demeanor that suggested lower self-esteem, such as sitting at the outer edges of the group, isolated from their peers, not showing interest through questions or discussion, and exhibiting a withdrawn or bored behaviour pattern (McCown et al., 1996). Very few of these girls were observed by the researcher to agree to participate in the study. It may

be that lower self-esteem prevented some girls from taking the initiative to volunteer for participation.

Second, the sample size of 130 is small in view of the total number of girls in grade six in Waterloo Region. Therefore, with a larger sample, the trend observed might become a significant difference.

The possibility that there is, in fact, a difference in self-esteem between grade six girls in 6-8 school settings compared to other settings is supported by the finding that the transition to a new school for the grade-six year was significantly associated with lower self-esteem of girls in this study when all girls who had changed schools were compared with those who had not. This finding supports previous research which found a relationship between school transition and self-esteem (Simmons et al., 1987).

Finally, the trend visible in the bar graphs for lower total and general self-esteem in middle school girls also provides some support for the notion underlying this research, that girls who have been placed in an environment not suitable for their developmental needs may experience a lower overall self-esteem (Deihl, Vicary & Deike, 1997). In looking at this in more depth, it is helpful to look as well at Figure 6 (home self-esteem), which also shows a trend toward lower self-esteem in middle school (6-8) girls. The developmental challenge for adolescent girls is to develop a sense of identity and independence. When grade-six girls are placed in an environment such as middle school which encourages this adolescent development, but for which they are not yet ready, lower self-esteem may be affected not only overall, but also in terms of their feelings about their home life, where parents and family may be struggling to cope with the developmental push in what is perceived by girls to be a negative manner. The trend to lower home self-esteem of girls in a middle school environment supports this possibility.

## **Hypothesis II**

The results of this research did not support the second hypothesis, that rural students would exhibit higher self-esteem than their urban counterparts. In fact, the slight difference between the two overall total self-esteem means was negligible (rural mean =71.97, s.d.=18.41; urban mean =72.75, s.d.=17.00).

## **Other Variables Associated with Self-Esteem and School Setting**

### **Father's Employment Status and Self-Esteem**

The employment status of fathers was shown in this study to be associated with girls' self-esteem. Specifically, the overall self-esteem of girls whose fathers were employed full time was significantly higher than that of girls whose fathers did not work outside the home. This finding may reflect societal gender role expectations that continue to imply that men should be the main breadwinners of the family. The lower self-esteem of participants whose fathers were not employed outside the home suggests that these girls may feel the pressure of societal expectations, thus internalizing negative feelings associated with their family not conforming to the cultural norm. Because cultural values, beliefs and norms inform the developing self-esteem of growing children (McCown et al, 1996), the fact that their fathers were not working outside the home may negatively impact the very identity of these girls, resulting in lowered self-esteem.

Also, since men generally earn more than women, it may be that homes with fathers who are not working have lower household income, which previous research has indicated is associated as a risk factor for lower self-esteem in students (Offord et al., 1989). The girls whose fathers are not employed outside the home may feel they cannot measure up to their peers in terms of clothes or entertainment, for example, due to restrictions on the family's financial resources.



### **Couple Relationships and School Setting**

The finding that grade-six girls in the elementary (K-6) setting were significantly more likely to claim involvement in 'couple' relationships at the time of data collection than were girls in the other two settings (Figure 8) is interesting. On the surface, this finding appears to contradict the premise that middle school students would feel more pressure to engage in older adolescent social behaviour. In considering these results, however, two possible explanations present themselves.

First, students in the elementary (K-6) setting are the oldest in their schools, giving them the leadership role. The fact that there is no pressure from older students who may criticize or ridicule their attempts at adolescent behaviour may give K-6 girls more freedom to experiment than girls in the other two settings. Second, as these settings tend to have smaller student populations, this aspect may give students the opportunity to develop relationships within which it is more comfortable to try out new behaviours.

It could also be argued that girls in an elementary (K-6) school setting may have defined 'couple relationship' differently than their counterparts in the other school settings, whose definitions would be influenced by the older adolescents in the school. This aspect may have affected the way girls responded to the questionnaire.

With this in mind, the fact that girls in the 6-8 school settings reported more couple relationships than girls in the K-8 school settings may indicate that being in an environment where older students in the school engage in couple behaviour affects the behaviour of the grade-six girls differently depending on the setting. Specifically, those girls in the middle school setting, as the youngest in their school, may feel pressure to engage in behaviours the older students exhibit, whereas those girls in the combined

school setting, being neither oldest nor youngest, may feel more at ease to develop these relationships at their own pace.

### **Extracurricular Activity and School Setting**

Although approximately one third of girls within each of the three school settings (K-6, 6-8, K-8) indicated they did not participate in any extracurricular activities, the middle school girls were significantly more likely to participate in three or more activities compared to girls in the other two settings. McCown et al. (1996) noted that children seeking resolution to Erikson's industry versus inferiority stage of development search for self-confidence through others' recognition of their successes and productivity. It is possible that the girls in the middle (6-8) school setting may be accessing more extracurricular activities in order to fulfill needs that are not met in their school setting compared to the other school settings. The small numbers, however, make this finding difficult to interpret, and suggest the need for further research.

The finding that proportionately, more rural students engage in two or three extracurricular activities than their urban counterparts may indicate their need to increase their social circles due to the decreased choices for friendships within their own communities. By engaging in weekly activities outside of school, for instance, girls can not only increase their social network and feel accepted due to mutual interests, but their accessibility to these additional friends is regular and stable.

### **Girls Descriptions of Self**

Although the relationship between self-esteem scores and variables of how much and what kind of television they watched were found to be statistically insignificant, the descriptive findings in this study appear to support previous research regarding concerns of today's adolescents about body image (Stice et al., 1994; Striegel-Moore et al., 1986).

For example, while the girls' descriptions of what they liked about themselves included positive evaluations of their bodies, a large number of participants expressed dissatisfaction with aspects of their appearance. Also, that over half of the first choice desired changes were unchangeable, such as being taller, slimmer or altering a body part, may be reflective of the cultural expectation that, to be ideal, girls must conform to the female images most frequently portrayed in the media.

An interesting point to consider is the contrast in overall descriptive findings regarding how girls described themselves and how they thought their friends viewed them. When describing what they liked about themselves, girls referred to their body image, yet when thinking about how their friends viewed them, body image was irrelevant. They thought their friends were more valuing of internal or personality attributes, such as creativity, a sense of humour, or trustworthiness, than body attributes. These qualities may be reflective of what they, themselves, look for and value in friends. As the gender of friends was not specified in the questionnaire, it would be interesting to see how the responses would differ if they were asked to describe what male friends liked about them.

Additionally, this contrast could be an indication of development into the realm of Piaget's formal operations, where the ability to think in terms of the hypothetical and the abstract, as opposed to egocentric and concrete self-descriptions, marks this stage of cognitive development (Vasta, Haith & Miller, 1995) which normally begin around age 11. The questions which asked about strengths your friends would say you have, and things your friends like about you required that the girls think both abstractly and hypothetically, as well as deductively, in order to conceptualize what might be in the mind of another person.

### **Reliability of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory**

The finding that all sub-scales of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory were significantly correlated with total self-esteem as well as each other indicates internal consistency within the assessment tool.

The correlation between the lie scale and total and general self-esteem scales indicates a tendency for girls with higher self-esteem to be more inclined to select socially desirable answers. The fact that on average, girls with high lie scale scores do not have significantly higher self-esteem suggests this tendency does not invalidate the measure.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The limitations to this study are important not only in understanding the results of the research, but also in reflecting on their overall significance. The first limitation consists of the number of schools selected for the study. While there are over 100 schools within the Waterloo Region District School Board, only eleven of them were included in this research. Although it was recognized that this number would limit generalizability across the region, careful consideration was given to selection of schools for inclusion in the study. These considerations included selecting only schools drawing from neighbourhoods with a broad range of socio-economic levels and schools with relative stability in terms of crime and ethnic composition. For example, schools with high Mennonite populations were excluded. The goal was not only to access schools across the region geographically, but also to attempt to match demographics between urban and rural schools. The fact that some of the initially proposed schools declined to participate in the research, and subsequent new choices had to be made, did not alter this goal, as the criteria used for the selection of the additional schools was the same as for the

first choices. Because of these goals, the number of schools participating was small, particularly for the middle school component, where only one rural school and one urban school were included. The observed differences in findings between these two schools may therefore have more to do with idiosyncrasies within those schools than with the self-esteem of middle school students.

The paucity of rural K-6 schools in Waterloo Region presented a limitation as to which rural elementary schools could be selected for this study. As noted in the methodology, the inclusion of Heidelberg and Little's Corners, both 1-6 schools, was unavoidable given that Bridgeport is the only other rural-type school with grade six in an elementary setting.

The lack of multiple assessment tools is also a limitation. Only one questionnaire and one formal inventory was used because of concerns about possible respondent fatigue, given the young age of the participants, and the subsequent unreliability of assessment responses. It was decided that the value of obtaining sub-scale and lie scores on a longer self-esteem instrument, not available in the shorter version, outweighed the value of inclusion of additional inventories. That all data were based on self-report measures, and corroborating information from teachers or parents was not collected, also limits the depth of assessment possible.

Several previous researchers, cited in the literature review, obtained measurements at different time points throughout the school year. This suggests that the single time point of testing used for this study may be a limitation. As has been noted, much of the previous research involved identifying differences in self-esteem across the transition period. While it can be argued that the grade-six participants for this research represent a cross-section of pre-, post- and non-transitional children, the main purposes of

this study was to investigate whether there is a relationship between school setting and the self-esteem of young girls.

The design of the informal questionnaire has some limitations, in that it was not pre-tested except with the researcher's daughter. Further refinement of some questions may have yielded better data and reduced the possibility that meanings were interpreted differently by different girls.

As noted in the discussion of the hypotheses, participants in this study were not a random sample of all of the grade-six girls. The possibility may exist that girls in each school with higher self-esteem volunteered to be involved in the research. As a result, the lack of support for the hypotheses may be due to girls with lower self-esteem selecting themselves out of the study. The rural middle (6-8) school participation rate of 41% was lower than the average rural participation, while the urban 6-8 participation rate of 63%, as shown in Table 3, is not a true participation rate. In the latter case, due to the large number of grade six classes in that school, the guidance counsellor had chosen to present a general outline of the study to the girls, so that only those interested in the study came to the presentation by the researcher.

In addition, a sample of 130 is small in view of the total population of grade-six girls in Waterloo Region. A larger sample would more adequately test the study hypotheses.

The fact that the study attempted to select a fairly homogeneous sample precludes generalization to different populations. The sample in this study was predominantly white and middle class. Generalization to populations including diversity in culture, race and socio-economic status is not possible.

In spite of these limitations, this study has added some Canadian research to the study of the effects of school setting on girls' self-esteem. It has also shed light on methodological issues that need to be addressed in future studies.

### **Next Steps and Future Directions**

Future studies seeking to test the hypotheses identified in this study should employ larger samples and more sources of data. Ideally, schools from several Boards would be included, and sampling would occur from all schools within the Boards in order to increase generalizability. With the consent of the appropriate Ethics Review Board, something closer to random sampling might be achieved if the procedure for obtaining parents' permission for their children's participation was altered. A procedure whereby all children were included in the research unless the parent specifically refused permission would probably result in a higher participation rate.

Methodology that gathered information regarding parents' and teachers' assessment of girls' self-esteem in addition to girls' self-report would strengthen the study.

The experience of rural students should also be considered for further study. Noting that most school studies use samples from urban or suburban populations, it is possible that there may be both positive and negative aspects, as yet unknown, to the rural experience, the effects of which have cancelled each other out in this study. More information is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the issues of students in rural school settings.

Finally, a study incorporating a longitudinal design may help to better assess the relationship of school setting to self-esteem of grade-six girls by following them from grade five through to grade seven or eight. Not only could this type of a study assess the

impact of school setting on girls, it could also discover whether there are any long term effects on self-esteem for students educated in the various types of settings. Further research of this nature may also help to decipher whether the drop in self-esteem following transition to a new school, reported in the literature, is associated with the transition itself, or the differences within the school settings that follow the transition.

In view of the finding that self-esteem is lower for those girls whose fathers are not employed outside the home, further research of this issue and subsequent public awareness can help to alleviate the impact of societal judgements and the possible internalization of negative self-image by these girls. It would also be interesting to examine whether a similar finding would be evident for boys.

### **Implications for Professional Practice**

In terms of professional practice, this study presented two findings which, if replicated, must be taken into consideration as possible risk factors by professionals who work with children, such as teachers and school social workers.

The fact that self-esteem is significantly lower for girls whose fathers are not employed outside the home than for girls whose fathers work full-time suggests the need for professionals to address with students the diversity of gender roles in families. Teachers and social workers can develop educational programs or curricula to educate students regarding the negative messages they receive about families that do not conform to the traditional norm of father as the main provider, thereby buffering the impact of those negative messages. In advancing this idea, it is also important to address students' conceptions of changing gender roles, equity, and media influence in order that the stereotypes they may have can be challenged.



The self-esteem of girls in this study who had changed schools for their grade-six year was significantly lower than that of their counterparts who had not made a transition to a new school, supporting previous research in this area. While it is important for professionals to recognize that changing schools can be a risk factor for any student, it is particularly important for those in school settings, such as the middle (6-8) school, where all students are transitional for their initial year. School social workers, teachers and principals must take into account the potential negative impact of changing schools on self-esteem when planning for, and interacting with these students. Providing opportunities for students to explore their feelings and perceptions of the change through groups or a mentoring program, for example, may help to alleviate the stress of changing schools. Awareness of transition as a risk factor can also help professionals both in assessing new students for potential problems and in intervening when difficulties do arise.

The significant difference in self-esteem of girls making a transition and those who have not also lends modest support to the cumulative change theory addressed in Chapter Two. This theory purports that girls making a transition to a new school are disadvantaged compared to girls in schools where a transition is not required, particularly if the transition occurs concurrently with the onset of puberty or other negative life events (Simmons et al., 1987; Anderman & Maehr, 1994). While the results of analyses of self-esteem and other variables in this study, such as family structure and extracurricular involvement, did not show significant relationships, but transition to a new school was found to be significant, the observed trend of lower self-esteem in the middle (6-8) school setting suggests that further study needs to be pursued to give more insight into the validity of the cumulative change theory. These findings suggest that, not only should

professionals be aware of current theories and studies presented in the literature in order to work effectively with students, but should also endeavor to conduct further research themselves.

The non-significant findings of this study with regard to school setting and self-esteem, may, as noted previously, be due to limitations such as small sample size. They may also, however, be viewed in terms of professional practice within Waterloo Region. While it was reasonable to expect significant differences in self-esteem between middle (6-8) school settings and the other two settings from previous research on the cumulative change theory, the fact that this study did not replicate these results, even though transition to a new school was significantly related to self-esteem, may indicate that there exists within Waterloo Region something which ameliorates the effects of changing schools. For example, there may exist specific supports within communities, schools or by teachers that were not tapped by this study, but which buffer what could potentially be a negative experience for girls. Clearly, further study must be undertaken to explore these possibilities.

**APPENDIX A: SAMPLE LETTER TO THE SCHOOLS**

(On Waterloo Region District School Board Letterhead)

Special Education Services  
51 Ardelt Ave., Box 68, Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3X5  
Phone: (519) 570-0003 Fax: (519) 742-1364

Mr. Gerry Peters, Principal  
Wilmot Sr. Public School  
Waterloo Region District School Board

Dear Gerry:

The attached research project has come to us in a little different manner than usual. Maureen Kropf is a social work student who has been doing an internship with us this term. She wishes to have 20-30 grade six girls to complete two brief surveys before the end of this school year. I realize it is late in the school year and these are busy times, but I would appreciate it if you would consider assisting Maureen. The project is not very onerous.

I'll have Maureen call you in a few days to see if you will accept the project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jim Dudeck, Ph.D.  
Research Committee Chair

Attached

c.c.: Maureen Kropf

## APPENDIX B: INFORMATION FORM FOR PARENTS

(On Wilfrid Laurier University Letterhead)

Dear Parents/Guardians,

My name is Maureen Kropf, and I am currently a Masters student in the Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University. Today, your daughter has brought this form home to you following a brief presentation in her class. This presentation described my current thesis research, which is now at the stage where I require student participants in order to obtain data. Briefly, my research is concentrating on how girls in particular have experienced grade six. Research in the United States has indicated a relationship between the transition year from grade six to grade seven and various outcomes and attitude changes in students, and in particular girls. Changes in the way girls interact socially, the activities they are involved in, and the way they view themselves are some of the areas that the research has focused on. Because grade six can be found in a number of different school settings in our region, I am particularly interested in exploring whether there is a relationship between the type of school setting and the way grade-six girls feel about themselves. I will be gathering information from different schools around the region to see if the results are different in different schools, such as rural versus urban settings, as well as the elementary, middle school and combined settings in which grade six can be found. Your daughter's school has been chosen because of its distinctive characteristics as they relate to my research needs.

Your daughter has agreed to discuss with you her possible participation in my research. You can be assured that all measures of confidentiality have been taken. No one will see the completed questionnaires except myself and perhaps my thesis supervisor. Your daughter's name will **not** appear on the questionnaires, as I am looking to explore the relationship of different school settings and the **average** responses from groups of girls within those settings. All questionnaires will be sealed in an envelope for transportation from your daughter's school in order to assure they cannot be accessed by anyone but myself. During the course of the research, the forms will be stored in a locked cabinet under my direct supervision. Following completion of this study, all forms will be destroyed using a paper-shredding process.

Once I receive all the signed consent forms, I will then randomly be selecting up to 30 girls to complete two questionnaires. Examples of the questions that will be asked include involvement in extracurricular activities, and what the girls consider to be their strengths and weaknesses. I will be consulting with school staff to schedule a convenient time for the girls to complete the questionnaires. The time involved will be approximately 20-30 minutes. Your daughter can refuse to answer any question and/or withdraw from the study at any time without explanation.

There are no known risks to participation in this study. There are no specific benefits to the participants except the knowledge that they have contributed to our understanding of any differences experienced by students in these school settings.

I am really excited about this research for two reasons. First, I believe the opportunity to gather information in a Canadian context is important to Canadian

education. Secondly, because the results of this study will be shared with the Waterloo Region District School Board, the opportunity exists to use this research to enhance the many good programs our schools have for our children.

Following the completion of this research, a summary of the results will be available at your daughter's school should you wish to review them. This summary will be available through the school's principal in September 1999.

Please be aware that this research has been approved by both the University Ethics Review Committee at Wilfrid Laurier University, as well as by the Waterloo Region District School Board. Should you wish any further information regarding this study, please feel free to call me at the Education Centre, 570-0003, option 3 for Voice Mail, then #5179. Alternately, you may call my thesis supervisor, Carol Stalker, at Wilfrid Laurier University, 884-0710, ext. 2026.

I appreciate your daughter's interest in participating in this study. Her contribution will be most valuable.

Thank you for your consideration,

Maureen Kropf, B.A., B.Ed.  
MSW Intern, Wilfrid Laurier University.

**APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

(On Wilfrid Laurier University Letterhead)

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read and understood the information about the research to be conducted by Maureen Kropf under the supervision of Dr. Carol Stalker of Wilfrid Laurier University. I understand that all materials will be held strictly confidential. I also acknowledge that I may revoke this consent at any time, without stated reasons, by contacting the principal of my daughter's school.

My daughter \_\_\_\_\_ has expressed interest in participating in the above mentioned research, and having read the research information,

I, \_\_\_\_\_ give my informed consent for my daughter \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the research conducted by Maureen Kropf of Wilfrid Laurier University.

I also acknowledge that I have received a copy of the information letter for parents/guardians.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX D : CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS**

(On Wilfrid Laurier University Letterhead)

I, \_\_\_\_\_, having received consent from my parent/guardian, hereby agree to participate in the research conducted by Maureen Kropf under the supervision of Dr. Carol Stalker of Wilfrid Laurier University. This research has been explained to me by Maureen Kropf and any questions have been answered for me. I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time during the research. I understand that all materials will be held strictly confidential.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E : INFORMAL QUESTIONNAIRE

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_

In Grade 5, I went to \_\_\_\_\_ School.

1. I live: \_\_\_\_\_ in the city \_\_\_\_\_ in a house  
 \_\_\_\_\_ in a rural town \_\_\_\_\_ in an apartment  
 \_\_\_\_\_ on a farm \_\_\_\_\_ other  
 \_\_\_\_\_ other: \_\_\_\_\_
2. I live with: \_\_\_\_\_ my mother \_\_\_\_\_ Please list other people that live  
 \_\_\_\_\_ my father with you in your home, and  
 \_\_\_\_\_ both parents their ages:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. My Mother: \_\_\_\_\_ stays at home My Father: \_\_\_\_\_ stays at home  
 \_\_\_\_\_ volunteers \_\_\_\_\_ volunteers  
 \_\_\_\_\_ works outside of the home \_\_\_\_\_ works outside of the home

Please state if the work is part-time (PT) or full-time (FT)  
 If one or both of your parents volunteer, please say what they do.

4. Outside of school, I participate in the following activities (check as many as you need to):

\_\_\_\_\_ Girl Guides \_\_\_\_\_ Scouts \_\_\_\_\_ Pioneers  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Church Group \_\_\_\_\_ 4-H \_\_\_\_\_ Sunday School  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Formal Tutoring \_\_\_\_\_ Army Cadets \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (e.g. Sylvan Learning Centre)

5. Outside of school, I participate in the following sports (check as many as you need to):

\_\_\_\_\_ Dance \_\_\_\_\_ Basketball \_\_\_\_\_ Soccer  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Gymnastics \_\_\_\_\_ Hockey \_\_\_\_\_ Volleyball  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Track \_\_\_\_\_ Rowing \_\_\_\_\_ Skating

6. I take formal lessons in:

\_\_\_\_\_ Figure Skating \_\_\_\_\_ Dance \_\_\_\_\_ Sport: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Music: \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. voice, piano, guitar, flute, violin) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. I have a pet at home. Yes No (Circle one). If Yes, please say what kind(s):

\_\_\_\_\_



8. I like to watch T.V. Yes No (Circle one) If yes, list your three favourite shows:  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. How many hours of T.V. do you watch in a week? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Name three strengths that you have:  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Name three strengths your friends would say you have:  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Name three things you really like about yourself:  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Name three things your friends like about you.  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. If you could change three things about yourself, what would they be?  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. How many friends would you say you have? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Have you been involved in "couple" relationships this year? Yes No (Circle one) If yes, do you currently have a boyfriend? Yes No (Circle one).
17. If someone was to ask you to describe yourself, what three words would you use?  
\_\_\_\_\_
18. Do you have any major worries or concerns in your life right now? Yes No (Circle one)  
If yes, what would they be? \_\_\_\_\_
19. Name three things you do when you get together with friends:  
\_\_\_\_\_
20. Name three things you and your family do together:  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank You for Participating in this Research.**

**APPENDIX F: TABLE F1: MULTIPLE RESPONSE STATISTICS FOR  
FAVOURITE TELEVISION SHOWS**

<b>Multiple Response Statistics for Favourite Television Shows</b>			
<b>Name of Show</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent of Responses</b>	<b>Percent of Cases</b>
Dawson's Creek	49	14.5	41.5
90210	15	4.4	12.7
Party of Five	10	3.0	8.5
Simpsons	30	8.9	25.4
Daytime Soap	6	1.8	5.1
Flintstones	2	.6	1.7
Breaker High	34	10.1	28.8
Rugrats	3	.9	2.5
Game Show	1	.3	.8
Wild Things	1	.3	.8
Saved By The Bell	4	1.2	3.4
MuchMusic	14	4.1	11.9
Star Trek	1	.3	.8
X-Files	1	.3	.8
King of the Hill	4	1.2	3.4
Freaky Stories	1	.3	.8
Seinfeld	5	1.5	4.2
Student Bodies	3	.9	2.5
South Park	7	2.1	5.9
Drew Carey	1	.3	.8
Friends	13	3.8	11.0
Boy Meets World	4	1.2	3.4
Mad About You	2	.6	1.7
Buffy the Vampire Slayer	7	2.1	5.9
Sports	5	1.5	4.2
Seventh Heaven	3	.9	2.5
Dharma & Greg	6	1.8	5.1
The Secret World of Alex Mack	2	.6	1.7
Hang Time	2	.6	1.7
California Dreams	1	.3	.8
Fresh Prince	3	.9	2.5
Caroline in the City	1	.3	.8
Ready or Not	14	4.1	11.9
Flash Forward	3	.9	2.5
Jonovision	1	.3	.8
Full House	2	.6	1.7
Are You Afraid of the Dark?	4	1.2	3.4
Art Attack	1	.3	.8

Table F1 continued...

Name of Show	Count	Percent of Responses	Percent of Cases
Clueless	2	.6	1.7
Goosebumps	3	.9	2.5
Baywatch	1	.3	.8
Sabrina the Teenage Witch	11	3.3	9.3
Daytime Talk Show	6	1.8	5.1
Dexter Lab	1	.3	.8
Highway Patrol	1	.3	.8
Home Improvement	9	2.7	7.6
Incredible Story Studio	1	.3	.8
Kratt's Creatures	1	.3	.8
Shirley Holmes	1	.3	.8
Life with Louie	1	.3	.8
Touched by an Angel	1	.3	.8
Space Goofs	1	.3	.8
Damon	1	.3	.8
Ally McBeal	3	.9	2.5
2 Guys, a Girl and a Pizza Place	1	.3	.8
Arthur	6	1.8	5.1
e.r.	1	.3	.8
Cavana	1	.3	.8
The Torkelsons	1	.3	.8
Jerry Springer	1	.3	.8
The Jetsons	1	.3	.8
SkoobyDoo	1	.3	.8
The Magic School Bus	1	.3	.8
Kids Say the Darndest Things	1	.3	.8
Diagnosis Murder	1	.3	.8
Movies	1	.3	.8
Country Mouse, City Mouse	1	.3	.8
Sweet Valley High	1	.3	.8
Blossom	1	.3	.8
Doug	1	.3	.8
Family Matters	1	.3	.8
Emily of New Moon	2	.6	1.7
Figure It Out	1	.3	.8
What Would You Do?	1	.3	.8
SportsDest	1	.3	.8
Hit List	1	.3	.8
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>286.4</b>

\*12 missing cases; 118 valid cases

**APPENDIX G: TABLE G1: SUMMARIES FOR EACH OF THE FAVOURITE  
SHOW RESPONSES**

**SHOW TYPE 1**

	<b>Show Type</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	Teen	50	42.4
	Adult Cartoon	12	10.2
	Children's	6	5.1
	Drama	5	4.2
	Science Fiction	9	7.6
	Sitcom	13	11.0
	Family	3	2.5
	Educational	1	.8
	Extreme	3	2.5
	Miscellaneous	16	13.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**SHOW TYPE 2**

	<b>Show Type</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	Teen	43	37.4
	Adult Cartoon	13	11.3
	Children's	6	5.2
	Drama	4	3.5
	Science Fiction	4	3.5
	Sitcom	20	17.4
	Family	5	4.3
	Educational	2	1.7
	Extreme	6	5.2
	Miscellaneous	12	10.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**SHOW TYPE 3**

	<b>Show Type</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	Teen	33	31.7
	Adult Cartoon	16	15.4
	Children's	5	4.8
	Drama	2	1.9
	Science Fiction	4	3.8
	Sitcom	13	12.5
	Family	6	5.8
	Educational	4	3.8
	Extreme	7	6.7
	Miscellaneous	14	13.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**APPENDIX H: TABLE H1: FREQUENCY TABLES FOR ACTIVITIES  
PARTICIPANTS LIKE TO DO WITH FRIENDS**

**What I Do When Getting Together With Friends – Choice 1**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No response	1	.8
Basketball	2	1.5
Biking	6	4.6
Bowling	1	.8
Do our nails	1	.8
Do things with boys	1	.8
Go out	1	.8
Go to the park	1	.8
Go to the store	1	.8
Hang out	3	2.3
Have fun	1	.8
Homework	1	.8
Kite flying	1	.8
Laugh	5	3.8
Listen to music	3	2.3
Make-overs	1	.8
Make up games	1	.8
Movies	10	7.7
Play	4	3.1
Play games	4	3.1
Play hockey	1	.8
Play marionettes	1	.8
Play sand-tag	1	.8
Play soccer	1	.8
Play truth/dare	1	.8
Relay races	1	.8
Roller-blade	5	3.8
Shop	19	14.6
Sidewalk chalk	1	.8
Sleepover	2	1.5
Swim	7	5.4
T.V.	7	5.4
Talk	26	20.0
Talk re army	1	.8
Talk re boys	2	1.5
Talk re life	1	.8
Talk re school	2	1.5
Tell stories	1	.8
Watch scary movies	1	.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**What I Do When Getting Together With Friends – Choice 2**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No response	2	1.5
Biking	9	6.9
Call boys	1	.8
Catch frogs/bugs	1	.8
Climb trees	1	.8
Computer	1	.8
Dance	2	1.5
Do each other's hair	1	.8
Eat	1	.8
Go boating	1	.8
Go places	1	.8
Go swimming	1	.8
Go to the park	1	.8
Go to the store	1	.8
Hang out	7	5.4
Hang with guys	1	.8
Homework	1	.8
Laugh	1	.8
Listen music	8	6.2
Look at magazines	1	.8
Make jokes	1	.8
Make movies	1	.8
Make things	1	.8
Movies	5	3.8
Play	8	6.2
Play Barbies	1	.8
Play cards	1	.8
Play commander	1	.8
Play computer	1	.8
Play games	3	2.3
Play imaginary games	1	.8
Play Nintendo64	1	.8
Play Ouija	2	1.5
Play sand-tag	1	.8
Play truth/dare	3	2.3
Play water balloons	1	.8
Roller-blade	4	3.1
Shop	10	7.7
Sing	2	1.5
Sleepover	3	2.3
Sports	3	2.3
Swim	9	6.9
T.V.	2	1.5
Talk	13	10.0
Talk boys	1	.8
Talk re problems	1	.8
Tell jokes	2	1.5
Walk	2	1.5
Watch boys	2	1.5
Watch guys	1	.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**What I Do When Getting Together With Friends – Choice 3**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No response	5	3.8
Be crazy	1	.8
Biking	7	5.4
Call on guys	1	.8
Climb trees	1	.8
Dance	5	3.8
Daydream	1	.8
Do fun stuff	1	.8
Do weird stuff	1	.8
Eat	4	3.1
Explore	1	.8
Fun doing anything	1	.8
Go to McDonalds	1	.8
Go out	1	.8
Go to YMCA	1	.8
Hang out	6	4.6
Have fun	2	1.5
Hide & seek	1	.8
Jump on trampoline	1	.8
Kill spiders	1	.8
Listen to music	6	4.6
Movies	5	3.8
Out to eat	1	.8
Party	1	.8
Play	3	2.3
Play cards	1	.8
Play computer	1	.8
Play cops/robbers	1	.8
Play games	5	3.8
Play grounder	1	.8
Play hockey	1	.8
Play outside	2	1.5
Play sports	4	3.1
Play truth/dare	1	.8
Read magazines	1	.8
Roller-blade	4	3.1
Share secrets	1	.8
Shop	6	4.6
Sleepover	6	4.6
Sports	1	.8
Stay at home	1	.8
Swim	5	3.8
T.V.	6	4.6
Talk	16	12.3
Talk boys	2	1.5
Talk re future	1	.8
Talk re problems	1	.8
Throw rocks in pond	1	.8
Watch the guys	1	.8
Waterballoons	1	.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

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