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PEER GROUPS AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT IN TRADITIONAL AND ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

by

Diana D. Coyl

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Family Life / Family and Human Development

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ABSTRACT

Peer Groups and Adolescent Development in

Traditional and Alternative High Schools

by

Diana D. Coyl, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2000

Major Professor: Dr. Randall M. Jones
Department: Family and Human Development

This study explored the influence of peer relationships on students who have a history of school difficulties. Peer Relationship Surveys I and II assessed school-based peer group status, relationship qualities, school-related behaviors, attitudes, and intentions (BAIs); substance (i.e., alcohol and tobacco) use; and identity development in relation to experiences at traditional (survey I, retrospective accounts) and alternative high schools (survey II). Both surveys were administered in five classrooms to students at an alternative high school (i.e. Cache High) during the first academic term (August 1999) and in January 2000. Eighty-five and 83 predominantly Caucasian adolescents between the ages of 15 to 19 completed surveys I and II, respectively. Twenty-one students were interviewed.

The majority of participants indicated that peer group membership and status were less salient at the alternative school and that the quality of their peer relationships at the

alternative school was better than what they had experienced at their traditional high schools. Quantitative analyses provided less support for the linkages between peer relationship quality, school-related BAIs, and grades, but interviews with students consistently supported the premise that supportive peer relationships contributed to improvement in school BAIs. Compared to responses about their traditional high school experiences, students reported more positive school-related BAIs and fewer negative BAIs at the alternative school. Analyses of differences or change in identity statuses showed that moratorium scores, which are characterized by greater exploration of choices in personal beliefs, educational goals, and interpersonal relationships, were statistically significantly different based on comparisons of responses to surveys I and II.

Findings suggests that school environments (traditional and alternative) do influence peer status, peer relationship qualities, school-related BAIs, grades, and identity status development. This study demonstrated that adolescents who were labeled as unmotivated and possibly academically underachieving in traditional high schools found that with encouragement and individualized attention at the alternative school they could change their school-related attitudes and performance. Conclusions from this study emphasize the importance of tailoring educational experiences to the needs of students rather than expecting students to conform to existing school structures and procedures, which are clearly ineffective for some learners.

(189 pages)

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Diana D. Coyl

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem

Typically, as they grow older, adolescents spend less time with their families and more time with their peers (Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Larson, Moneta, Richards, Holmbeck, & Duckett, 1996). Lauren and Williams (1997) observed that the frequency of interactions and activities with parents decreases, while time spent with same-age peers increases substantially during adolescence. Although many adolescents maintain positive, warm relationships with their parents if they existed earlier (Offer & Offer, 1975; Youniss & Smollar, 1985), some adolescents believe that their parents do not understand them as well, or that parent and adolescent viewpoints and opinions become somewhat divergent. Adolescents may feel that their parents cannot relate to the changes they are currently experiencing, such as pubertal development (Steinberg, 1989), the challenges of adjusting to expanded social networks associated with transitions to middle, junior, or high school, peer influences and pressures (Cairns, Neckerman, & Cairns, 1989; Crockett, Losoff, & Peterson, 1984; Rice & Mulkeen, 1995), and a growing interest in the opposite sex (Elkind,1988; Furman & Wehner, 1997).

Adolescents typically turn to peers in search of greater support and understanding. Some research suggests that peer groups become especially salient during adolescence because they help to develop norms and standards for social interactions and roles, as well as a sense of belonging (Dunphy, 1963; Youniss, 1980). In addition, peers provide support and empathy as boys and girls navigate social, emotional, and physical changes

associated with adolescent development (Douvan & Adelson, 1966). In addition, peer pressure is a commonly employed strategy for increasing conformity in adolescents' behavior, choices, and values (Foster-Clark & Blyth, 1991; Kandel, 1978b). Thus, it can be said that peers take on an increasingly significant role in shaping social development and individual identity during adolescence.

School environments are social settings that promote the development of adolescent peer groups. In fact, many groups exist solely due to the school environment, for example, student body officers, jocks, and cheerleaders usually belong to elite status peer groups that would not be salient in other social settings, such as community-sponsored activities or clubs. Within the middle, junior, and high school environments, most adolescents belong to, or desire to belong to one or more peer groups. Individual popularity or peer status may depend upon their peer group affiliations. Thus membership in high status peer groups is actively sought by many adolescents and is usually contingent upon participation in school-sponsored activities such as athletic teams, student government, or certain school clubs (Coleman, 1961).

Peer networks can promote healthy development and positive outcomes, as well as inhibit an individual from achieving their potential (Cairns et al., 1989). Adolescents who belong to high status social groups, such as athletes or school leaders, generally have higher social status and more opportunities for rewarding experiences than adolescents who self-select into, or end up in low status social groups. Adolescents in high status social groups feel supported by their friends and tend to have higher test scores and report card grades, and are more involved in school. They also exhibit positive

positive attitudes toward friends, family, and school (Feldman & Elliot, 1990). Adolescents in low status social groups are often perceived by peers to be aggressive and antisocial (Hogue & Steinberg, 1995). They also tend to be less involved in school activities, exhibit lower school achievement, and are more involved in delinquent behaviors (Aseltine, 1995). Low status peer groups often foster an antischool subculture that attempts to minimize or deny the importance of doing well in school (Gregory, 1995).

Furthermore, an individual's ranking or status within a peer group influences the roles or behaviors he or she will perform (Dunphy, 1963). If a group has a reputation for doing well in school (or not), then individuals within the group will generally conform to that expectation. Peer group associations and friendships have been linked to school-related behaviors such as: (a) educational intentions; (b) grades; (c) frequency of cutting classes; (d) number of days absent; (e) time spent doing homework; and (f) substance use (Kandel, 1978b).

Since many peer groups are a product of the school environment, it is likely that all schools have them to varying degrees of organization and visibility. In public schools, visibility and organization are usually quite high and adolescents can easily identify selected peer groups (e.g., jocks, band members, academic club members, drinkers and druggies, etc.). It is likely that students transferring from a public school into an alternative school belonged to one of the lower status social groups at their old schools or possibly to no group at all. Within the new school system, however, they may find their place among the new peer groups that exist there. Opportunities to "start over" or develop a more positive identity at the new school may also exist. It is possible for

individuals who were considered unsuccessful or unpopular at their old school to become leaders or better school achievers in the new school environment. The level of perceived support from peers, teachers, administrators, and parents should influence school achievement and positive changes in the adolescent's life.

Gregory (1995) examined the factors that contribute to the ability of at-risk high school students to make the transition from behavior patterns associated with academic failure to academic success. Based on open-ended interviews with 66 adolescents, many attributed their "turn-around" to enrollment in an alternative school. They indicated that the new school environment enabled them to change. In particular, they cited the following factors that contributed to their success: (a) the new school was smaller than the public schools they previously attended; (b) lack of anonymity (could not hide or disappear, more people were involved in your life and knew about you); (c) encouraging, responsive teachers and staff and more individualized attention from them; (d) the opportunity to start over; and (e) positive peer influences. In regards to this last factor, students indicated that they avoided hanging out with friends who influenced them to fail and sought new friends who were interested in their well-being and who valued education.

Purpose for This Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of peer relations on students who have a history of school difficulties. A change in school environment may allow for, perhaps encourage, the reshuffling of some adolescents' peer group

memberships and status. It was anticipated that most adolescents who were unable to succeed in their regular high schools either belonged to low status peer groups that engaged in antischool behaviors and fostered antischool attitudes, or that these adolescents were disconnected from their peers and unable to rely upon them as a source of support, particularly in their school experiences. In addition, the transition to the alternative high school may afford some of these adolescents the following opportunities: (a) the chance to establish positive peer relationships that will support their efforts to do well in school; (b) to change their attitudes and intentions about school and their academic performance; and, (c) to enhance their identity development. Identity development often occurs within a context of change (Erikson, 1968). Changes in the school environment (from public to alternative high school) and peer relationships should foster greater exploration regarding personal commitments related to attitudes about school and academic performance, future career plans, and interpersonal relationships.

Definitions

The following conceptual definitions are relevant to this study and are reflective of previous research and theory regarding adolescent peer relationships. Operational definitions will be discussed in Chapter III (Methods).

1. Peer Groups: Adolescent peer groups usually consist of individuals who share common characteristics and interests. Peer groups frequently consist of individuals who are similar in the following socio-demographic factors : age; grade-level; gender; religion; socio-economic status; and, ethnicity. In addition, adolescent friends have been found to

be exhibit comparable academic profiles, attitudes, intentions, identity status development, and behaviors (Akers, Jones, & Coyl, 1998; Berndt, 1982; Berndt & Perry, 1990; Hartup, 1980; Kandel, 1978b).

2. Peer Networks: Peer networks consist of groups of individuals within a defined population. These networks provide information about the structural characteristics and linkages among individuals and groups (Ennet & Bauman, 1996).

3. Peer Status: Peer status provides information about an individual's standing, position, or rank within one's own peer group or in relation to the peer networks with which he or she is associated.

4. Alternative Schools: A nontraditional or alternative high school is designed to provide for the needs of individual students who are unsuccessful or unable to continue their enrollment in a traditional or private high schools.

5. Behavior: A behavior is defined as a physical, observable action. For this study, measured behaviors include those related to academic performance and the use of tobacco and alcohol.

6. Intention: An intention is a goal, future plan, or choice. For this study, measured intentions are related to individuals' perceptions of their own ability to make choices and to take social cues from parents and peers.

7. Attitude: An attitude reflects personal beliefs or values that may or may not be based in consensual reality or observable facts. Attitudes often have an affective component and may be associated with certain behavior patterns and intentions.

8. Identity Statuses: Identity status may be defined in terms of a person's level of

exploration of life experiences and commitment to personal beliefs or values. Marcia (1966) provided descriptions of four identity statuses in relation to their level of exploration and commitment.

a. Achievement–a high degree of commitment, following a period of exploration of alternative choices.

b. Moratorium–a current process of exploration of possible choices, but a lack of commitment to specific individuals or ideologies.

c. Foreclosure–a high degree of commitment, without having undergone a period of exploration of alternative choices.

d. Diffusion–a lack of active exploration of choices and commitments, and no current interest in the pursuit of either.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of peer relations among a select group of adolescents, specifically those who are enrolled in an alternative high school. In order to better understand how peer influences operate on individual attitudes, intentions, and behaviors, the following research questions were investigated.

1. Do adolescents' perceive differences in their peer status at a traditional compared to an alternative high school?

2. Do adolescents' perceive differences in the quality of their peer relationships from a traditional to an alternative high school?

3. Do relations exist among school-related behaviors, attitudes, intentions, and the quality of peer relationships?

4. Is there a relation between academic achievement and the quality of peer relationships?

5. Do relations exist among adolescents' intentions and behaviors associated with the use of alcohol and tobacco and the quality of peer relationships?

6. Is there a relation between identity status development and attendance at an alternative high school?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Drawing upon psychoanalytic theory, developmental theorists such as Erikson (1968) and Blos (1979) have emphasized the transitional nature of adolescent social relationships. From this perspective, one of the fundamental tasks of adolescence is the development of a unique and separate identity. This is facilitated by the loosening of familial ties associated with a child's dependence on his or her parents and the increasing reliance on peer relationships to foster greater psychological independence. Research findings confirm that adolescents become more emotionally independent from their parents and develop a more individuated sense of self. For early adolescents these changes are accompanied by greater susceptibility to the influence of peers (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). Blos (1979) acknowledged the central role of peers in providing emotional support and socialization to facilitate these changes. Youniss (1980) provided a similar interpretation of adolescent social development, and he identified the nature of peer relations as distinctly different from adult-child relations. In contrast to the authority-based relations that characterize adult-child interactions, reciprocity and cooperation are more typical of peer interactions, thus providing a flexible or liberal social context in which adolescents may experiment with new ideas, attitudes, and behavior.

Identity Development

Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development was one of the first to

acknowledge the importance of identity development during adolescence. During this developmental period advanced cognitive capacities, physical maturation, and changing societal expectations converge. The ability to think abstractly, to see oneself and others in new ways, and to consider hypothetical futures or roles becomes possible during adolescence. As they begin to mature physically, adolescents no longer see themselves as children, yet they have not achieved adult status either. In addition, changing expectations from others, such as parents and peers, contribute to a sense of confusion about which roles are now salient.

These changes trigger an "identity crisis" which Erikson (1959) viewed as a process by which young people attempt to integrate previous life crises (i.e., the resolution of earlier stage crises) with possible roles and self-definitions they are currently exploring. Identity formation is facilitated by exploration within several domains (e.g., occupational, interpersonal, religious, political) and by making commitments within domains that lead to the integration of identities. According to Erikson (1968), what is needed most for healthy identity resolution is a period of moratorium, a time to integrate elements of identity that were established in childhood, thereby providing a sense of continuity, at the same time allowing for the integration of new aspects (roles and specific ideological identities) of their emerging adult identity.

In response to the many changes associated with this developmental period, early adolescents typically seek the support of peers. Initially, imitation and reciprocal socialization may characterize their peer interactions. During this period, youth are concerned with conforming to and fitting in with their peers, not developing autonomous

identities. They tend to follow what their peers are doing without making deliberate self-defining choices. Eventually, most adolescents begin to independently explore new experiences, roles, self-identities, relationships, and beliefs (a moratorium period), which should contribute to individual identity formation (commitment to particular ideologies and self-defining identities and roles).

Thus, identity formation appears to occur most commonly at the end of the adolescent developmental period. Waterman's (1982) research provides support for a developmental progression in identity development. Increases in the percentage of those who attain the status of identity achievement in conjunction with decreases in the percentage of those classified as identity diffused have been observed from pre-high school years to college, particular in the domain of occupational choice. However, not all adolescents undergo a period of moratorium that leads to positive identity development and strong commitments to chosen values. Some remain in a state of role confusion, while others maintain a foreclosed identity in which they accept without questioning the identity, roles, and ideologies that have been passed to them by adults (usually their parents).

It should also be acknowledged that identity development is a lifelong process. Although adolescence is the developmental period associated with heightened self-awareness and greater exploration of potential roles and ideologies, Erikson (1982) and others (e.g., Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Stephen, Fraser, & Marcia, 1992) have emphasized the fluid, life-long nature of identity formation. According to Stephen et al.

(1992), "Identity is not fixed, nor is it closed. The identity statuses are open, mutable, and subject to reworking" (p. 285).

The Measurement of Identity

Marcia's (1966) operationalization of Erikson's fifth stage of psychosocial identity development is the most widely recognized construct. Marcia classified youth into four identity statuses based on their level of exploration and commitment to interpersonal, occupational, political, and religious beliefs and values. The four statuses are identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion. Identity-achieved youth have undergone a period of exploration about who they are and what they want from life. As a result of this process, they have made strong commitments toward future goals. Moratorium youth are in the process of actively exploring options before making commitments. Foreclosed youth are characterized by strong commitments to the ideologies of significant adult authority figures, without having independently explored alternatives. Diffused youth are characterized by their lack of exploration and commitment. They tend to drift along, following the path of least resistance and conflict, lacking future-orientation or clear goals (Schiedel & Marcia, 1985).

Peer Influences on Identity Development

Harter has argued that "self is a social construction" (1990, p. 353) that develops from adolescents' interactions with others. Social interactions become a source of information, values, feedback, social comparisons, expectations, evaluations, and exhortations. Parents and peers exert significant and sometimes conflicting influence on

adolescents and identity development is profoundly shaped by these social relationships.

Other theorists have acknowledged the influence of peers on adolescent identity development. Borrowing from Erikson's psychosocial theory (1950) and Havighurst's (1953) theory of developmental tasks, Newman and Newman (1976) proposed that the primary developmental task of early adolescence is: group identity versus alienation. Adolescents' needs for social approval, affiliation, status, and reputation lead to identity exploration that is closely linked to peer relationships. Positive resolution of this crisis is achieved when adolescents are accepted into a peer group that they believe will meet their social needs and provide a sense of belonging. Under these circumstances, group membership facilitates individual psychological growth and the accomplishment of other developmental tasks associated with this stage. Negative resolution of this crisis occurs when adolescents are not accepted into the peer groups they wish to belong to, or they are accepted into groups that do not promote healthy psychological growth.

Newman and Newman's (1976) thesis is based on empirical findings that indicate that most young adolescents (i.e., aged 13 to 14 years) experience considerable pressure to conform to peer group expectations and norms. This pressure arises from parents, the school environment, and peers. During adolescence, youth spend increasing amounts of time with peers in the school setting and on weekends while spending less time with their families. As adolescents associate themselves with particular peers and peer groups, parents typically express their opinions about, or attempt to influence their children's choice of friends. Parents may discourage some associations while encouraging other relationships that they feel will benefit their children.

The school environment often promotes certain peer groups and allows students to find their own opportunities within such groups. School personnel passively accept as well as actively encourage the organization of school peer groups. They allow students to establish boundaries, maintain existing rivalries, and manage group interactions with little or no interference (Eckert, 1989). Furthermore, teachers and other school staff hold expectations of students based on their peer affiliations. Adolescents in popular groups or "leading crowds" are expected to do well in school and to cooperate with school adults (Coleman, 1961). Adolescents in unconventional peers groups are viewed more warily by school staff. Teachers are likely to expect poor academic performance, uncooperative attitudes, and problem behavior from members of these groups (Eckert, 1989).

Peers also are active in encouraging and sustaining peer group membership. Adolescents are often defined by the friends with whom they spend their time, their interests, and activities. Group identity has meaning within the larger context of community and school. There are demands within groups for loyalty and commitment, and there are also expectations from other peers that reinforce an individual's group identity or that may limit opportunities to associate with other groups. By the time adolescents attend high school, peer group social structure and status are typically well defined.

Thus, from this theoretical perspective, peers play an important role in group identity development. Based on initial similarities in abilities or interests and through pressure exerted by peers, adolescents make commitments to particular groups, which results in their identity being based on group membership. In time, peer group

socialization will contribute to greater similarities among members within a group.

The Structure, Characteristics, and Functions of Peer Groups

Cliques and Crowds

Dunphy's (1963) field investigation of urban adolescent peer groups in Australia described the basic structures and social functions provided by these groups. Three hundred and three adolescent boys and girls ranging in age from 13 to 21 were informally observed for a period of 4 to 6 months. In addition to these observations, youth participants were asked to keep diaries of their interactions with peers, to complete questionnaires, and to respond to interviews.

Dunphy (1963) proposed a developmental model of peer relationships, implying that as adolescents' needs change, so do the functions of peer groups. During stage one, which typically corresponds with early adolescence, most boys and girls interacted primarily in isolated same-sex cliques. Stage two begins with the formation of crowds that facilitate heterosocial interactions, although these initial interactions are somewhat limited and superficial. Middle adolescence corresponds with stage three and is characterized by the formation of heterosexual cliques in which high status group members initiate individual romantic relationships. Adolescents who belong to heterosexual cliques often maintain membership in their original same-sex cliques as well. During stage four heterosexual cliques and fully developed crowds are common. By late adolescence (stage five) crowds begin to dissipate and most group members form individual romantic relationships.

In Dunphy's (1963) study groups were clearly recognized as unique entities within the larger adolescent social structure. Building upon previous research by Hurlock (1949) and Hollingshead (1949), Dunphy (1963) investigated the differences and purposes of cliques and crowds, and the key roles that some youth fill within such groups. Cliques of three to nine members were composed of more intimately associated peers. Clique members were identified as good friends who typically lived in close residential proximity to one another and interacted throughout the week. Crowds consisted of two to four associating cliques and ranged in membership from 15 to 30. They provided a means of bringing cliques together for larger social activities such as dances and parties. Crowds congregated mostly on weekends. Thus cliques could be described as a more constant and intimate source of social and emotional support, whereas crowds provide opportunities to intermingle with other peers and in particular to interact with members of the other sex.

From Dunphy's (1963) research it would appear that one primary function of crowds is to provide opportunities for heterosocial interactions. Thus during early adolescence, crowds are less common presumably because interest in the opposite sex and dating is not yet fully developed, and in later adolescence they are no longer necessary because most older adolescents have learned how to interact independently with the other sex.

Coleman's (1961) study of high school peer groups focused on other functions of crowds. He asserted that all schools have a "leading crowd" (i.e., a high status peer group). A leading crowd provides behavior models for other school mates. They establish and maintain norms and set standards for peer social status. Of the 10

midwestern high schools from which Coleman's sample was drawn, most adolescents sought membership in their school's "leading crowd." Reputation and personality traits were important determinants of crowd membership. For girls, having a good personality, being friendly, attractive, and well-dressed were important criteria for membership. Besides having a good personality and good looks, boys reported that athletic ability was especially salient. Members of the leading peer groups were more popular and had higher self-esteem than adolescents who were not members. Similar to Dunphy's (1963) findings about age and the salience of crowd membership, Coleman reported that the importance of membership decreased with advancing grade level.

The purposes served by peer group affiliations and the importance of group membership appear to change over the course of adolescence. Most early adolescents seek membership in peer groups for a variety of reasons including greater emotional and instrumental support, opportunities to form and enhance friendships, and to increase their participation in social events. In contrast, older adolescents tend to be critical of group demands for conformity that interfere with their autonomy and the unnecessary maintenance of some friendships within groups (Brown, Eicher, & Petrie, 1986). Most studies (Brown, Eicher, & Petrie, 1986; Coleman, 1961; Dunphy, 1963) indicate that the importance of peer group membership decreases with age. Crowd membership and influence appear most salient during early to middle adolescence.

Unconventional Peer Groups

The leading crowd is not the only visible peer group in American public schools.

Other groups are based on school-related activities, for example, academic achievement, debate club, band, and choir participation. Some peer groups are formed by individuals who come from similar backgrounds (e.g., race or socioeconomic status), or who engage in similar behaviors such as drug and alcohol use, or other delinquent behavior. Eckert's (1989) ethnographic study of high school peer groups in the early 1980s profiled two dominant groups within the public school system: jocks, who were likely to be members of a leading school crowd, and "burnouts." Burnouts were likely to come from working-class homes, smoke tobacco and pot, drink alcohol, skip classes, and experience occasional difficulties with the police. For purposes of this study, adolescents who belong to peer groups with similar characteristics to burnouts will be referred to as members of unconventional peer groups. Unconventional refers to adolescent behaviors and attitudes that are not endorsed by societal norms and conventions.

Isolates, Liaisons, Neglected, Rejected, and Controversial Youth

As prevalent as peer groups are, not all adolescents belong to one. Network analysis performed by Ennett and Bauman (1996) from a panel study conducted in 1980 and 1981 of 8th-through 10th-grade students identified two additional sociometric categories for adolescents, "isolates" and "liaisons." Isolates were identified as adolescents who do not belong to a peer group. They had few or no links to other adolescents in their school social network. In contrast, liaisons were adolescents who maintained friendships with individuals in more than one clique or peer group but did not claim allegiance to a particular group. Liaisons provided indirect connections between

cliques through their interactions with various clique members. Adolescents classified as liaisons or isolates ranged from less than one fifth to one half of the school samples. Females were more likely to be clique members and males were more likely to be isolates. Classification as an isolate or clique member tended to be more stable over time (one year between wave one and wave two data collection points) than did classification as a liaison. Liaisons were more likely to become clique members rather than isolates between the two assessment periods (Ennett & Bauman, 1996).

Other sociometric categories or status groups (i.e., neglected, rejected, controversial) have been identified for children and adolescents who do not belong to the popular leading crowd. Wentzel and Asher (1995) examined the academic orientations of early adolescents who belonged to different sociometric status groups. They observed differences among the following sociometric categories, "rejected," "neglected," and "controversial." Rejected children were infrequently nominated as someone's best friend and were actively disliked by their peers. Neglected children were nominated infrequently as a best friend but not disliked by their peers. Controversial children were both frequently nominated as someone's best friend and were actively disliked. In relation to school experiences, adolescents in these three sociometric categories were significantly different from adolescents classified as "average."

Wenztel and Asher (1995) found that compared with average children, rejected and controversial children were preferred less by their teachers, and received lower teacher ratings associated with their academic performance, self-regulation, and general classroom behaviors (e.g., helping others, following rules, acting responsibly).

Their peers also tended to view them as marginal students. Neglected children also differed significantly from average children on several academic characteristics. These children reported higher levels of school motivation. They were perceived as more independent by teachers, more appropriate in their classroom behaviors, and they were preferred more by teachers. Wentzel and Asher's research highlights the important differences that exist among sociometric status groups in terms of school experiences, motivation, competence, and relationships with peers and teachers.

Peer and Friendship Influences

Peer Influences and Friendship Similarity

The research cited above suggests that peer group membership or lack of membership may have important ramifications in several domains of adolescent development. It has been suggested and observed that peers take an active role in shaping behavior by applying various forms of social pressure (e.g., reinforcement, rewards, and punishment) in order to achieve greater group conformity or to enforce peer norms (Foster-Clark & Blyth, 1991; Steinberg, Brown, Cider, Kaczmarck, & Lazzaro, 1988). Early and middle adolescents appear to be especially susceptible to peer influences, more so than younger children or older adolescents (Brown, Clausen, & Eicher, 1986; Brown, Lohr, & McClenahan, 1986). However, peer influence is not the same as peer pressure. Peers also provide positive role models for each other, define social norms, and structure opportunities for peer interactions and socialization. Research findings suggest that peer influence is often positive (Bearman & Brückner, 1999; Steinberg et al., 1988), providing

important social and emotional support for adolescent psychosocial development.

Within larger peer groups, smaller clusters of friends or friendship pairs are common. Because close friends provide greater social and emotional support (Dunphy, 1963), it is likely that friends have a greater influence on adolescents than do other peer acquaintances. In review a of several studies, Cohen (1983) concluded that "selected friends have more influence on an individual than nonselected (peer) acquaintances" (p. 163).

In assessing the developmental significance of friends, Hartup (1995) contends that is it important to consider three aspects of friendships: 1. Having friends or not; 2. the identity or personality characteristics of a child's friends; and 3. friendship quality (e.g., conflict ridden, supportive or nonsupportive). These three factors lead to substantial variations in adolescent psychosocial development. Thus, friends can contribute in positive ways toward individual development and they can impede development. A teen who belongs to a large peer group consisting of antisocial, coercive friends (e.g., gangs) may be at greater risk than a teen with only one or two friends. Adolescents with no friends are at the greatest risk for negative psychosocial outcomes and school experiences (Epstein, 1983).

Recent investigations of peer influences on teen sexual behavior showed that a teen girl's immediate circle of friends is far more influential on her behavior (related to sexual debut) than the next larger peer group or even a single best friend (Brown & Theobald, 1999). Brown and Theobald stated:

[A]dolescents are influenced not just by current associates, but by peers they

> admire or with whom they'd like to develop closer ties-suggesting that teens may be more inclined to change their behavior to fit into a new crowd than to maintain a current friendship. (p. 3)

The influence of friends on adolescent attitudes and behaviors is well-documented. Kandel (1978a, 1978b) observed that adolescent friends tend to be similar or become more similar in their attitudes and behaviors as a result of their interactions. Homophily among friends is enhanced by selection processes (who is chosen to be a friend), socialization (how friends influence each other), and elimination (who is rejected or eliminated from the circle of friends). Individuals who are similar in a number of characteristics (e.g., age, race, sex, socioeconomic status) may already associate with one another due to propinquity (e.g., they grew up in the same neighborhood, attended the same schools). This is commonly the case among elementary-age children and early adolescents. In addition, peers become more similar in their attributes through the process of interacting with one another (Brown & Theobald, 1999; Kandel, 1978a, 1978b). Over time, some peers are ostracized because they are judged as not fitting in with the group anymore.

Other studies have established friendship similarities and influence for the following characteristics: attitudes about school and educational attainment (Ide, Parkerson, Haertel, & Walberg, 1981; Kandel, 1978b), college plans (Duncan, Haller, & Portes, 1968; Kandel & Lesser, 1969; Picou & Carter, 1976 cited in Cohen, 1983), dating behavior (Simon, Eder, & Evans, 1992), deviant behaviors (Aseltine, 1995; Kandel, 1978b), and identity status development (Akers et al., 1998). For purposes of this study,

a brief review of peer similarities related to school variables and identity development follows.

Peers' and Friends' Influences on Education Attainment and Attitudes about School

Kandel's (1978b) study of high school friendship pairs revealed that adolescents were most similar on four sociodemographic attributes: grade in school, sex, race, and age. In addition, friends were most similar in their use of marijuana and other illicit drugs, followed by their academic interests (educational aspirations, overall grade average, class cutting, school program) and participation in peer activities. Ide et al. (1981) conducted a meta-analysis of peer influences on educational outcomes. The average correlation between individuals and peers on measures of achievement was $\underline{r} = .24$. The strength of peer influence was significantly higher for best friend pairs. It appears that students' perceptions of similarity with friends on achievement variables exceeded their actual level of similarity (Ide et al., 1981). Epstein (1983) reported that the magnitude of peer influence was small and more strongly associated with college aspirations and achievement test scores than was grade point average, whereas friends' influence on academic outcomes was substantially greater. Specifically, regardless of initial achievement test scores, individuals have higher achievement test scores one year later if their friends have initially high achievement scores. Students low in achievement and self-reliance improved their scores on these measures if their high-scoring friends reciprocated their friendship choice and those friendships were stable for at least a year. Epstein

concluded that "[stable] friends show significant, continued influence on many outcomes across several grade levels. . ." (1983, p. 197).

Research suggests that peers and friends can also impede school achievement and motivation. Downs and Rose (1991) found that adolescents in drug and alcohol treatment programs who were members of delinquent peer groups at their schools reported being uninvolved in school activities, involved with alcohol and drugs, and "just drifting through school" (p. 480). They had significantly higher levels of depression and lower levels of internal locus of control than did adolescents who were not in treatment programs and who belonged to prosocial peer groups (e.g., groups that were highly involved in school activities).

Ethnographic studies of peer cultures, such as Gregory's (1995) research with students at alternative high schools, revealed that these adolescents had previously participated in antischool subculture that promoted the denial of the importance of school success. Endorsing the antischool subculture can lead to school dropout. For some adolescents, dropping out may be a way of affirming peer group membership. Gibson (1982) observed that norms discouraging achievement in some male peer groups were associated with behaviors exhibited by group members that decreased their positive reputation among teachers, but increased their peer group status. Labov (1982) also described the conflict that inner city, ethnic minority students faced between school culture and peer culture. Students who spoke "school English" risked derision from peers. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) reported that Black students are often encouraged by adults to adopt the majority group cultural patterns as a means of achieving social and economic

success. Such a choice, however, often results in a loss of status among their peers. Many high-ability students dampened their academic efforts in order to maintain peer status.

Such studies illustrate how context shapes peer interactions and individuals' responses. In both Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) study and Gregory's (1995) research, the school environment shaped peer norms, expectations, and students' achievement motivation. Fordham and Obgu (1986) observed that high-achieving students who were placed in an environment where all peers were high achievers were not forced to hide or minimize their academic abilities in order to maintain peer status. Similarly, Gregory (1995) reported that peers at alternative high schools generally supported academic achievement. These findings suggest that contextual changes, such as a change in school environment, can reduce potential conflicts between peer norms and school achievement.

Similarities in Identity Status Development Among Friends

Research on identity development among friendship pairs conducted with high school students (grades 10 through 12) showed that best friends did share similar identity characteristics, particularly in their levels of foreclosure and diffusion (Akers et al., 1998). In addition, best friends were more similar in measures related to academics than were nonfriends. Variance shared by best friends ranged from 25 to 43% for positive and negative attitudes toward academics, academic behaviors, school attendance, and extracurricular activities. Overall, this study confirmed that "adolescent friends share

important similarities in identity and in many behaviors, attitudes, and intentions related to identity" (Akers et al., 1998, p. 197).

Effects of School Environment on Peer Groups and Academic Motivation and Achievement

It has been argued that schools, to a large extent, provide the structure for peer group affiliation and adolescent social status. There would be no peer group based on athletic abilities or academic achievement if school sports programs and honor societies did not exist (Coleman, 1961; Eckert, 1989; Newman & Newman, 1976). Peer status is often determined by an adolescent's participation (or lack of participation) in such programs. Adolescents who participate in school-sponsored programs (e.g., athletic teams, cheerleading) and who meet adults' expectations regarding school achievement (e.g., those who maintain good grades and cooperate with teachers) are generally granted high social status from adults and peers. Adolescents who do not participate in such programs and who do not meet adult expectations are generally assigned low social status from adults and peers. According to Eckert (1989):

> The school assembles people from diverse segments of the community that might otherwise remain separate and engages them in a competition to control their environment, to define their age group, and to set norms for interaction among themselves and with adults. (p. 22)

Jock and burnout peer groups represent stable and common foundations that maintain an oppositional relationship to each other. Most public schools have both of these groups. Membership in either group is largely determined by an adolescent's

personal attributes and behaviors (e.g., athletic skill, good looks, socioeconomic status, reputation, social skills, drug use, academic performance), and the individual's opportunities to achieve social status within the school environment.

Whereas teachers, administrators, and parents generally accept and admire adolescents who belong to popular school groups (e.g., jocks), adolescents who belong to unconventional peer groups are usually rejected and stigmatized by adults (Eckert, 1989). In addition, children who are disliked by their peers are often not well liked by teachers either (Taylor, 1989; Wentzel & Asher, 1995). These same children tend to receive more criticism and less help from their teachers (Brophy & Good, 1984), and thus poor social relationships with peers and teachers are likely to contribute to poor academic motivation and achievement.

There are other ways in which the school environment fosters or diminishes adolescents' motivation and academic performance. Elkind (1988) argued that public school systems in America emphasize academic performance while minimizing or ignoring the importance of adolescents' healthy psychosocial development. Adolescents experience great pressure to achieve, and clearly not all adolescents are able or willing to meet the high expectations placed upon them, as high school dropout rates attest.

Success at school is determined by a combination of specific academic and social behaviors, such as accomplishing assignments on time, class participation, regular attendance, and positive attitude/behavior toward teachers and other students (Gregory, 1995). Research indicates that students are well aware of the expectation to conform to school rules, teachers' instructions, and classroom goals (Martin, 1972; Ringness, 1967).

Students are expected to internalize school rules and procedures and to function without much personal supervision within a prescribed program of daily activities. They are to arrive on time, attend class, and abide by school rules. Students may differ in their willingness to conform, but all are aware that the expectation for conformity is a central component of the norm structure (Newman & Newman, 1987).

In contrast, social status is not based solely on academic achievement or ability to follow school rules and procedures. Coleman (1961) observed that academic achievement did coincide with membership in leading crowds, and family background played an important role in both school performance and peer group membership for both boys and girls. However, athletic ability for boys was clearly more important than academic excellence. Athletes were named as most popular with girls and athletic achievement was the highest symbol of success for boys. The combination of being both an athlete and a scholar (1.3% of the total student body met this criterion) was associated with the highest ratings of popularity, more than being an athlete only or scholar only. Boys that were neither athletes nor scholars received little recognition and respect from their peers. Social status for girls was associated with scholastic achievement and social success with boys. Physical attractiveness was closely linked with girls' social success. In general, social success appeared to be more salient than school achievement, although schools differed in whether beauty or brains contributed more to female popularity.

Other research confirms that athletics for high school boys remains an important avenue to status (Eitzen, 1975). However, characteristics of both the schools and male students influence the relative importance of this attribute. Participation in athletic

programs is a greater source of status in small rather than in large schools, and in highly structured authoritarian schools than in permissive schools; it also appears to be more important to students who are highly involved in school activities than to those who are uninvolved.

Although some students' identity and reputation at school are based on academic performance, peer groups vary in their acknowledgment of its importance. Faunce (1984) observed that, among a group of high school seniors in Michigan, academic performance was an important basis for assigning status among these students. However, students with low school achievement coped with this threat to self-esteem by withdrawing self-investment from the student role. Level of self-investment varied directly with grade point average and self-evaluation of academic achievement. Two fifths of low-status students said they would deny any concern for how they were evaluated as students. In contrast, high-status students said they would challenge the legitimacy of negative evaluations by classmates or suffer loss of self-esteem. Faunce (1984) concluded that adolescent conceptions of self and concern for academic achievement depends on social location within peer networks. Low-status students are more likely to have low school achievement, are more likely to affiliate with one another, and are less likely to invest in the student role. Other researchers concur that the importance of academic orientation varies among peer groups. Jocks and populars report more pressure to do well in school than toughs and druggies (Clasen & Brown, 1985). Some groups strongly endorse academic achievement while others minimize or deny its importance (Steinberg et al., 1988).

How do students attending nontraditional high schools obtain peer status? How do male students who attend schools without athletic programs build their reputation? Are academic achievement and social success still viable avenues to status for girls who attend nontraditional schools?

Alternative Schools

Alternative schools were created to address the educational and vocational needs of adolescents who are unsuccessful in the public school system. The focus and goal of many alternative high schools is dropout prevention. They are designed to meet the needs of students who are behind in credits, have a history of behavioral or truancy problems, are pregnant or parenting, have learning disabilities, are involved in the court system, or are homeless.

Open classrooms and alternative schools rely upon a philosophy and approach that differs from the public school system in a number of ways. Korn (1990) described these differences in the following manner: mini-lessons and units are more typical in open classrooms; students are encouraged to further personal interests independently; lesson plans are flexible and adapted to the varying interest and needs of the students; a less obvious power differential among teachers, staff, and students exists; and students are encouraged to set goals and compete with themselves instead of others.

The following characteristics are typical of the alternative school environment: lower enrollments and ratios of students to staff; more staff counseling, mentoring, and tutoring of students; clear rules and expectations; students' voice in school operations; a

curriculum that combines classroom learning with vocational training opportunities; flexible schedules; high standards for behavior, attendance, and performance; noncompetitive learning environment; and an emphasis on individual accountability and responsibility ("Alternative Schools Benefit," 1997; Young, 1990).

Gregory's (1995) study of adolescents who experienced a "turnaround" in their school experiences (from failure in the public school system to varying definitions of school achievement or positive change at the alternative school they attended) provides important insights into how the school environment affects students' academic performance and motivation to achieve. Interviews were conducted with 66 students of diverse ethnic backgrounds (e.g., Latino, African American, West Indian, East Asian) who were attending three alternative schools in New York City. All three schools were located on City University of New York college campuses and were specifically designed to serve students who were at-risk for dropping out.

Alternative school students often have a history of negative school experiences. They may have trouble keeping up with their peers for many reasons (e.g., learning difficulties, language or cultural barriers, family problems). In addition, these students are more likely to exhibit behavior problems (e.g., easily provoked, violent temper, fighting, truancy, excessive drug and alcohol use), or experience an unintended pregnancy. Many of these students believe that they don't really matter. One student reported, "You could walk right out the door and they wouldn't even care about you. That's a big problem at public schools. They don't care enough. To them you're just, 'What's your number?' They don't even ask you your name" (Gregory, 1995, p. 143).

Not all students who end up attending an alternative school have troubled pasts, nor did they all belong to low-status peer groups at their former schools. Unintended pregnancies are one of the primary reasons that some females attend alternative school. These adolescents may have belonged to popular peer groups at their old school. Other students simply felt overwhelmed by the transition to a large public high school. The size of their school and the anonymity that they felt at school contributed to some students choice to associate with peer groups that further diminished their positive reputations or former social status. One girl described how school pressures led to her rapid decline in school achievement:

> I felt lost, just lost. You feel like you don't belong, no one cared, you know, just another regular person lost in the crowd. I went to classes for about a month, but I felt uncomfortable. I didn't know anyone really. So I started staying outside, and then I met other people doing the same, and we started hanging out. . . . Everyone was surprised because I had been a good student before. (Gregory, 1995, p. 145)

In contrast to students' negative reports of their experiences at public high schools, these same students described a positive, caring environment at the alternative school which helped them change. Most alternative schools incorporate a philosophy of personal responsibility with more individualized attention and caring expressed by teachers and staff members toward students. Students are typically assigned credit, not grades, for the courses they complete, thus alleviating some of the pressure or competition inherent in grading procedures (Joel Allred, personal communication, 1999). The following examples illustrate students' perceptions of alternative school teachers and counselors:

> Teachers at school show an interest in the person not the number. They know you as a person. They know who you are and they're very on top of you.

> The counselors are always on my back. It's not like fake concern, you know, it's real concern.
>
> All of the teachers have helped 'cause they never said, "All right, since you're not doing this, you're not passing. Don't bother coming no more." Not one teacher has said that since I've been here. They always encourage me to come even though they know I'm not going to pass a class. (Gregory, 1995, p. 150)

Success rates among alternative school students who were classified as at-risk for dropping out or academic failure at their previous public schools are generally quite high (e.g., 95% graduation rate; Joel Allred, personal communication, 1999). Students report that individualized instruction, positive interactions with teachers and counselors, and a nongrading format support their efforts to complete high school (Griffin, 1994; Speckhard, 1992). Again, most studies of peer influences on educational experiences have been conducted with students attending public and private schools. Little is known about peer influences on students attending alternative schools. One exception is Gregory's (1995) study in which she reported that peers were an important source of support in students' efforts to change. Students who experienced a "turnaround" in academic motivation and achievement avoided associating with friends and peers who had influenced them to fail at their old schools. In addition, they "sought out new friends who were interested in their well-being and who valued education" (p. 151).

Background Information about Cache High

Cache High was established in 1991. The 1991-1992 school year had six academic terms beginning in October and ending in April. Eighty-six students, ranging from freshman to seniors, began school at Cache High the first year. Of the original

students, 12 graduated in May of 1992. After the first couple of years, it was decided that freshman were too immature for the alternative school environment. Currently only a few sophomores, some juniors, and mostly seniors attend the school.

The maximum student capacity at Cache High is 100, although up to 135 students may be enrolled during a term. Many students divide their time between academic courses at Cache High, vocational training courses taken at Bridgerland Applied Technology Center, and work experience. Joel Allred, a behavioral specialist with a master's degree in education, is the principal. There are six teachers, one administrative secretary, and a school counselor.

When a student transfers to Cache High, the principal schedules a home visit. This is done to acquaint both the prospective student and his or her family with procedures at Cache High and to recruit the support of parents for their child's education. Parents and the student are required to read and sign a school contract which details expectations for students. Students are to attend school regularly, respect the teachers, follow instructions, complete assignments, not distract other students from learning, not deface or vandalize school buildings or property, and refrain from illegal activities such as using or selling alcohol and drugs at school. The consequences for violation of the contract, discipline options and procedures, interventions, due process, student rights, attendance/tardy policy, and work experience opportunities are outlined in the contract.

The school year begins the end of August and finishes during the first week of June. Students who transfer to Cache High attend until they have completed all credits necessary for graduation. The typical enrollment at Cache High is one year (six academic

terms). The school week runs from Monday through Friday with three 1-hour-and-50-minute class periods each day. There are six teachers on staff and five classes are held each of the three periods. As is typical of alternative schools, the teacher-student ratio is lower than most public school classrooms with approximately15-18 students in each class period. For each class completed during a term, students earn a letter grade and one-half credit. Teachers attempt to provide flexible lesson plans to accommodate the varying abilities of students. Tutoring is available and all homework assignments are completed at school. However, because Cache High is an accredited high school, all students must meet state mandated proficiencies and requirements for graduation.

In addition to typical courses (e.g., history, math, English), students may enroll in vocational training courses or take elective credits at Bridgerland Technology Institute. Courses at Bridgerland are designed similarly to those at Cache High. They are 6 weeks long, with class periods of 1 hour and 50 minutes each. Some students also earn work experience credit. For example, they may have a part-time job at McDonald's. For every 240 hours of work they earn one school credit; they can earn up to five credits of work experience during their enrollment at the alternative high school.

Alternative school staff recognize that many of their students have had trouble with adult authority figures (past teachers, principals, police officers). In attempting to earn their students' trust and ease their transition back into school, staff tend to take a more informal, less authoritarian approach to their roles as teachers and administrators. Students are allowed to refer to staff members by their first name. Students are encouraged to discuss their opinions and objections openly with teachers, the counselor,

and the principal. In fact, they are encouraged by the counselor and principal to discuss anything they feel is important (Joel Allred, personal communication, 1999).

Based on informal observations and interviews with staff and students, the principal appears to be somewhat of a father-figure to many of the students. They appear comfortable in talking with him. Many share very personal experiences with him, and they express their admiration for him openly. Former students often come back to visit after they have graduated or send letters and photos of themselves. Students express similar positive feelings about their teachers, school counselor, and the school secretary. As one student put it, "It's like we are a family here."

The school environment also is less formal than most schools. For example, one classroom does not contain any chairs or desks. Students arrange themselves on one of several couches in the room and write on coffee tables. The walls of most classrooms are covered with slogans, sayings, and art work. The principal maintains a food program and allows students to buy food and beverages at minimal cost and eat in the classrooms. Students are allowed to smoke in a common area outside the school buildings, although smoking is discouraged by the staff.

In keeping with the philosophy of responding to the plurality and diversity of student needs, Cache High employs a school counselor 25 hours a week. This person works with students on an individual and group basis. Community agencies and volunteers are also recruited to provide additional services for students (e.g., anger-management group therapy; drug, alcohol, physical, and sexual abuse treatment programs; academic tutoring).

In summary, Cache High is structured and based upon a philosophy similar to other alternative schools. It incorporates lower enrollments and ratios of students to staff, individual and group counseling is available for the students, as well as mentoring and tutoring opportunities. Clearly defined and reinforced rules and expectations are stated at the beginning of enrollment. Courses combine classroom learning with vocational training opportunities. Schedules are flexible, high standards for behavior, attendance, and performance are expected, and a noncompetitive learning environment is provided by an openly caring and responsive staff

Identity Development Among Alternative High School Students

Research on identity development has been conducted among adolescents in public and private schools, but there appears to be no information about how identity development is influenced by attendance at alternative high schools. Does the alternative school environment foster identity development? Given the emphasis placed on vocational training and experiences that alternative schools typically provide, it seems plausible that alternative schools do encourage active exploration in the occupational domain. Are students attending alternative schools more likely to be classified as moratorium on measures of identity related to occupational choices? Do students experience changes in identity status during the course of their enrollment at an alternative high school?

Peer Relationships at Alternative High Schools

Do peer associations at the alternative school influence academic identity

development? Research has shown that children and adolescents who are not accepted by their peers tend to do less well academically than more popular children and are at greater risk for dropping out of high school (Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990; Parker & Asher, 1987). Feldman and Elliot (1990) have argued that "rejected" adolescents tend to have poorer attitudes toward friends, family, and school. They are less involved in school activities and experience lower levels of academic achievement than do "popular" adolescents.

For this study it was proposed that adolescents who might have been classified as isolates, neglected, rejected, controversial, or members of unconventional peers groups at their former schools are more likely to be included in the population of students attending alternative high school. These individuals were less likely to benefit from or feel supported by their former peer associations in terms of their school motivation and achievement.

Literature Summary

The importance of peer relationships for adolescent psychosocial development has been reported and discussed by many researchers and theorists (Berndt, 1979; Blos, 1979; Brown, Eicher, & Petrie, 1986; Brown & Theobald, 1999; Cairns et al., 1989; Erikson, 1968; Newman & Newman, 1976; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). According to Brown (1999), there are four basic levels of peer relationships: a dyad, small group or "clique," a crowd, and youth culture (pervasive norms that influence a generation of teenagers).

The structure of peer relationships and the nature of peer interactions change over

time. For early adolescents the peer group provides a sense of belonging, opportunities for social activities, as well as norms and standards. Peer relationships at this stage of development may be characterized by dyads (pairs of friends) or small group cliques (consisting of a few same-sex friends who spend most of their free time together). The demands for conformity within peer groups are usually high, and peers take an active role in pressuring group members toward greater homophily. During middle adolescence, cliques begin to associate more with each other and larger groups (crowds) become a salient forum in which adolescents interact more frequently.

Crowds are reputation-based groups. Membership and status are determined by personal characteristics and abilities (e.g., participating in school sport teams, being popular, attractive, academic achievement). Crowds also provide norms for their members' attitudes and behavior preferences (Brown & Theobald, 1999).

While parental influence may decrease in some areas of adolescents' lives, peers become much more influential. Peer influence is not necessarily negative nor does it compel adolescents toward antisocial or risky behaviors. Adolescents are likely to conform to their peer groups' standards or norms when they are younger and if group membership is important to them. Within peer groups, close friends may have additional or greater influence on each other than other members of the group. For example, within the context of a larger peer group in which risky behaviors are acceptable or encouraged, many adolescents report more pressure from their friends to refrain from drug use or sexual activity than to engage in it (Clasen & Brown, 1985; Keefe, 1994).

Peer relationships during adolescence change frequently. Over a one-year period

most adolescents experience changes in their closest friendships (Ennett & Bauman, 1994; Kandel, 1978a). Thus, the influence of specific friends may be constantly changing (Brown & Theobald, 1999). However, some research suggests that adolescents tend to choose the same types of individuals as friends (Cairns & Cairns, 1994).

It may be that contextual factors within the school environment such as an adolescent's reputation, social status, or peer group affiliation at their school channel their opportunities and reduce the likelihood for changes in the types of peer relationships they can develop, as well as potential changes in academic motivation and achievement. It has been observed that adolescents who were failing academically at public high schools experienced a positive change in peer relationships and improved school achievement as a result of their attendance at an alternative high school (Gregory, 1995). Thus a change in school environment (from public to alternative) appears to provide opportunities for positive change in peer status and peer relationships within a new school environment, as well as opportunities to improve academic performance.

Research findings indicate that alternative schools foster academic achievement, but less is known about how they affect peer relationships. Alternative schools do not provide many of the extracurricular activities that public schools do (e.g., sports teams, cheerleading, choir, bands); therefore, it is likely that other factors contribute to the types of peer groups at alternative schools. What is the basis around which peer groups are formed at alternative high schools? Is there sufficient cohesion and time spent together among alternative school students for peer groups to be viable? What is the basis for peer social status among students at alternative schools? How might peer status change for

adolescents who transition from a public high school to an alternative school? How are friendships affected by changing schools? Do former friends and peer associates spend time together despite the fact that a group member is now attending a different school?

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Research Hypotheses

The research questions presented in Chapter I about the relations among school environments and the quality of peer relationships, identity development, school-related behaviors, attitudes, and intentions, and intentions and use of alcohol and tobacco were examined using the six research hypotheses listed below. Past research using adolescent samples from public schools indicates similarities among peers in behaviors, intentions, and attitudes related to school performance and substance use. Friendship similarity in identity status level also has been examined. Studies of peer relationships at public schools also show that many peer groups are the product of specific school environments that foster their development (e.g., athletic programs are sponsored by most public high schools). Participation in extracurricular activities and programs in the public school system is often the basis for membership and status within peer groups. What has not been examined is the development and basis for peer group affiliation and peer status at alternative schools. Specifically, for students attending alternative high school what opportunities exist for peer group participation, influence, and status? How do peer relationships affect identity development, school-related behaviors, attitudes, and intentions?

Hypothesis 1

Adolescents' peer status differs depending on whether they attend traditional or alternative high school.

Hypothesis 2

Adolescents' perceptions of peer relationship quality differs depending on whether they attend traditional or alternative high schools.

Hypothesis 3

Relations exist among school-related behaviors, attitudes, and intentions (hereafter referred to as School BAIs) and the quality of peer relationships.

Hypothesis 4

There is a relation between academic achievement and the quality of peer relationships.

Hypothesis 5

Relations exist among adolescents' intentions and behaviors associated with the use of alcohol and tobacco and the quality of peer relationships.

Hypothesis 6

There is a relation between identity status development and attendance at an alternative high school.

Design

One of the primary purposes of this study was to examine changes in peer relationships and identity development over time. A longitudinal research design is essential for assessing change over time. Data were collected during the course of one academic year from students at an alternative high school. The independent variables (1. school environments, 2. peer status, and 3. peer relationship quality) and the dependent variables (1. peer status and peer relationship quality, 2. School BAIs, 3. academic achievement, and 4. intentions toward, and use of alcohol and tobacco, 5. identity development) were measured at an alternative high school using in-class questionnaires. School records were examined to verify self-reported grades and selected respondents were asked to participate in a brief, semi-structured face-to-face interview.

Both surveys were administered to students currently attending an alternative high school. Survey I asked participants to recall past experiences and perceptions associated with their former traditional public high school. Survey II asked participants to respond to questions about their recent experiences and perceptions associated with their attendance at an alternative high school.

Sample

Ninety-five students were enrolled at Cache High (e.g., Cache County's alternative high school) for the first term of 1999. Six terms comprise the school year (1999 - 2000), each lasting approximately 29-31 days. Of the 95 students who attended

first term, 22 were new students at Cache High, the rest were returning students (73). Approximately 10 students complete their high school credit requirements and graduate each term, and 10 new students transfer to Cache High from the two county public high schools, Mountain Crest and Sky View.

The reasons for referral to Cache High vary. The most common reason is being at-risk for graduation. This category includes students with poor grades, insufficient credits to graduate, poor motivation, truancy, and other behavior problems. Other reasons for referral to the alternative high school include Youth Corrections recommendations, typically for adolescents who have committed status offenses (e.g., underage drinking or drug use) and unintended pregnancy.

Slightly higher numbers of males completed both surveys ($\underline{n}$ = 46 survey I; $\underline{n}$ = 43 survey II) than females ($\underline{n}$ = 39 survey I; $\underline{n}$ = 40 survey II). Respondents' ages ranged from 15 to 19 years with a mean age of 17.08 ($\underline{SD}$ = .78). Approximately 68% of the students were in 12th grade, 28% were in 11th grade, and 4% were in 10th grade. Adolescents were predominantly Caucasian (90%) and had lived in Cache Valley nine years or longer (79%). Fifty-five percent indicated that their parents were married, while 36% reported that their parents were divorced or separated. Fifty-two percent lived with both their natural parents, and 31% indicated that they lived with only one of their biological parents either in single-parent households or in blended families (see Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics from Survey I and Survey II

	Data source			
	Survey I		Survey II	
Demographic characteristics	n	%	n	%
Gender				
Males	46	54.1	43	51.8
Females	39	45.9	40	48.2
Ages				
15 years old	2	2.4	1	1.2
16 years old	22	25.9	18	21.7
17 years old	48	56.5	38	45.8
18 years or older	13	15.3	26	31.3
Grade Level				
10^{th}	3	3.5	2	2.4
11^{th}	24	28.2	24	28.9
12^{th}	58	68.2	57	68.7
Ethnicity				
White	76	89.4	75	90.4
Hispanic / Latino	2	2.4	3	3.6
Other	7	8.2	5	6.0
Residence in Cache County				
0-3 years	9	10.6	9	10.8
4-8 years	9	10.6	8	9.6
9 years or more	67	78.8	66	79.5
Parents Marital Status				
Married	48	56.5	44	53.0
Divorced / Separated	31	36.5	30	36.1
Other	6	7.0	9	10.9
Adolescents' Living Arrangement				
With both natural parents	46	54.1	42	50.6
Mother or father only	30	35.5	22	26.5
With relatives or parent's friends	3	3.5	2	2.4
Adoptive or foster parents	0	0.0	2	2.4
Other same-age peers	1	1.2	4	4.8
Other (e.g., married)	5	5.9	11	13.3

Note: Sample size for survey I, N = 85; sample size for survey II, N = 83.

Measures

Two versions of a 104-item self-report questionnaire, titled Peer Relationships: A Personal Opinion Survey (hereafter referred to as Peer Relationships Surveys) were used. The Peer Relationships Survey asked about school-based peer relationships and groups, the status of peer groups, reasons for involvement in peer groups, identity development, School BAIs, alcohol and tobacco intentions and use, and selected demographics. Survey I of the Peer Relationships Survey asked participants to respond retrospectively to items in relation to their perceptions and experiences at their previous traditional high school (Appendix A). Survey II asked participants to answer items using their current or recent perceptions of, and experiences at the alternative high school (see Appendix B).

Definitions of peers and peer groups were provided within the structure of the questionnaires. Preceding the items pertaining to peer relationships, peers were defined as "kids about our same age, . . . whom "we spend time with while at school." Peer groups were identified as friends or members of a group that we belong to or "hang out with" at school. Examples of typical adolescent peer groups (e.g., athletes, skateboarders, popular kids) were provided.

Peer Relationship Quality

A 13-item Likert-type scale was used to assess participants' perceptions of the quality of their peer relationships. Response choices ranged from 1 strongly agree to 6 strongly disagree. This scale was adapted from Akers (1996) Friendship Strengths and

Qualities measure. The original measure (Akers, 1992) consisted of 54 items in eight subscales (i.e., conflict, commonalities, help/loyalty, intimacy, reciprocity/mutuality, trust, time spent together, strength). Using a sample of middle school adolescents, Akers (1992) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .89 (total scale), and subscale alphas ranging from .48 to .85 for this measure. Other reports of the internal consistency for the friendship strength measure indicated a mean Cronbach's alpha of .77 (Peterson, 1994). Akers et al. (1998) used a modified version of the Friendship Strengths and Qualities measure containing eight items. Cronbach's alpha for the modified version was .76 using a sample of high school students. To determine construct validity of the friendship strength scale, a factor analysis was performed on the eight items. After reverse coding the three negatively worded items to match the positive orientation of the other five items, a two-factor solution resulted (Akers, 1996).

The modified scale that was used for this study contained the eight items from the modified friendship strength scale (Akers et al., 1998), substituted the word "peers" in place of "best friend," and asked participants to respond in relation to their peer group experiences at their previous traditional high school. Five additional items were added to the scale to assess the importance of being liked by one's peers, similarity in attitudes about school, encouragement by peers to do well in school, whether or not peers were also considered good friends, and whether or not respondents still spent time with peers from their old school. Together, these 13 items were intended to provide information about conflict, intimacy, trust, time spent together, school support, and similarity among adolescents within school-based peer groups (see Tables F1 & F2).

Sample items include:

At my old school, my peers and I liked to do all of the same kinds of things.

It was easy for my peers and I to talk about anything, including personal problems.

My peers encourage me to do well in school.

School-Based Peer Groups, Status Rankings, and Participation

A set of items first asked respondents to list the five most visible peer groups at their old school, then to rank those five groups in terms of their school status. Respondents were then asked to indicate whether or not they belonged to a peer group at their old high school and, if so, to write in the name of the group(s) they belonged to. Additional items asked respondents who they spend most of their time with at school and their perception of the importance of belonging to a school-based peer group. The construction of these items was based on previous studies (Brown, Clasen, & Eicher 1986; Brown, Eicher, & Petrie, 1986; Cairns et al., 1989) of peer influence and the reasons for peer group involvement. They were intended to provide descriptive and comparative information about visible school-based peer groups, groups' status, and respondents participation in peer groups.

Sample items include:

List five of the most well-known peer groups at your old school.

How important was it for you to belong to a peer group at your old school?

If you belonged to a group, or more than one group please write in the name of your group(s) here. Please write "No Group" if you did not belong to a particular group.

Sociometric Status and Peer Nominations

Because alternative schools do not provide many of the extracurricular activities and programs that foster the development of some school-based peer groups, it is possible that peer groups, if they exist at the alternative school, are based on different criteria for membership other than participation in school programs. Sociometric procedures and peer nominations were used to provide information about peer relationships and status that might not be obtained by asking respondents to identify and rank visible peer groups at the alternative high school.

The Peer Relationships Survey (survey II) contained a current school roster of students attending the alternative high school. Respondents were asked to nominate three school peers for each of the following categories: Most Popular; Best Liked; Least Liked; Least Popular; who Starts Fights or Gets into Trouble. According to procedures described by Coie, Dodge, and Copportelli (1982) and Coie and Dodge (1983), nominations based on the above criteria provide the basis for some of the following sociometric status groups (i.e., popular, rejected, neglected, controversial, and average).

Researchers who have used sociometric procedures report that popularity is correlated with prosocial behaviors and entertaining qualities (e.g., Coie et al., 1990; Parkhurst & Asher, 1992; Williams & Asher, 1987). Sociometrically popular students are also less likely to start fights, and are characterized by their peers as kind, honest, trustworthy, and fun to be with (Coie et al., 1982; Parkhurst & Asher, 1992, Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998). Parkhurst and Hopmeyer (1998) argued for a distinction to be made between self-perceived popularity and sociometric popularity (based on peer liking and

disklike). They reported positive correlations between sociometric popularity and peer impact ($r = .41$, $p < .001$), and sociometric popularity and liking by peers ($r = .47$, $p < .001$). Their analyses indicate that sociometric popularity provides the basis for predicting attributes such as kindness, trustworthiness, being conceited, or being easily pushed around.

Sample items include:

> Write a #1 beside the names of three students that you like the best at Cache High.
>
> Write a #4 beside the names of three students you think are the least popular at Cache High.
>
> Write a #5 beside the names of three students who start fights or get into trouble easily.

Identity Development

Since Marcia's (1966) operationalization of ego identity formation, several measures based on Erikson's theory of psychosocial development and Marcia's identity paradigm have been created. Adams, Shea, and Fitch (1979) constructed the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (OMEIS) that assesses identity with regard to occupation, religion, and politics. Grotevant, Thorbecke, and Meyer (1982) expanded Marcia's interview format to include questions about friendship, dating, and sex roles. Grotevant and Adams later developed the Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (EOM-EIS; 1984). This paper-and-pencil measure is easier to administer and evaluate than previous versions of identity measures constructed by both Adams and Grotevant.

The 5-point Likert-type scale is potentially more sensitive to differences in levels of responses (Jones, Akers, & White, 1994).

Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status

The 64-item EOM-EIS assesses psychosocial maturity characterized by the four identity statuses (i.e., identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, diffusion) in the following eight content areas: occupation, politics, religion, philosophical lifestyle, friendship, dating, recreation, and gender roles (Akers et al., 1998). Items provide an indication of respondents' level of exploration and commitment within specific domains, and can be used to categorize subjects into one of Marcia's four identity statuses: achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and identity diffusion (Jones et al., 1994).

Construct validity and reliability (internal and test-retest) of this instrument have also been demonstrated in other studies, which provide estimates for junior and high school students (Jones & Hartmann, 1988; Jones & Streitmatter, 1987), and college students (Coyl, 1997; King, 1993). In a summary of 13 studies, Adams, Bennion, and Huh (1987) found that the median Cronbach alpha coefficient for the four subscales was .66. Test-retest reliabilities had a median correlation of .76.

Modified EOM-EIS

Jones et al. (1994) conducted a study using a modified version of the 64-item EOM-EIS (Grotevant & Adams, 1984) to determine if some content areas might be eliminated, thus creating a more concise identity measure, better-suited for high school-

age adolescents. Retention of specific content areas was based on the greatest differences in scores across grade levels. Content areas were eliminated where small differences among grade levels were observed. Based on these analyses, four content areas were retained: occupation, philosophical lifestyle, friendship, and dating. A fifth content area, academic identity (containing eight items), was constructed to assess school-related identity issues germane for adolescent populations (see Table F4). A 6-point Likert-type response scale was used with answers ranging from 1 strongly agree to 6 strongly disagree.

A preliminary validation study of the 40-item modified EOM-EIS was conducted using a sample of 225 college students. Internal reliability estimates for this modified version of the EOM-EIS were similar to those reported for the original instrument. Factor structure and convergent and discriminant validity estimates provide support for construct validity of this measure (Akers, 1996). Cronbach alphas for the identity subscales using a high school student population indicate satisfactory estimates of internal consistency: identity achievement (10 items) alpha = .74; moratorium (10 items) alpha = .71; foreclosure (10 items) alpha = .79; diffusion (10 items) alpha = .78 (Akers et al., 1998). Sample items include:

> (Friendship foreclosure) My parents know what's best for me in terms of how to choose friends.
>
> (Dating diffusion) I haven't thought much about what I look for in a date-I just go out to have a good time.
>
> (Academic moratorium) I'm not sure about what I want for my education, but I am now actively exploring different choices.

(Philosophical lifestyle achievement) After considerable thought, I've developed my own individual viewpoint of what is for me an ideal "life-style" and I don't believe anyone will be likely to change my views.

(Occupational foreclosure) My parents had it decided a long time ago what I should go into for employment and I'm following their plan.

School-Related BAIs

Past research supports the premise that peer relationships influence school-related experiences. The inclusion of measures designed to assess peer relationships, peer status, behaviors, attitudes, and intentions related to school participation and academic achievement in the Peer Relationships Survey (survey I) should provide a replication of previous findings regarding these constructs for adolescents attending public high schools. These same measures included in the Peer Relationships Survey (survey II) were intended to provide information about how changes in peer relationships and status might influence school experiences among alternative high school students. These two assessments allow for comparisons of peer group effects on school BAIs in two different school evironments.

Akers (1996) constructed scales of BAIs through a process of consultation with high school staff, on the basis of item face validity, and by exploratory factor analysis. Items were intended to provide information about respondents' perceptions of their positive and negative behaviors, attitudes, and intentions related to school. The wording of specific items was modified based on feedback provided by high school staff. An initial exploratory factor analysis yielded five factors. Three factors were related to behaviors (academic achievement, extracurricular activities, school attendance), and two additional factors were related to attitudes (positive academic attitudes and negative academic

attitudes). An additional factor for intentions was created by combining four individual items taken from four of the five other academic scales. Cronbach alphas for the five behavior and attitude scales ranged from .66 to .74 (median .70). Cronbach alpha for the four intention items was .61. Although the internal consistency estimate for the intentions factor was low, factor analyses that produced a single factor having an eigenvalue greater than one supported the inclusion of all four items (Akers, 1996).

For this study the 22-item measure that assesses school-related behaviors (three items about academic achievement, three items about extracurricular activities, three items about school attendance) and attitudes (five items about positive academic behaviors and attitudes and five items about negative academic behaviors and attitudes) was included with three items pertaining to school intentions on the Peer Relationship Survey (survey I) when respondents were asked about their previous experiences in the public school system. Response choices ranged from 1 strongly agree to 6 strongly disagree. Because alternative schools typically do not sponsor school athletic programs, one item that asked about involvement in school athletics was omitted on survey II of the Peer Relationships Survey (see Table F3).

Sample items include:

(Academic achievement) My natural academic abilities are above average.

(Extracurricular activities) I participate in many school-sponsored activities.

(School attendance) I am absent less than most other students.

(Positive academic attitudes) High grades are important for getting a good job or for going on to college.

(Negative academic attitudes) School is not worth my time.

(School intentions) I will quit school if I can.

Academic Achievement

In addition to information provided by the questionnaires about academic achievement, permission was obtained from parents to access their adolescents' previous school records (when they attended public high school) and their current school records (attendance at alternative high school). These records were used to verify self-reported grades. Approximately 25% of respondents' self-reported grades were verified by the researcher. Both self-report of previous school grades and current GPA (at the alternative school) were generally valid and reliable. Discrepancies between self-reported and recorded grades were minimal (i.e., approximately $\pm$ .5).

Alcohol and Tobacco Use

Fourteen items constructed by Akers et al. (1998) related to intentions and use of alcohol and tobacco (cigarettes and chewing tobacco) were also included. Past research indicates similarities in both intentions, use, and avoidance of these substances among adolescent friends and among members of certain peer groups. This study was designed to allow for comparisons of, or changes in intentions and recent use of these substances associated with school environment (traditional and alternative) and changes in peer relationships associated with a change in school environment.

In addition to items that asked if a respondent had ever tried alcohol or tobacco, items about age at first use (measured by grade level), and with whom (e.g., best friend(s),

other peers, family members, alone), and frequency of recent use (none to 8 or more times) were included. Other items asked whether or not members of the respondent's peer group use alcohol or tobacco, respondent's perception of frequency of use among peer group members (yes, often to no, never), and intentions regarding the use of these substances for both those who had tried them and those who have not. General intentions regarding use of substances were assessed with four statements beginning with I drink (use tobacco) now, and I have no plans to change, I drink (use tobacco) now, but I plan to quit within the year, though I have before, I don't drink (use tobacco) right now, and my goal is to never start (try it) again, and though I don't drink (use tobacco) now, I have in the past, and I am likely to try it again.

Demographics

Six demographic items were placed at the end of the surveys. These items assessed respondents' sex, age (in years), grade level, ethnicity, length of residence in Cache County, and family structure and living arrangements.

Interview Protocol

Brief (15- to 20-minute), semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with a subsample ($n = 21$) of students who had attended alternative school for approximately three terms or longer (i.e., 3-4 months). Interviews were scheduled after students had completed survey II. Respondents were chosen to represent the diversity of adolescents who attend alternative high school. For example, some students transferred to the alternative school because they were failing academically, some transferred for drug,

alcohol, and other types of delinquency-related problems, a few students were referred because of unintended pregnancy. Interviewees were representative of all of these referral categories. A few others were chosen because they exemplified individuals who have made positive changes in their school-related attitudes, behaviors, and intentions. Interviews were also conducted with a few students who had not experienced positive changes while attending the alternative high school.

The purpose of the interviews was to gather more detailed information related to the topics assessed in the surveys and to clarify puzzling responses. In addition, interview respondents were asked if they perceived any changes in their peer relationships and school-related goals, or identity development since they started attending the alternative school (Appendix C).

All interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed. Content analysis was conducted in order to identify common themes that emerged from the interviews following procedures recommended by Berg (1998). Content analysis is an objective coding scheme applied to notes or data. Analysis can focus on both the literal terms used by individuals (in vivo codes) and the sociological constructs (terms or categories applied by researcher). For example, "we can talk about anything" would represent an in vivo code that a researcher might categorize as a sociological construct called "intimacy with peers." Sampling units can be constructed from different data levels (e.g., words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs). For this study, phrases and key words were the sampling units. Codes such as "peer relationship quality" and "teacher-student interactions" were applied to compatible phrases extracted from the interviews. The questions asked by the

interviewer were the coding frames around which data were organized.

Interview data were also used to answer research questions and to provide more in-depth information about the ways in which students conceptualized peer relationships and their school experiences. In addition, responses associated with changes in their identity development, school-related attitudes, behaviors, and intentions since attending the alternative high school were also examined. Questions about identity development were indirectly assessed by asking interviewees if they had experienced changes in their occupational and school goals, as well as their interpersonal relationships since attending the alternative school.

Sample interview questions include:

> Are you aware of any differences between your old high school and Cache High?
>
> Has the group of kids that you hang out with changed since you started attending Cache High?
>
> Have your goals regarding school or a career changed since you began attending Cache High?

Procedures

Data Collection

Peer Relationship Surveys I and II were administered in five classrooms to students at the alternative high school (i.e., Cache High) the beginning of the first academic term (survey I, August 1999) by the principal, school counselor, and three researchers. Instructions and background information about the study were provided for these five persons prior to data collection. Students and their parents were also provided

with written information about the purposes of this study.

The second large classroom administration (survey II) occurred in January of 2000. It was reasoned that after 4 months of regular attendance at the alternative high school, respondents would have formed new peer relationships and changes in identity status, school-related behaviors, attitudes, and intentions associated with the new school environment would be discernable, if such changes occurred.

Because students can complete their graduation credit requirements at the end of each term, students were tracked with the help of the school principal in order to ensure that of the original 85 who were surveyed during the first term, as many as possible completed the second Peer Relationships Survey prior to concluding their attendance at the alternative high school. Individual arrangements were made to administer the second questionnaire and to conduct interviews during one of their final days of attendance.

Eighty-five adolescents completed survey I, which asked about school-based peer status, relationship qualities, school-related behaviors, attitudes, intentions, substance (i.e., alcohol and tobacco) use, and identity development in relation to experiences at their former traditional high schools. Eighty-three adolescents completed survey II, which asked the same or similar questions in relation to adolescents' experiences at the alternative high school they are currently attending. Based on an estimated alternative school population of 95 students, the percentage of completed surveys was between 89% and 87% for surveys I and II, respectively. Seventy-five adolescents completed both surveys allowing for matched comparisons pertinent to the research hypotheses.

Ethical Considerations

Approval for this study was acquired from Utah State University (Institutional Review Board), Cache County School District, and the alternative school principal. Each family received a written explanation of the purposes and procedures for this study and the names and phone numbers of persons to contact if they had additional questions.

Families were informed in writing that the general intent of this study was to better understand how peer relationships impact adolescents' school experiences, their attitudes about education, and their self-concept (identity development). The letter was designed to inform parents and students, as well as to motivate them to participate in the study.

Informed consent was obtained for each potential respondent (Appendix D). Parents and students were told in writing that they could refuse, without pressure or consequence, to participate or discontinue participation at any time. Students were assured that their responses in questionnaires and interviews would be confidential and that their names would not be linked to specific results or findings generated from this study.

Data Management and Analysis

All data management, preliminary reliability and validity analyses, and the calculations of variables were performed using SPSS 8.0 for Windows software. Item responses from completed Peer Relationships Surveys were entered into a database format using SPSS software. After data were entered, the accuracy of data entry was tested by

randomly checking data entry from approximately 10% of the protocols. ID numbers were assigned to respondents so that data collected from the Peer Relationships Surveys I and II could be matched for specific analyses.

Peer relationship quality. Reliability analysis was conducted on the peer relationship qualities items adapted from Akers et al. (1998) modified version of the Friendship Strengths and Qualities measure. The peer relationship quality variables were based on perceptions of peer relationship quality or support at traditional and alternative high schools. These variables were used to test all research hypotheses related to students' perceived peer relationship quality in the two school environments (traditional & alternative).

Peer status and change in peer status. Peer status was determined from students' responses about their peer group affiliations and group rankings at their traditional high school (survey I) and responses about peer group affiliation at Cache High and sociometric ratings obtained from survey II. These indicators of peer status were used to test research hypotheses related to changes in peer group affiliation and peer status from traditional to alternative high schools.

School-related BAIs. Items from Akers (1996) constructed scales of school-related BAIs were grouped conceptually and reliability analysis was conducted. These school-related variables were used to test research hypothesis two. Peer relationship quality variables were correlated with BAI variables and comparisons were made between responses associated with traditional and alternative school experiences.

Academic achievement. Academic achievement indicators included grades and selected items that represent academic achievement (e.g., I work carefully on assignments, I have won service or academic awards). School records were used to verify self-reported grades. These variables were correlated and compared with peer relationship quality and peer status variables respectively. Comparisons were made between responses associated with traditional and alternative school experiences.

Alcohol and tobacco intentions and behaviors. Items representing substance use, intentions, and behaviors were correlated and compared with peer relationship quality variables (traditional and alternative school). The frequency of current substance use among peer group members at traditional (survey I) and alternative school (survey II) was also correlated with peer relationship quality variables.

Ego identity status. Scale scores for each of the four identity statuses (achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, diffusion) were created from items contained in the modified version of the EOM-EIS (Akers et al., 1998). Mean scale scores were compared from the two survey administrations to assess change in identity development over time. It was not anticipated that major changes in identity status would occur over such a brief period of time, but it is plausible to investigate whether or not respondents had experienced theoretically plausible changes in identity development. For example, a change in school environment might lead to greater exploration of options (moratorium) and less diffusion for some students.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Psychometric Properties of the Peer Relationship Quality Variables: Traditional and Alternative Schools

An estimate of internal consistency was obtained for 12 items from the peer relationship qualities scale (Akers et al., 1998) using survey I data ($\underline{N} = 84$). These items were combined to create a variable representing respondents perceptions of peer relationship quality or peer support at their traditional high schools. Coefficient alpha was .85 which suggests high consistency in responses across these items. Eighty-five percent of the observed score variance is attributed to true score variance for this sample.

An estimate of internal consistency was obtained for 11 items from the peer relationship qualities scale (Akers et al., 1998) using survey II data ($\underline{N} = 82$). These items were combined to create a variable representing respondents perceptions of peer relationship quality at their alternative high school. One of the items (i.e., I still spend time with some of my peers from my old school) used for the variable representing peer relationship quality at traditional high schools was not included on survey II. Coefficient alpha was .78, which suggests moderate to high consistency in individuals' responses across these items. Seventy-eight percent of the observed score variance is attributed to true score variance for this sample.

These two variables representing peer relationship quality at traditional and alternative high schools were compared and used in subsequent analyses. Information

about recoded items and which items were used to create these variables can be found in Appendix E.

School-Related BAIs: Traditional and Alternative Schools Variables

Using data from survey I ($\underline{N}$ = 84), items from the school-related BAIs scales adapted from Akers et al. (1998) were grouped conceptually to form three variables related to positive BAIs (e.g., absent infrequently, high grades are important, my school is a good school), extracurricular participation (e.g., involvement in school athletics, service, and awards won), and negative BAIs (e.g., school is not worth my time, I would quit if I could) associated with respondents' perceptions of their former traditional high schools. Cronbach's alpha for positive BAIs was .68, .73 for negative BAIs, and .76 for extracurricular participation. These alpha coefficients suggest moderate consistency in individuals' responses for items associated with each variable. Between 68-76% of the observed score variance for each variable was attributed to true score variance.

Using data from survey II ($\underline{N}$ = 82) items from the school-related BAIs scales (Akers et al., 1998) were grouped to form two variables related to positive BAIs and negative BAIs associated with respondents perceptions of their alternative high school. Because alternative schools do not have extracurricular activities such as athletic teams, these items were not included in survey II. Coefficient alpha for the positive BAIs variable was .57, indicating moderate to low consistency in individual responses for items associated with this variable. Coefficient alpha for the negative BAIs variable was .74,

indicating moderate consistency in individual responses for items associated with this variable. Between 57-74% of the observed score variance for each variable was attributed to true score variance. Information about recodes and which items were used to create these variables can be found in Appendix E.

Ego Identity Status

Alpha coefficients were also calculated to ensure that internal consistency estimates for the EOM-EIS subscales adapted by Akers (1996) were similar to those of past research (e.g., Akers et al., 1998) with a comparable age sample of high school students. Using data from survey I, coefficient alphas were calculated for each of the EOM-EIS subscales (achievement alpha = .78; moratorium alpha = .65, foreclosure alpha = .74, and diffusion alpha = .75) indicating moderate consistency in individual responses for items associated with each subscale. Using data from survey II, coefficient alphas were again calculated for the EOM-EIS subscales and were comparable to estimates of internal consistency using survey I data (achievement alpha = .80; moratorium alpha = .71, foreclosure alpha = .75, and diffusion alpha = .72). Reliability estimates were similar to those reported by Akers et al. (1998; alpha = .74 for achievement, alpha = .71 for moratorium, alpha = .79 for foreclosure, and alpha = .78 for diffusion). Information about which items were used to create these subscales can be found in Appendix E.

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Adolescents' peer status differs depending on whether they attend a traditional or alternative high schools. All available data from surveys I and II were used to provide descriptive information about peer groups and status at both types of schools.

Peer groups. Respondents were asked to list and rank five of the most well-known peer groups at their former traditional high schools. Jocks and preps or popular kids were listed most frequently and given the highest group rankings (first and second), followed by skaters (third), cowboys (fourth), and dirtheads (fifth). Other peer groups were listed besides these five (e.g., gangsters, hippies, straight edgers), but usually only by a few respondents. Because the first four groups listed appeared to need no further explanation, respondents were not asked to provide information about the types of adolescents who belong to these groups or reasons for group membership. However, during interviews, students were asked to describe what characteristics or behaviors qualify an adolescent for membership in the group called dirtheads. Responses indicated that lack of personal hygiene or grooming, shabby clothes, indifference to school norms and expectations, and drug and alcohol use were typically reasons for classification into this group. Adolescents in this group frequently sluffed classes, did poorly academically, and engaged in frequent alcohol and substance use (tobacco and drugs). Based on information provided by interviewed students, dirtheads and stoners may have been different names for the same peer group or rather, individuals who might be labeled as a stoner or dirthead could be included in either peer group. Dirtheads are probably similar to the druggies or burnouts

that other researchers have identified as peer groups that typically have low status at traditional high schools.

Of the 85 respondents who completed survey I, 37% ($\underline{n} = 31$) indicated that they did not belong to a peer group at their former high school. Of the 40 students who did report peer group membership, the most frequently listed peer groups were dirtheads (17%, $\underline{n} = 14$) and stoners (9%, $\underline{n} = 8$). Thus the majority of respondents reported that they belonged to no group or identified themselves as belonging to peer groups with the lowest status at their former high schools. The rest ($\underline{n} = 14$) failed to indicate whether or not they belonged to a group (see Table 2).

In survey II, students were asked to list and rank peer groups at the alternative school. Responses on this survey showed considerably less consensus about the types of peer groups present at the school, or if they existed at all. Twenty percent of respondents ($\underline{n} = 17$) reported that no groups existed at Cache High. During interviews, several adolescents also reported that there were no groups or that they did not exist in the same way that they do at traditional high schools. Although some individuals exhibited allegiance to former peer groups by maintaining group associated behaviors (skateboarding, drug use), clothing (cowboy hats, tye-dye shirts), or contact with members of their former peer groups, nearly all interviewees said that no one was excluded from peer interactions because of these differences. As one student reported, "Here, cowboys hang out with preps, and dirtheads, . . it don't matter. We do everything together as a big group. We are like a family here. . . Everyone's different in their own way, but we accept everyone. No one gets left out because they're different."

Preps or popular students were identified most frequently as groups or individuals with the most status at the alternative school. Druggies (stoners and smokers) and dirtheads were ranked as having the second highest status. Although dirtheads were identified by some students as a peer group that existed at Cache High, no one indicated that they belonged to this group. Cowboys and hippies were also identified as groups that existed at the alternative school. Not surprisingly, jocks were not identified because the alternative high school does not have athletic teams or programs. Fifty-seven percent ($n = 47$) of the respondents indicated that they belonged to no group or that "everyone hangs around with everyone else" (see Table 2).

Table 2

Peer Group Membership at Traditional High School and at Alternative High School

	Data source			
	Traditional school (survey I)		Alternative school (survey II)	
Group membership	n	%	n	%
No group membership	31	36.5	47	56.6
Dirthead	14	16.5	0	0.0
Druggies	8	9.4	1	1.2
Preps/jocks	6	7.1	1	1.2
Skaters	5	5.9	1	1.2
Cowboys	4	4.7	2	2.4
Other	3	3.4	12	14.5
Missing	14	16.5	19	22.9

Note. Sample size for survey I, $N = 85$; sample size for survey II, $N = 83$.

Sociometric nominations. Because it was questionable whether or not well-defined peer groups exist at the alternative high school, sociometric nominations were also obtained from both students and staff as an indicator of peer status, and for comparisons between peer status at the traditional and alternative schools. A series of questions were asked eliciting the names of three students for each of the following categories: best liked, most popular, least liked, least popular, and who got into trouble easily. Only about 70% of the students and only three of the school staff (from a total of five teachers, one secretary, one counselor, and one principal) were willing to complete these measures. Students wrote on the surveys comments like, "I don't agree with this. . . We don't rate each other here. . . This is just like my old school and we aren't like that anymore." Staff comments included, "It was really difficult to fill this out. . . It seems so judgmental . . .We try not to categorize any student here."

Nevertheless, the names of all students nominated under each of the peer status categories were entered into a data file. Then frequencies were obtained for individuals in each category. The five peer status categories were dummy-coded so that values were entered for all survey II respondents. Values ranged from 0 to 29 depending on the number of nominations each student received. Frequency of nomination for a particular category (e.g., most popular) was used as a proxy to indicate level of status. For example, a person who received eight nominations for best liked was assumed to have greater likability status than a person who received only two nominations for best liked. Individuals who were identified as most popular and best liked were assumed to have the greatest peer status at the alternative school. Individuals who were nominated for the

Table 3

Intercorrelations Between Sociometric Peer Status Categories

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Most popular	--	.26**	-.12	.11	.06
2. Best liked		--	-.09	-.04	-.07
3. Least popular			--	.45**	-.09
4. Least liked				--	.34**
5. In trouble					--

Note. N = 86

** $p < .01$

categories of least popular, least liked, and gets into trouble were assumed to have lower peer status. Correlations among these peer status categories are shown in Table 3.

Among the statistically significant correlations, nominations for most popular were positively correlated with those for best liked. Approximately 7% of the variability in most popular nominations was associated with the variability in best liked nominations. Similarly, nominations for least popular were positively correlated with those for least liked. Approximately 20% of the variability in least popular nominations was associated with the variability in least liked nominations. Least liked nominations were positively correlated with nominations for gets into trouble. Approximately 12% of the variability in least liked nominations was associated with the variability in gets into trouble nominations. These correlations are consistent with previous findings that suggest that categories for high peer status (popular and best liked) and low status (unpopular, least liked, and in

trouble) should be positively related to one another (see Table 3).

It should be noted that statistical significance was used as only one marker for evaluating the importance of results. Given the fact that these data do not meet the assumptions for inferential tests (e.g., the use of random sampling procedures), statistically significant results should be interpreted with caution. Effect sizes were also reported to provide additional information about the relations among variables.

Among the statistically nonsignificant correlations, nominations for most popular were negatively correlated with nominations for least popular and positively correlated with least liked nominations. Generally, peer nominations for most popular are in opposition to nominations for being least popular. However, it is sometimes the case that popular students are also disliked by other students, which may be reflected in the positive correlation between most popular nominations and least liked nominations. Best liked nominations were negatively correlated with nominations for least popular, least liked, and in trouble frequently. These correlations fit theoretical premises that view the type of students who are nominated as best liked to be very different from those who are nominated by their peers as least popular, least liked, and gets in trouble (see Table 3).

Sociometric nominations and peer status at traditional high schools. Responses about peer group membership at the traditional high school were compared with sociometric nominations for individuals who received five or more nominations. For the category of most popular, five students received several nominations (between 13 and 29); two were male, and three were female. Of these five students, four individuals indicated on survey I that they did not belong to a specific peer group. One student identified her

old school peer group as dirtheads, but then commented that her friends were in that group and she just hung out with them. A couple of students who reported no group membership included comments like, "I hung around a lot of different people." It is possible that these individuals already possessed the social skills that lead to popularity among peers, but none of them belonged to the peer groups that typically have the most status at traditional high schools (i.e., jocks, cheerleaders, and popular or preps). Thus, it could be argued that these students with low or little peer status at the traditional high schools (based on self-report of belonging to no peer group or belonging to peer groups with low status) experienced increases in their peer status when they began attending the alternative high school.

For the category of most liked, only two students received five or more nominations (five each); both were female. One of these individuals was also nominated as most popular. She reported belonging to the dirthead group at her old school. The other person who received five nominations for best liked indicated that she belonged to no group at her previous high school. Again, it appears as though peer status increased for both of these adolescents in conjunction with their attendance at the alternative school.

Five individuals received five or more peer nominations for least popular (between five and 10); all were males. Two reported that they belonged to the dirthead group at their old schools, two reported no group membership, and one individual did not complete survey I. It is impossible to determine whether peer status changed for the two respondents who reported no group membership. In comparing those who were nominated as most popular, four of those adolescents also reported that they did not

belong to a group at their former schools. Individuals who do not belong to a group may be independent for a variety of reasons including the contrasting possibilities that they get along well with most peers and do not feel the need to attach themselves to a particular group, or that they are not accepted by any group, or they do not wish to conform to the existing group norms. For the two adolescents who reported belonging to the dirthead group at their old school, it appears as though their peer status remained stable between the two school environments.

Six individuals received five of more nominations for least liked (between five and 13); four were male, two were female. Five of the six reported belonging to no group at their former schools, one male indicated that he belonged to the jock/gangster group. Stability in low peer status between the two school environments may be inferred for the five who reported no group membership. Jock/gangster group membership does not fit with conventional peer group categories. It is likely that this individual's peer group was not one of the higher ranking groups at his former high school. This individual was not available for a follow-up interview that might have clarified his former school peer status.

Four individuals received five or more nominations for gets in trouble (between six and 13); all were males. Two reported being in the stoner peer group at their former school, one indicated no group membership, and the fourth was the individual who was nominated as least liked and indicated his former peer group to be jock/gangsters. Again, it is likely that peer status remained stable between the two school environments for these adolescents.

Overall, hypothesis one was partially supported by these analyses and interview data. Peer status did improve for some of the adolescents with the transition to the alternative high school. Specifically, those nominated as most popular and best liked at the alternative school appeared to increase their peer status based on their self-report of no group membership or low status group membership (dirtheads) at their former traditional high schools. In addition, all interview participants, which included students who were not very popular at the alternative school, indicated that they got along better with students at the alternative school and felt more accepted by their peers than they did among peers at the traditional high schools. However, low peer status appeared to remain stable between the two school environments, based on self-report of no group membership or low-status group membership at former schools, and peer nominations for least popular, least liked, and in trouble at the alternative school.

The following correlations do not directly address hypothesis one, but do provide descriptive information about the relations between sociometric nominations and several key variables. Specifically, relations were examined among peer nominations and perceived peer relationship quality, school-related BAIs, and identity statuses in the alternative school environment.

Sociometric nominations and peer relationship quality, school-related BAIs, and identity statuses. Sociometric nominations for each of the five categories were also correlated with peer relationship quality, school-related BAIs variables, with current GPA at the alternative school, future goals (e.g., college, technical/trade school), and identity status. Most of the individuals named for each peer status category received only one or

two nominations. A lack of variability for the sociometric nominations was observed during data entry (i.e., most persons were nominated only once). Based on these observations, it was suspected that correlation coefficients using the sociometric nominations would be suppressed. Thus, correlations were first calculated by including all individuals who were nominated for each status category and a second time excluding individuals who were nominated only one time. Correlation coefficients increased substantially when individuals who were nominated only one time were excluded from the analysis. Table 4 presents correlations between sociometric status categories and other peer and school-related variables for individuals who received more than one nomination for each category. The number of individuals who received more than one nomination for each status category was generally small, and although the many correlations were of moderate size, they were not statistically significant.

In fact, only one correlation coefficient was statistically significant. Peer nominations for most popular were negatively correlated with the foreclosure identity status. Seventy-four percent of the variability in these nominations was associated with the variability in foreclosure scale scores. Theoretically this relation makes sense. Popular students are often described as school leaders, decision-makers, and initiators (Coleman, 1961). Foreclosure identity status is generally associated with deference toward authority figures, and being dependent on others' opinions or recommendations. Most popular nominations was positively related to moratorium status, these two variables shared 9% of the variability. Again, popular students are often viewed as dynamic individuals, open to experiences, which may also characterize adolescents in moratorium who are exploring

their options, beliefs, and new experiences. Most popular nominations were negatively associated with peer relationship quality and positive school-related BAIs. Between 7 and 9% of the variability in these two variables was associated with the variability in most popular peer nominations. Popularity among peers does not guarantee peer relationship quality; and as stated previously, popularity may lead to being disliked by some peers.

In contrast, nominations for best liked were positively correlated with peer relationship quality. Approximately 8% of the variability in peer relationship quality was associated with the variability in best liked nominations. Interestingly, best liked nominations were negatively correlated with plans after high school, except for the plan to take time off. It is possible that the supportive peer environment at school makes the transition to college and jobs less appealing for those who are well liked. Best liked nominations were also negatively correlated with positive school-related BAIs. Popularity and liking among peers does not appear to be contingent on an individual's best school behavior or attitudes.

Least popular nominations were correlated with plans to go to college, technical, or trade school, and moratorium identity status. Least popular nominations were positively correlated with technical or trade school and negatively correlated with college plans. In terms of social opportunities, college is certainly an environment that has the potential to enhance those opportunities which might be more limited in a technical, or trade school. Thus, individuals who are unpopular with their peers might prefer an educational environment with limited social interactions or less of the traditional educational experiences that college offers (e.g., large classes, social events). In addition,

costs associated with college enrollment (tuition, room and board, other fees, and expenses) and the length of time required to complete a college degree may be contributing factors that help explain the negative relation between least popular nominations and plans to attend college. Least popular nominations were negatively correlated with all of the identity statuses except moratorium. Approximately 7% of the variability in least popular nominations was associated with the variability in moratorium scores. Moratorium suggests active exploration in a variety of ideological and interpersonal domains. These exploration processes may limit the stability of peer relationships and lead to unpopularity.

The largest correlations between peer nominations for least liked and other variables were average grades, plans to attend a technical or trade school, and achievement identity status. Average grades and plans to attend a technical or trade school were positively correlated with least liked nominations. Approximately 9% of the variability in these nominations was associated with grades and technical/trade school plans. Sometimes adolescents who are least liked by their peers are labeled as nerds, kids that do well in school, but are not well liked. Consistent with this hypothesis are the positive correlations between least liked nominations and positive BAIs, average grades, and plans to attend college, and the negative correlation with peer relationship quality. The largest correlation for least liked nominations was with identity achievement scores. They were negatively correlated. Twelve percent of variability in least liked nominations was associated with the variability in identity achievement scores. Adolescents with high identity achievement scores generally have made both ideological and interpersonal

commitments. Adolescents who are least liked have probably not explored social relationships very much and therefore may not be in a position to make interpersonal (friendship or dating) commitments. Consistent with this idea is the positive correlation between least liked nominations and diffusion scores. Diffusion represents a lack of ideological and interpersonal exploration.

Moderate correlations were found between nominations for being in trouble and peer relationship quality, negative BAIs, average grades, and the identity status scores for achievement and moratorium. Being in trouble was negatively correlated with peer relationship quality, but positively correlated with negative school-related BAIs. Twenty percent of the variability in being in trouble was associated with the variability in peer relationship quality. Fifty percent of the variability in being in trouble was associated with the variability in negative BAIs. The type of trouble adolescents get into at school is often associated with difficulties in getting along with other students, negative attitudes about school, and misbehavior, which may be reflected in these correlations. Curiously, average grades were positively correlated with being in trouble. In interviews with two students who were nominated by peers as getting into trouble frequently, they expressed more negative attitudes about the school environment and their peers, but also indicated that teachers were willing to work with them and help them complete assignments. Although they may dislike school, they were able to complete tasks and assignments and maintain their grades. Nominations for being in trouble were positively correlated with identity achievement scores and negatively correlated with moratorium scores. Between 21 and 31% of the variability in achievement scores and moratorium scores, respectively,

Table 4

Correlations Between Sociometric Nominations and Peer Relationship Quality, School-Related BAIs, and Identity Statuses

Constructs	Most popular (n)	Best liked (n)	Least popular(n)	Least liked (n)	In trouble (n)
Peer relation quality	-.31 (15)	.29 (44)	.01 (16)	-.08 (22)	-.45 (8)
Positive BAIs	-.26 (14)	.24 (43)	-.04 (16)	.25 (21)	.14 (8)
Negative BAIs	-.12 (14)	-.22 (43)	.13 (15)	.10 (21)	.71 (8)
Average grade	-.11 (14)	.13 (43)	-.16 (16)	.29 (20)	.47 (7)
Plans after HS					
Get a job	-.05 (14)	-.25 (43)	-.17 (16)	-.17 (20)	-.34 (7)
Take time off	--	.08 (43)	.09 (16)	.00 (20)	--
Tech/Trade school	-.13 (14)	-.11 (43)	.31 (16)	.30 (20)	.19 (7)
College	.19 (14)	-.05 (43)	-.32 (16)	.14 (20)	.19 (7)
Identity statuses					
Achievement	-.11 (15)	-.13 (43)	-.05 (16)	-.35 (22)	.46 (8)
Moratorium	.31 (14)	-.07 (43)	.27 (16)	.05 (22)	-.56 (8)
Forclosure	-.86**(14)	.14 (43)	-.16 (16)	-.17 (20)	.16 (6)
Diffusion	-.04 (14)	.08 (42)	-.22 (16)	.27 (20)	-.16 (6)

**$p < .01$.

was associated with the variability in nominations for being in trouble. Theoretically, once individuals have made commitments (achievement) they are no longer in a process of active exploration (moratorium), nor are they diffused. This hypothesis is supported by the correlations. In relation to being in trouble, these students may feel that they have already made up their minds about what they want and may be frustrated by the constraints (rules) of the school environment, which could lead to behaviors that get them into trouble more easily than other students.

Hypothesis 2

Adolescents' perceptions of peer relationship quality differ depending on whether they attend a traditional or alternative high schools. To test this hypothesis, data from respondents who completed both surveys were used ($n = 75$). A paired t test was calculated to compare means for the variables associated with peer relationship quality at traditional and alternative high schools. Mean scores for peer relationship quality were statistically significantly different based on perceptions of peer relationship quality at traditional ($M = 3.73$, $SD = .95$) and the alternative high schools ($M = 4.39$, $SD = .67$), $t(74) = -5.34$, $p < .05$. Responses to items for these variables were coded so that higher scores indicated better or more supportive peer relationships, thus a t value of -5.34 obtained by subtracting traditional high school peer relationship mean scores from alternative school peer relationship mean scores indicates that respondents perceived the quality of their peer relationships at the alternative high school to be more supportive.

The effect size obtained by dividing the difference between the two peer relationship quality means (traditional minus alternative) by the average of the two peer relationship quality standard deviations (traditional and alternative school) was .81 of a standard deviation. Based on criteria suggested by Cohen (1977) in which an effect size of .20 is small, an effect size around .50 is medium, and an effect size greater than .80 is large, the difference in the mean peer relationship quality between traditional and alternative schools would be considered large.

During interviews, all respondents ($n = 21$) reported that they felt accepted by most or all of the students at the alternative school. Responses to the query, "How long does it take for a new student at to feel accepted by the other kids, or to have someone to talk to?" were consistent. Students reported that within a day (shortest) to within a few weeks (longest) new students felt accepted. Many interviewees said that people (peers and staff) were much more friendly at Cache High, "Almost everyone says 'hi' to you, and asks about you." In contrast, all interviewees felt that it was much more difficult to "break into peer groups" at their old schools. When asked how long it takes for a new student to feel accepted at a traditional high school, many indicated that it took a lot longer, or that it may not happen at all. Most reported that they did not feel accepted or that they disliked some peer groups at their traditional high school. One student said, "I use to hate the skaters at my old school. I'd go looking to start fights with them. But here, I hang out with skaters, and dirtheads, and whatever. We aren't that different inside. We can accept each other here." Consistently, respondents used the metaphor of a family to describe peer and staff relationships at the alternative high school. Individuals reported that their peers

at Cache High supported their efforts to stay in school, complete assignments, and graduate. Three respondents indicated that in contrast to their experiences with peers at their traditional high school, students at the alternative school did not label them as being stupid, nor were they criticized for showing allegiance to a particular group (e.g., wearing cowboy hats, or tye-dye shirts).

Based on results of quantitative analyses and interview data, hypothesis two was supported. It appears that adolescents' perceived peer support or relationship quality is better at the alternative high school.

Hypothesis 3

Relations exist among school-related behaviors, attitudes, and intentions (introduced on page 54) and the quality of peer relationships. To test this hypothesis, data from respondents who completed both surveys were used ($n = 75$). Paired t tests were calculated to compare mean scores for positive and negative BAIs based on perceptions or experiences at traditional (survey I) and alternative high schools (survey II). Mean scores for positive BAIs were statistically significantly different for the traditional schools ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.04$) and the alternative high school ($M = 4.66$, $SD = .80$), $t\ (74) = -14.55$, $p < .05$. Responses to items for these variables were coded so that higher scores indicated more positive BAIs. The t value of -14.55 obtained by subtracting survey I positive BAI mean scores from survey II scores indicated that respondents reported substantially more positive BAIs in relation to their experiences at the alternative high school. The mean difference effect size for positive BAIs from traditional to

alternative schools was 2.38 standard deviations and would be considered large.

Mean scores for negative BAIs were statistically significantly different based on perceptions of experiences at traditional ($\underline{M}$ = 4.42, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.15) and the alternative high schools ($\underline{M}$ = 1.61, $\underline{SD}$ = .77), $\underline{t}$ (74) = 19.30, $\underline{p} < .05$. Responses to items for these variables were coded so that lower scores indicated fewer negative BAIs, then traditional school scores were subtracted from alternative school scores. Thus the positive $\underline{t}$ value of 19.30 indicated higher scores or more negative BAIs associated with experiences at traditional high schools. The mean difference effect size for negative BAIs from traditional to alternative schools was 2.93 standard deviations and would also be considered large.

Most interviewees reported that their attitudes, behaviors, and intentions toward school had greatly improved since enrollment at the alternative high school. Many said they liked school for the first time and felt like they would be able to graduate. Most indicated that had they stayed at their traditional schools they would not have graduated. Respondents said that peers, teachers, and the principal cared about them at the alternative high school and their caring made them feel better about being in school. They reported being able to ask for and receive additional help that enabled them to complete assignments and take a greater interest in the subjects that were being taught. One student said,

> Yeah, I used to hate school before. I just never wanted to go. I would go, but then I'd just wait for the other kids who didn't go to classes and then we'd all leave together and do something else for the rest of the day. Here (at the alternative high school) I care about what I'm learning. The teachers make it interesting. Other kids at school support you for coming to school and learning. We learn a lot about life, we can talk about anything in class and the teachers and

other kids are willing to listen to you. They care about what's going on in your life. I like coming to school now.

Correlations were calculated between the school BAIs and the peer relationship quality variables. None of the correlations between peer relationship quality and positive, negative school BAIs, and extracurricular participation associated with students' perceptions of their traditional high schools experiences were statistically significant. Only 1% or less of the variability in positive and negative school BAIs and extracurricular participation was associated with the variability in peer relationship quality scores using survey I data (see Table 5).

In contrast, the correlation between peer relationship quality and negative school BAIs associated with students' perceptions of their alternative school experiences was statistically significant, r (74) = -.33, $p < .05$. This suggests that as peer relationship quality increases, negative school-related behaviors, attitudes, and intentions decrease. The Pearson correlation coefficient between peer relationship quality and positive BAIs was r (74) = .22, ns. Between 4 and 11% of the variability in peer relationship quality scores was associated with the variability in positive and negative BAIs respectively (see Table 5).

Based on results of quantitative analyses and interview data, school environment appears to significantly influence relations among school BAIs and quality of peer relationships. Quantitative analyses (t tests) showed that peer relationship quality and positive BAIs significantly increased, and negative BAIs decreased at the alternative school. Peer relationship quality was statistically significantly correlated with negative

Table 5

Correlations Among Peer Relationship Quality and School BAIs at Traditional and Alternative High Schools

School BAIs	OS peer relationship quality	AS peer relationship quality
1. Positive BAIs	.10	.22
2. Negative BAIs	.02	-.33**
3. Extracurricular participation	-.12	--

Note. OS refers to traditional high school; AS refers to alternative high school.

$\underline{n} = 74$.

**$\underline{p} < .01$.

BAIs, whereas there were no meaningful correlations (effect size indicators) between perceptions of peer relationship quality at traditional high schools and school-related BAIs. Interview data suggest that for most students interviewed, they felt more support from school-based peers for their efforts to do well in school and accomplish academic goals. Thus, hypothesis three was partially supported.

Hypothesis 4

There is a relation between academic achievement and the quality of peer relationships. Respondents were asked to report their average grade at their traditional high schools (survey I) and last term at the alternative high school (survey II). Using matched data from survey I and II ($\underline{n} = 75$), students' average grades were compared.

Responses were coded so that a lower score indicated a better letter grade (e.g., 1 = A, 5 = F). The average grade for the last term students attended at their traditional high school was about a D ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.03$), whereas the average grade obtained at Cache High was a B- ($M = 2.64$, $SD = .55$). The paired t test was statistically significant, $t\ (82) = 10.96$, $p < .01$. The mean difference effect size for average grades from traditional to alternative schools was large (1.82 standard deviations).

Correlations were calculated between peer relationship quality and grades for both school environments. No relation between peer relationship quality and grades was found based on perceptions of either school environment, $r\ (74) = -.05$, ns for traditional school variables and $r\ (74) = .04$, ns for alternative school variables.

During interviews, students commented that their change in attitudes about school (from negative to positive) helped them achieve better grades at the alternative high school. In addition, several interviewees said that teachers at the alternative school were more willing to work with students on an individual basis to ensure that they understood the concepts being discussed or their assignments. Some interviewees also said that peers helped them complete assignments, or that they were encouraged to work with peers on some assignments.

Based on quantitative analyses (i.e., correlations), hypothesis four was not supported. It is clear that grades improved from traditional to alternative schools, but other factors (e.g., teacher support, class size) may account for larger amounts of the variance in grade point averages than did the indicator of peer support (i.e., peer relationship quality variables) used in this study.

Hypothesis 5

Relations exist among adolescents' intentions and behaviors associated with the use of alcohol and tobacco and the quality of peer relationships. Data from survey I were used to provide descriptive information about alcohol and tobacco use ($\underline{N} = 85$). Ninety-four percent ($\underline{n} = 80$) of respondents indicated that they had tried alcohol and tobacco, 3% ($\underline{n} = 3$) indicated that they had tried neither, 3% had missing data for these items. The largest percentages of students reported that they were in seventh grade or younger the first time they tried alcohol (35%, $\underline{n} = 30$) and tobacco (43%, $\underline{n} = 37$; see Figures 1 and 2), and the largest percentages of respondents indicated they were with their best friend (58%, $\underline{n} = 49$) or other same-age peers (20%, $\underline{n} = 17$) the first time they tried alcohol and tobacco (with best friend 52%, $\underline{n} = 44$; with other peers 22%, $\underline{n} = 19$; see Figures 3 and 4).

When asked if peer group members at their traditional high schools used alcohol and tobacco, 60% ($\underline{n} = 44$) indicated that their peer group members "often" used alcohol and approximately 77% ($\underline{n} = 51$) "often" used tobacco. Data from survey II ($\underline{n} = 83$) were used to compare alcohol and tobacco use for peer groups at the alternative high school. Thirty-nine percent ($\underline{n} = 32$) indicated that their peer group members "often" use alcohol and 83% reported that peer group members "often" used tobacco. Survey II reports of peer group members who "often" use alcohol at the alternative school was considerably less than survey I reports of peer group members who "often" used alcohol at traditional high schools. Comparisons of alcohol and tobacco use for peer groups at the traditional and alternative high schools are illustrated by Figures 5 and 6.

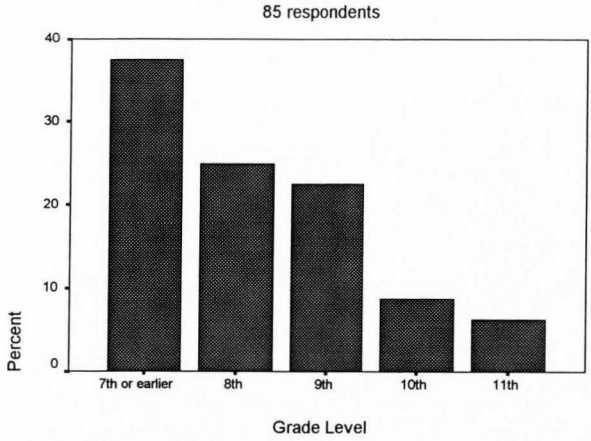

Figure1. The percentage of respondents who first tried alcohol by grade level.

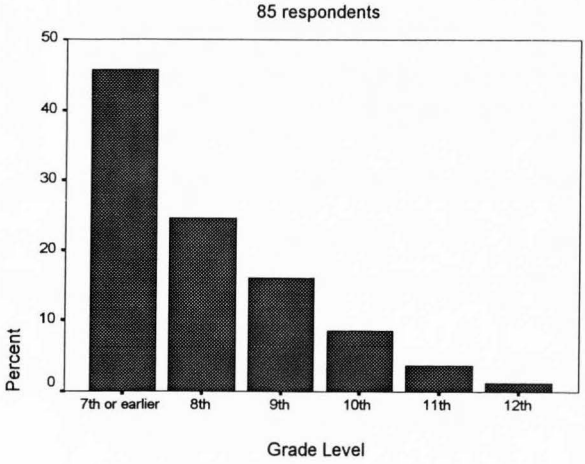

Figure 2. The percentage of respondents who first tried tobacco by grade level.

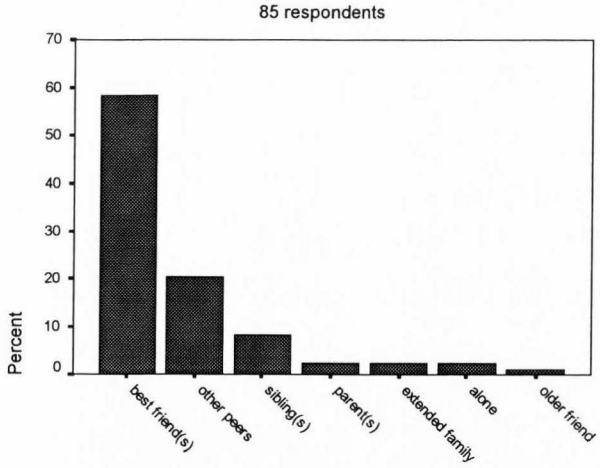

Figure 3. Persons with whom respondents first tried alcohol.

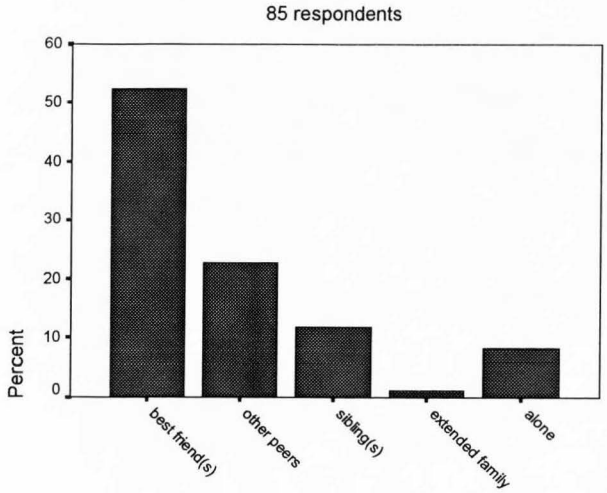

Figure 4. Persons with whom respondents first tried tobacco.

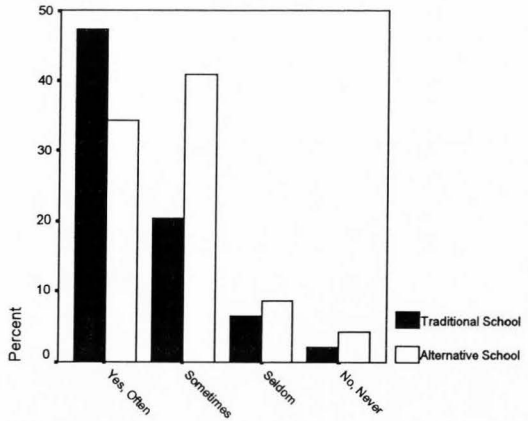

Figure 5. How often respondents' traditional and alternative high school peer groups used alcohol by percentages.

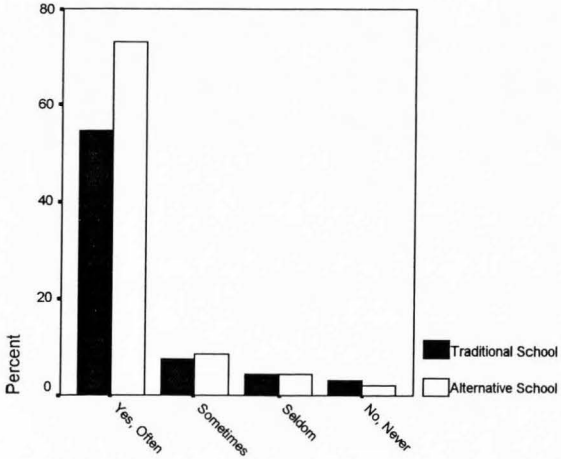

Figure 6. How often respondents' traditional and alternative high school peer groups used tobacco by percentages.

In order to test hypotheses regarding peer relationship quality and alcohol and tobacco use and intentions matched data from surveys I and II were used ($n = 75$). Peer relationship quality and alcohol and tobacco use and intentions variables at both the traditional and alternative high schools were not statistically significantly correlated (see Table 6). The following effect sizes are based on respondents' perceptions of peer relationship quality and substance intentions and use at their traditional high schools (survey I data). Less than 2% of the variability in peer relationship quality was associated with the variability in frequency of current alcohol and tobacco use. One percent or less of the variability in peer relationship quality was associated the variability in intentions regarding alcohol and tobacco use, and less than 1% of the variability in peer relationship quality was associated the variability in peer group use (see Table 6).

The next set of effect sizes are based on respondents' perceptions of peer relationship quality and substance intentions and use at their alternative high schools (survey II data). Less than 1% of the variability in peer relationship quality was associated with the variability in frequency of current alcohol and tobacco use. One percent or less of the variability in peer relationship quality was associated the variability in intentions regarding alcohol and tobacco use, and 1% or less of the variability in peer relationship quality was associated the variability in peer group (see Table 6). Due to the sensitive nature of the topic (illegal substance use), this hypothesis was not explored during interviews.

Overall, hypothesis five was not supported by quantitative results. There appears to be no meaningful relations among perceived peer relationship quality and adolescents'

Table 6

Correlations Among Peer Relationship Quality and Alcohol and Tobacco Use and Intentions at Traditional and Alternative High Schools

Alcohol and tobacco use and intentions	Traditional high school peer relationship quality	Alternative high school peer relationship quality
1. Current frequency of alcohol use	.14	.08
2. Current frequency of tobacco use	.09	-.01
3. Alcohol intentions	.12	.01
4. Tobacco intentions	.05	.13
5. Peer group alcohol use	-.19	.04
6. Peer group tobacco use	.02	.11

Note. None of the correlation coefficients were statistically significant.

$n = 74$.

intentions and behaviors associated with the use of alcohol and tobacco.

Hypothesis 6

There is a relation between identity status development and attendance at an alternative high school. To test this hypothesis, data from respondents who completed both surveys were used ($n = 75$). Paired t tests were calculated to determine whether or not means for each of the four identity subscales were statistically significantly different comparing survey I and II data. Only mean scores for the moratorium subscale met this criterion. Respondents' mean moratorium scores were lower on survey I ($M = 3.54$,

SD = .72) than on survey II (M = 3.72, SD = .73), t (72) = -2.59. A t value of -2.59 obtained by subtracting traditional high school mean moratorium scores from alterative school mean moratorium scores suggests that changes associated with transferring from their traditional high schools to the alternative school enhanced the exploration processes for these students. The mean difference effect size for moratorium scores from traditional to alternative schools was .25 of a standard deviation and would be considered small or of little substantive importance. Mean scores for the other three identity subscales also increased (see Table 7).

Identity subscale scores from survey I and II were moderately to strongly correlated with each other. Between 36 to 49% of the variability in survey I identity subscale scores was associated with the variability in survey II identity scores. Overall, identity subscale means between survey administrations appear to be fairly stable. Consistent with the expectations discussed in Chapter III, identity statuses did not change dramatically during the brief period (4 months) between the administration of surveys I and II.

During interviews, respondents were asked if they had experienced changes in their personal beliefs, in what they considered to be important, or in their values. Most indicated that they had not. However, several interviewees indicated that classroom experiences or discussions with the school counselor and principal had led them to explore career options they had previously not considered. Furthermore, many expressed feelings that they were more open-minded toward all sorts of people (especially the other students at the alternative school) and that they had learned to be more respectful and considerate

of both peers and adults while attending the alternative school. These responses suggest a movement toward higher levels of moratorium and achievement in the areas of occupational and interpersonal domains.

Based on both quantitative and qualitative analyses, only limited support was found for hypothesis six. There appears to be little relation between identity status development and attendance at an alternative high school. However, it should be noted that due to limitations in the research design, it was not possible to obtain information about identity development from students who were still attending traditional high schools. Furthermore, most participants completed both surveys with only a 4- to 5-month period between administrations. Transitions associated with identity statuses typically occur over a longer period of time (Erikson, 1968).

Table 7

Mean Identity Subscale Scores Based on Students' Perceptions of Their Traditional and Alternative High School Experiences

	Traditional high school mean identity scores		Alternative high school mean identity scores		
Identity Subscales	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	n
1. Achievement	2.89	(.81)	2.90	(.94)	73
2. Moratorium	3.54	(.72)	3.72	(.73)	72
3. Foreclosure	4.52	(.69)	4.58	(.72)	68
4. Diffusion	4.08	(.81)	4.18	(.72)	68

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Research Questions

This study explored the influence of peer relationships on students who have a history of school difficulties. It was hypothesized that a change in school environment might provide opportunities to "start over," both in terms of academic or school-related behaviors, attitudes, and intentions, and with their new peers. It was also hypothesized that a change in school environment and peer associations might enhance identity development.

Perceptions of Peer Status and Peer Relationship Quality in Two School Environments

Respondents were much more consistent in their identification of specific peer groups when asked to name and rank groups at their traditional high schools. Jocks and preps or popular males and females were ranked as the groups with the first and second highest peer status, and dirtheads, skaters, and stoners were ranked as having lower status at traditional high schools. These rankings and the specific groups identified are consistent with previous peer group classifications reported by other researchers (Coleman, 1961; Eckert, 1989; Feldman & Elliot, 1990; Hogue & Steinberg, 1995). Many of the adolescents who transferred to the alternative high school had previously belonged to low-status peer groups or did not belong to any group at their former traditional high schools.

Both of these conditions have been associated with negative outcomes in previous studies (Coie et al., 1990; Downs & Rose, 1991; Eckert, 1989; Epstein, 1983; Parker & Asher, 1987; Wenztel & Asher, 1995). At their former schools, many of these adolescents had negative attitudes toward their teachers, school staff, and other peer groups, frequently sluffed classes, engaged in regular tobacco and alcohol use, and were at-risk for dropping out as evidenced by their poor attendance records and failing grades in most classes.

At the alternative school, preps and popular kids were also ranked as having the highest status, but dirtheads and stoners were most frequently nominated as the group with the second highest status. Whereas nearly all respondents identified peer groups at their traditional high schools, fewer respondents reported that these groups existed at the alternative school. During interviews, several students indicated that some students maintained allegiance to previous peer groups and this was usually demonstrated by the clothing they wore, their music preferences, and the group activities they engaged in. However, in both interview and survey responses the majority of students said that everyone was accepted by peers at the alternative school; no one was excluded from activities or opportunities to socialize. Many expressed in interviews that the pervasive sense of acceptance of all types of adolescents was in sharp contrast to the cliques and status-conscious groups at their former schools. When asked about peer group membership at the alternative school, a small percentage of students claimed membership in particular peer groups (e.g., cowboys, skaters), but more than half said they did not belong to any group, or that "everyone hangs out with everyone here."

A transfer to the alternative school appeared to enhance peer status for some individuals based on sociometric peer nominations. Specifically, those most frequently nominated for Best Liked and Most Popular by peers at the alternative school reported that they had belonged to no peer group or a low-status peer group (usually the dirtheads) at their former schools. It is possible that these adolescents were similar to adolescents classified as "liaisons" by Ennett and Bauman (1996). Liaisons are adolescents who maintain friendships with several cliques or peer groups. A few of the adolescents nominated as Best Liked and Most Popular reported that at their former schools they "hung around with a lot of different people." Nevertheless, none of these adolescents reported that they belonged to the peer groups with the most status at the traditional high schools (i.e., cheerleaders, jocks, and preps). Thus, both quantitative and qualitative data from this study support the idea that many of these students did experience gains in peer status as they moved from traditional school to an alternative high school. However, adolescents who were nominated by their peers at the alternative school for Least Liked, Least Popular, and Gets into Trouble did not appear to change peer status from one school environment to the other. These adolescents also reported belonging to no group or low status peer groups at their former high schools.

In terms of perceived peer relationship quality, both quantitative and qualitative analyses showed that peer relationship quality improved when students began attending the alternative high school. Students rated their peer relationship quality higher at the alternative school compared with their former high schools, based on responses to questionnaire items about perceived peer support. During interviews, all respondents

reported that it was much easier to get along with, and feel accepted by peers at the alternative school than at their traditional high schools. Many reported that their peers at the alternative school encouraged them to stay in school and to work hard. In contrast, students said that their peer groups at the traditional high schools had a reputation for sluffing and for engaging in behaviors (drug and alcohol use) that undermined their school-related performance and achievement. Students' reports of peer group activities at their former schools were consistent with Eckert's (1989) findings that members of the "Burnout" peer group typically engaged in substance use, skipped class, and experienced difficulties in following school rules and in doing well academically.

School-Related BAIs, Academic Achievement, and Peer Relationship Quality

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses indicated that adolescents' perceptions of their school-related BAIs had changed from their traditional high schools to the alternative high school. Mean score comparisons of positive BAIs showed higher positive BAIs at the alternative school compared with students' recollections of their experiences at traditional high schools. During interviews, respondents said that they were more motivated to attend school and that they liked going to the alternative high school. In contrast, many of them reported that they were at-risk for graduation (usually due to poor attendance and failing grades) at their former schools and did not like going to school. Mean score comparisons of negative BAIs based on perceptions of experiences at traditional and alternative schools showed lower negative BAIs at the alternative school

compared to responses related to traditional high school experiences. During interviews, adolescents said that they were less likely to quit school and did not think school was a waste of time now that they were attending the alternative school. The opposite was reported when asked about their school-related attitudes when they were attending traditional high schools. Using data from survey I (perceptions of experiences at traditional high schools), correlations were calculated between peer relationship quality and the following variables: positive BAIs, negative BAIs, extracurricular participation, and grades. None of the correlations using survey I data were statistically significant. Using data from survey II (perceptions of experiences at the alternative high school), correlations were calculated between peer relationship quality and the following variables: positive BAIs, negative BAIs, and grades. Only the correlation between negative BAIs and perceived peer relationship quality at the alternative school was statistically significant. As peer relationship quality increased at the alternative school, negative BAIs decreased. This finding fits previous reports that peers can provide positive role models for each other and support adolescents' efforts to do well in school (Bearman & Brückner, 1999; Gregory, 1995; Steinberg et al., 1988).

In comparing academic achievement measured by reported grades (both at their former schools and at the alternative school) and honor roll status, the average grade earned during the last term at the alternative school was statistically significantly higher (B+) than the average grade earned the last term they attended their former schools (D-). In addition, many students at the alternative school made the honor roll (based on a GPA of 3.66 or higher) for the first time in their academic careers. However, correlations

between grades and peer relationship quality were not statistically significant.

Alcohol and Tobacco Intentions and Behaviors and Peer Relationship Quality

None of the relations among items measuring alcohol and tobacco intentions and use were statistically significantly correlated with peer relationship quality. There may be obvious reasons for this. More than 90% of respondents indicated that they had tried both alcohol and tobacco and that they currently used these substances with varying frequency. Although analyses about peer relationship quality indicated improvements or perceptions of greater support from peers in the alternative school setting, it appears that most of these same peers at the alternative school also currently use both alcohol and tobacco. These findings suggest that among students at this alternative school the use of these substances is normative.

Kandel (1978a, 1978b) and Akers et al. (1998) showed that adolescents' friends and peers tend to be similar in both behaviors and attitudes as a result of their interactions, and specifically, adolescent friends tend to be similar in their use of illicit drugs. Peer relationship quality, as it was measured in this study, assessed respondents' level of agreement or disagreement to statements about whether their peers were easy to talk to, said the right things, made themselves available when they needed help, and whether they could trust their peers. Thus perceived peer support may not influence drug and alcohol use and intentions among adolescents who already engage in these behaviors.

Identity Status Development and Peer Relationship Quality

Mean scores for each of the four identity subscales (i.e., achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion) were compared based on responses associated with recollected experiences at former traditional high schools (survey I) and current experiences at the alternative high school (survey II). Only moratorium subscale scores were statistically significantly different based on comparisons of responses to survey I and II. This finding is consistent with Erikson's (1968) theory that significant changes in one's environment or experiences (in this case adolescents' experiencing a new school environment) should facilitate identity crisis that leads to moratorium or the exploration of new ideas, beliefs, behaviors. During interviews, several students indicated that conversations with peers, school staff, and classroom experiences had facilitated their consideration of new career and educational options and goals (e.g., going to college), and to be more open-minded and accepting of different people and their beliefs. However, overall it was not surprising that results revealed little or no change in the other identity statuses given the relatively brief period (four months) between the two survey administrations.

Implications

The influence of adolescents' peer relationships has been contemplated by parents, researchers, and others who work with this age group. Many concerned parents have worried that affiliation with the "wrong crowd" could jeopardize their child's school performance and future goals, and may lead to other undesirable outcomes (e.g., drug use,

premarital sexual behavior, delinquency).

The focus of this study was to explore how adolescents' perceptions of the quality of their peer relationships and peer social status influence school-related BAIs and identity development in two school environments. The majority of respondents who currently attend the alternative high school reported no peer group membership or membership in low-status peer groups at their former traditional high schools. However, on both survey responses and during interviews the majority of students reported that their peer relationships were more supportive at the alternative school. In addition, many reported that most students makes an effort to get along with everyone else, more so than at traditional high schools.

Alternative schools are often viewed as a place of last resort for troubled adolescents. The alternative high school in this study has been characterized by some members of the community as "a place to put all the worst kids." The reasons for referral or transfer to the alternative school (e.g., at-risk for graduation, discipline problems, drug and alcohol offenses, unintended pregnancy) make that perception understandable.

A few individuals appeared to experience an increase in peer status (based on self-reported peer group affiliation at their old schools and sociometric nominations by alternative school peers), but many students did not experience these changes. Thus it would be difficult to argue that the types of peers or peer affiliations changed dramatically between school environments.

However, the majority of participants indicated that the quality of their peer relationships and the support they felt from peers at the alternative school were better than

what they had experienced at their traditional high schools. Quantitative analyses provided less support for the linkages been peer relationship quality and school-related BAIs and achievement (grades and honor roll status), but interviews with students consistently supported the premise that supportive peer relationships contributed to improvement in school BAIs. The question is, what facilitated these changes? It appears that the school environment itself mediated peer relationship quality and school-related BAIs.

Research on school environment variables (e.g., school size, pupil-teacher ratios) suggests that high schools with large student bodies and high pupil-teacher classroom ratios are less able to provide individualized attention for students and contribute to students' feelings of alienation and anonymity (Fowler, 1992; Lee & Smith, 1997; Sares, 1992). Secondary schools with graduating classes above 750 appear to have negative effects on students' attitudes, achievement, and voluntary participation (Fowler, 1992). Results from Lee and Smith's (1997) study of high school size using data from the National Education Longitudinal Study suggest that the ideal high school enrolls between 600 and 900 students. Another approach to reducing anonymity in large public high schools has been to group students into "houses" according to grade level. With an average of 250 students per house, this approach presumably provides greater support services for students within each house (Eichenstein, 1994). Other research indicates that extracurricular participation was more likely to occur in smaller high schools (less than 800 students) and was related to 12th-grade self-esteem (Coladarci & Cobb, 1996). Some of these recommendations for large, traditional high schools have already been

incorporated into the structure and philosophy of alternative schools.

Alternative schools were specifically created to provide an environment that would facilitate academic involvement, positive participation, and achievement among students most at-risk for school dropout (Korn, 1990). In particular, it appears that school staff were essential in making an individualized connection with students. By providing a supportive school context, these adolescents felt accepted, cared about, and encouraged to learn and achieve. Repeatedly during interviews, students mentioned specific teachers, or the school counselor or principal as persons who helped change their mind about school and their abilities. Many of these students said that acceptance and encouragement from school staff helped them to make positive changes in their attitudes about school and their own lives. Findings from this study were consistent with Gregory's (1995) report that a positive, caring environment provided by teachers and staff can enable many at-risk students to succeed academically.

Dropout rates among U.S. high school students range between 7.6 to 25.3% for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics between the ages of 16 and 24 (NCES, 1999). Many factors may contribute to the likelihood of adolescents not graduating, including lack of motivation. However, this study demonstrates that adolescents who were labeled as unmotivated and possibly academically challenged in traditional high schools found that with encouragement and individualized attention at the alternative school they could change their school-related attitudes and performance. Findings from this study emphasize the importance of tailoring educational experiences to the needs of students

rather than expecting students to conform to existing school structures and procedures, which are clearly ineffective for some learners.

Limitations of This Study and Suggestions for Future Research

Any conclusions drawn from this study must be qualified by the limitations of the sample and research design. It was not intended or expected that participants of this study would represent all U.S. students who might be classified as at-risk for school dropout. Thus, research findings related to peer status and peer relationship quality variables and school BAIs and identity development obtained in this study only describe the perceptions and experiences of students at this particular alternative high school. In particular, the religious and cultural climate in which this study was conducted may have both direct and indirect influences on findings regarding adolescent peer relationships. For example, peer status or popularity may be influenced by religious group membership more so than in other regions of the United States. Whether or not an adolescent belongs to the dominant religious group (i.e., Latter-day Saints) in this region may be another means by which peer groups or friendships are divided or categorized. Furthermore, the pervasive "Mormon culture" that adolescents in this study were exposed to is likely to promote greater conformity and less tolerance of individual diversity than in geographical areas where greater cultural and religious diversity exists. Participants of this study were primarily Caucasian and lived in a rural area of the Intermountain West. Future studies should include other alternative schools, and students of different ethnic, cultural, and religious groups in different geographic locations.

In terms of the research design, students were asked to retrospectively respond to questions about their previous school experiences and peer group relationships at traditional high schools. Some students had been removed from those environments and relationships for a much longer time than others. It is likely that inaccuracies in reporting or some reconstruction of past experiences may have occurred since the time these students left their former schools. Limitations associated with this study did not allow for the tracking of students from traditional high schools into the alternative school. It would have been preferable to assess the variables in this study while students were still attending their traditional high schools and then to continue to assess them after they began attending the alternative school.

In addition, changes in identity status development may have been more likely if the study had been extended over a longer period of time. Because students completed both surveys while attending the alternative high school, it is not possible to determine whether or not responses on the identity development measure truly reflected the beliefs, attitudes, and opinions associated with their traditional high schools. Future studies could be designed to identify students most at-risk in traditional high schools and then to track them as they make the transition to alternative schools or other options (e.g., employment).

One of the limitations associated with survey measures in general is the inability to determine how honest participants are in reporting attitudes, opinions, intentions, and behaviors. It is also impossible to determine whether responses to a survey accurately reflect stable attitudes, opinions, and intentions. Interviews were conducted to clarify

ambiguous survey responses and to provide more in-depth information about the variables of interest. The advantage of using qualitative approaches lies in their potential to provide information about the context and change processes from the students' perspective. The first consideration in this study was to obtain interviews with students that represented a range of peer status categories and who had experienced differing degrees of school success since beginning their enrollment at the alternative school. Naturalistic observation and interviews with more of the school staff might have been helpful in providing additional information about how school contextual variables influence students' school-related BAIs.

Concluding Remarks

Findings from this study suggest that school environments (traditional and alternative) do influence peer status, peer relationship qualities, school-related BAIs, and academic achievement. In comparing structural components of traditional and alternative high schools, several conditions may impact the development of peer relationships. Traditional schools typically enroll much larger student bodies than do alternative schools. The two traditional high schools in this study had student populations of 1,647 (Sky View High School) and 1,424 (Mountain Crest High School) compared with 95 students who currently attend the alternative school (Cache High). Large high schools may contribute to feelings of anonymity among some students, whereas a smaller student body appears to foster opportunities to make friends. Average class sizes in public high schools are typically between 25 to 35 students compared to 15 to 18 students per class at the

alternative high school. Again, smaller class sizes may facilitate friendship development and better academic achievement.

Class schedules and extracurricular activities are additional differences that exist between the two types of schools. At traditional high schools, students usually attend five classes daily, which means they are likely to interact with larger numbers of different peers throughout the day. Opportunities to make friends and form peer groups are partially facilitated by extracurricular activities such as school clubs, student body organizations, participation on athletic teams, cheerleading, drill team, or band. At the alternative school, students attend only three academic courses that extend over one-hour-and-50-minute periods. They spend more time in the classroom with a smaller number of the same peers for longer periods than do traditional high school students. There are few if any extra-curricular activities at the alternative school, which is one reason why peer groups such as cheerleaders, jocks, and band members are not viable at these schools. Peer relationships at the alternative school in this study appear to be influenced by perceived common experiences and goals, as well as a sense of family-like concern for the well-being of fellow students.

Substantial research has identified relations between peer affiliation and adolescent development. Most of us realize that peers can have considerable influence over some of the choices adolescents make, but it is important to consider the context in which these relationships occur. In the school setting, positive peer interactions can be fostered by concerned staff who are willing to take an interest and active role. School staff can also provide a school environment that is accepting of the diversity in personal expression that

is characteristic of adolescents. Rather than labeling adolescents based on superficial indicators such as clothing and perhaps peer group affiliation, the effort to get to know them as individuals appears to lead to substantial rewards in terms of enhancing their motivation to succeed in school.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Peer Relationships: A Personal Opinion Survey (Version I)

PEER RELATIONSHIPS: A PERSONAL OPINION SURVEY

Dear Student:

Because you will complete more than one questionnaire during this school year, it is necessary to collect the following information from you. Your name will never appear on any of the questionnaires that you fill out, but it is important to match your name with an identification number. Please fill out this form and return it to your teacher or the person who will pass out the questionnaires. They will then provide you with a questionnaire. Thank you for your cooperation.

Your First Name _____ ID #

Your Last Name _____

Your home phone number _____

Your Address (street, city, zip code)

_____

The name of your parent(s) or guardian that you live with (please indicate if this person is your parent, a relative, or a guardian)

_____

Today's Date_____

The Name of Your Teacher in this class _____

Survey I ID # _____

Peer Relationships: A Personal Opinion Survey

We, from the department of Family and Human Development at Utah State University are interested in your beliefs and opinions about you, your peers, and your school experiences. We want to better understand the important part that social relationships play in young adults' lives.

Dear Student:

This questionnaire requests information about peer relationships and your attitudes and experiences relating to school and other activities. We are interested in adolescent experiences and in finding out how peers influence choices related to school participation. Peers are generally a source of positive influence, encouraging our success, but sometimes, peer relationships make it more difficult to do well in school. It's important to understand why and under what circumstances peers influence school participation. It may be interesting for you to think about how your peers relationships might influence your school experiences.

We feel the best way to learn about peer influences is by asking adolescents themselves. Because the statements in this questionnaire are about personal feelings, attitudes, and behaviors there are no right and wrong answers. The BEST response to each of the statements is your PERSONAL BELIEF or ACTUAL EXPERIENCE.

If you are confused by a question or do not know how to respond to a particular question, please write next to the question "Don't Know" or ask the person passing out the questionnaires.

Please DO NOT ask another student what they think a question means.

If you have any further questions about this survey, feel free to call us at the number listed below.

THANK YOU for taking the time to fill this out, and for your honesty and houghtfulness.

Sincerely,

Randall M. Jones
Project Director
Utah State University

Diana Coyl
Researcher
Utah State University

Peers are kids that are about our same age and are the ones we spend time with while at school. Some of them may be our friends, others may be just part of a group we belong to or hang out with. Thinking about you and the peers you spent time with before coming to Cache High, how well do the statements below describe those relationships?

Indicate your response by circling a number (1-6) according to the choices to the right of each statement:

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. **At my old school,** my peers and I liked to do all of the same kinds of things.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. **At my old school,** my peers could be irritating a lot of the time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. It was easy for my peers and I to talk about anything, including personal problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Too often, my peers acted like they thought I was stupid.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. My peers seemed to always be able to say the right thing at the right time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. No matter what, my peers always seemed to be there if I needed help.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. My peers seemed to ask a lot more favors of me,than I asked of them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I had complete and total trust in my peers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Sometimes, I wondered if being liked by my peers was <u>too</u> important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10. At my old school, my peers and I had similar attitudes about school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. My peers encouraged me to do well in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I consider many of my peers to be good friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I still spend time with some of my peers from my old school.	1	2	3	4	5	6

For the next set of questions, please provide your best answer to each question. You may need to circle an answer that is already provided, or you may need to write in an answer. *Most of the questions are about peer groups that existed at your old school. Peer groups are usually formed through friendships or because of activities, interests, or similarities among group members. For example, some kids are part of a group because they participate in school sports, like football players, other peer groups exist due to participation in school activities such as drama club. Some peer groups are formed because the members are similar, they may be a similar race or they share similar interests, such as gang members or skateboarders, etc. Some peer groups have to do with being popular, admired, or well-liked.*

Keeping this in mind, please write in answers for the following questions.

1. List five of the most well-known peer groups at **your old school.**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Please write a number after each group you list. This number will represent the group's social status at your old school. For example you may list "Football team members" and write #2 next to that peer group, indicating that they had the second highest status among all the groups at your old school.

2. If you belonged to a group, or more than one group please write in the name of your group(s) here. Please write "NO GROUP" if you did not belong to a particular group.

Please circle the best answer for you.

3. At my old school I spent most of my time with . . ."
   a. no one in particular
   b. one friend
   c. one group of peers
   d. several peer groups

4. How important was it for you to belong to a peer group at your old school?
   1. Very important
   2. Somewhat important
   3. Not very important
   4. Not important at all

5. If you were part of a peer group at your old school, please circle all of the reasons that being a part of group was important for you. If you did not belong to a peer group, please circle the reasons why you think other kids wanted to be in certain peer groups.
   a. helped provide an identity
   b. provides opportunities to make friends
   c. provides opportunities for social activities
   d. for social status
   e. for emotional support
   f. for protection
   g. enhanced my reputation
   h. a way to fit in with other kids

6. If there are other positive reasons why kids want to belong to peer groups, please list those reasons here.

_____

_____

_____

7. If you believe there were drawbacks to belonging members to a peer group, please circle all the reasons why being part of a peer group was bad or resulted in negative experiences for you. If you did not belong to a peer group, please circle the reasons why you didn't want to belong to a peer group at **your old school**.

   a. having to be like the group
   b. having to spend time with kids you didn't really like.
   c. low social status
   d. bad for your reputation
   e. being involved in behaviors like ditching school, smok ing, drinking, stealing, lying to parents
   f. the threat of violence because of group member ship

8. If there are other negative reasons why kids avoid or dislike belonging to peer groups, please list those reasons here.

_____

_____

_____

_____

PLEASE TURN TO NEXT PAGE

PLEASE READ THIS FIRST

Some of these statements may not seem to apply to your life right now; still, give us your opinion, as they might be appropriate to you in the future.

If a statement seems to have more than one part, respond to the statement as a whole.

Some statements will sound similar. This is deliberate; we want to know if different wordings lead to different responses. Please answer each question according to your own beliefs.

Indicate your response by circling a number (1-6) according to the following guide:

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. My parents know what's best for me in terms of how to choose friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I haven't thought much about what I look for in a date-I just go out to have a good time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. My own views on a good life-style were taught to me by my parents and I don't see any reason to question what they taught me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. My parents had it decided a long time ago what I should go into for employment and I'm following their plan.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. My education is not something I really spend much time thinking about.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I guess I just kind of enjoy life in general, I don't spend much time thinking about it	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Even if my parents disapprove, I could be a friend to a person if I thought she/he was basically good.	1	2	3	4	5	6

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8. I believe my parents probably know what is best for my future education.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. When I'm on a date, I don't like to have any particular plans.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I just can't decide what to do for an occupation. There are so many that have possibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. After a lot of self-examination, I have established a very definite view on what my own life-style will be.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I'm really not interested in finding the "right career", any job will do. I just seem to go with what is available.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I know my parents don't approve of some of my friends, but I haven't decided what to do about it yet.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Some of my friends are very different from each other, I'm trying to figure out exactly where I fit in.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I couldn't be friends with someone my parents' disapprove of.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. My parents' views on life are good enough for me, I don't need anything else.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I'm not so sure about what I want for my education, but I am now actively exploring different choices.	1	2	3	4	5	6

18. I can be flexiable in my dating standards, but for me to really change my standards, it must be something I really believe in.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

19. I've had many different kinds of friends, and now I have a clear idea of what I look for in a friendship.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

20. I've done a lot of thinking about my education, and I've got a specific plan laid out.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

21. I don't have any close friends-I just like to hang around with the crowd and have a good time.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

22. The standards or "unwritten rules" I follow about dating are still in the process of developing-they can still change.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

23. I would never date anyone my parents disapprove of.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

24. I've never had any real close friends-it takes too much energy to keep a friendship going.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

25. Sometimes I wonder if the way other people date is the best way for me.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

26. After considerable thought, I've developed my own individual viewpoint of what is for me an ideal "life-style" and I don't believe anyone will be likely to change my views.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

27. School is just something I'm supposed to do, not much more.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

28. I haven't chosen the job or occupation I really want to get into. I'll just work at whatever is available unless something better comes along.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

29. My rules or standards about dating have remained the same since I first started going out and I don't anticipate that they will change.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

30. In finding an acceptable viewpoint about life itself, I often exchange ideas with friends and family.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

31. It took a lot of effort to decide, and I now have definite intentions about my education.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

32. There's no single "life-style" that appeals to me more than another.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

33. It took me a while to figure it out, but now I really know what I want for a career.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

34. I'm still trying to decide how capable I am as a person and what jobs will be right for me.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

35. There are so many subjects to learn about in school. I'm trying out as many as possible so I can make a better decision about my future education.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

36. I might have thought about a lot of different jobs but there's never really been any question since my parents said what they wanted.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

37. I'm looking for an acceptable perspective for my own "life-style" view, but I haven't really found it yet.

38. My parents have taught me the most important goals about my education, I've seen no reason to doubt them.

39. It took me a long time to decide, but now I know for sure what direction to move in for a career.

40. I've dated different types of people and I now know exactly what my own "unwritten rules" for dating are.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

Next, we would like to know about your experiences at YOUR OLD HIGH SCHOOL and some of your attitudes about education. How well do the following statements describe you?

1. My natural academic abilities were above average.

2. I was usually satisfied with the grades I got.

3. I would have quit school if I had the chance.

4. School was not worth my time.

5. I participated in many school-sponsored activities.

6. I worked carefully on most homework assignments.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7. I was absent less than most other students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I seemed to get in trouble with my old teachers a lot.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I intended to miss no classes, except for legitimate reasons.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. At my old school, I thought high grades were important for getting a good job or for going to college.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. If I did too well in school my peers probably wouldn't like it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I got a lot of positive recognition when I got good grades.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Overall, my old high school was a very good school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. I had the most control over whether or not I did well in a class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I was involved in school athletics.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. I had won one or more service, athletic, or academic awards when I was at my old high school.	1	2	3	4	5	6

17. I often missed homework assignments.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

18. I sluffed a lot at my old school.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

19. I have gotten in trouble with the law more than most of my peers.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

20. My average grade for the LAST term I attended my old high school was about: (circle one letter)

a. A
b. B
c. C
d. D
e. F

21. For grades this term at Cache High, I intend to get an average of about:

a. A
b. B
c. C
d. D
e. F

22. After high school, my <u>main</u> goal is to:

a. Get a job
b. Take some time off
c. Go to a technical/ trade school
d. Go to a college/ university
e. Work for my family
f. Not sure
g. Other (Please write it)

_____

Next, we would like to know about your experiences with alcohol and tobacco.

1. Have you ever tried Alcohol?
   a. NO (if no, circle NO, then skip to question 6)
   b. YES (if yes, circle YES, and answer questions 2-5 below)

2. What grade were you in when you first tried alcohol?
   a. 12th
   b. 11th
   c. 10th
   d. 9th
   e. 8th
   f. 7th or earlier

3. Whom were you with when you first tried alcohol?
   a. Best friend(s)
   b. other same-age peer(s)
   c. sister or brother
   d. extended family (uncle/cousin)
   e. one or both parents
   f. I was alone

4. How often have you used alcohol in the LAST MONTH?
   a. None
   b. 1 or 2 times
   c. 3 or 4 times
   d. 5 to 7 times
   e. 8 or more times

5. Which of the following best describes you and alcohol?
   a. I drink now, and I have no plans to change.
   b. I drink now, but I plan to quit within the year.
   c. Though I have before, I don't drink right now, and my goal is to never start (try it) again.
   d. Though I don't drink now, I have in the past, and I am likely to try it again.

6. For those who have never tried alcohol, which statement to the right best describes you and alcohol?
   a. If I get a chance, I would give it a try.
   b. I might try it sometime.
   c. I have no intentions to ever try it.

7. Did members of your peer group at your old school use alcohol?
   a. Yes, often
   b. Sometimes
   c. Seldom
   d. No, never

8. Have you ever tried tobacco? (smoking cigarettes or chewing?)
   a. NO (if no, circle NO, then skip to question 13)
   b. YES (if yes, circle YES, and answer questions 9-12 below)

9. What grade were you in when you first tried tobacco?
   a. 12th
   b. 11th
   c. 10th
   d. 9th
   e. 8th
   f. 7th or earlier

10. Whom were you with when you first tried tobacco?
   a. Best friend(s)
   b. other same-age peer(s)
   c. sister or brother
   d. extended family (uncle/cousin)
   e. one or both parents
   f. I was alone

11 How often have you used tobacco in the LAST MONTH?
   a. None
   b. 1 or 2 times
   c. 3 or 4 times
   d. 5 to 7 times
   e. 8 or more times

12. Which of the following best describes you and tobacco?
   a. I use tobacco now, and I have no plans to change.
   b. I use tobacco now, but I plan to quit within the year.
   c. Though I have before, I don't use tobacco right now, and my goal is to never start (try it) again.
   d. Though I don't use tobacco now, I have in the past, and I am likely to try it again.

13. For those who have never tried tobacco, which statement to the right best describes you and tobacco?
   a. If I get a chance, I would give it a try.
   b. I might try it sometime.
   c. I have no intentions to ever try it.

14. Did members of your peer group at your old school smoke cigarettes or chew tobacco?
   a. Yes, often
   b. Sometimes
   c. Seldom
   d. No, never

Finally, we need some basic information about you and your family. Please circle the answer that best describes you or your family members.

1. My gender is
   a. Female
   b. Male

2. I am now _____ years old.

3. My grade in school now is
   a. 10th
   b. 11th
   c. 12th

3. My Ethnicity is
   a. White/Anglo
   b. Asian
   c. Native-American Indian
   d. African-American
   e. Hispanic / Latino
   f. Other (please list)
   _____

4. I have lived in Cache County
   a. 0 to 1/2 year
   b. 1/2 to 1 year
   c. 1 year to 3 years
   d. 4 to 8 years
   e. 9 or more years

5. My natural parents are
   a. Married
   b. Divorced
   c. Separated
   d. Not married, but living together
   e. Father is not living
   f. Mother is not living
   g. Neither parent is living

6. I now live with
   a. Both my natural parents
   b. With my mother, my father doesn't live with us
   c. With my father, my mother doesn't live with us
   d. Relatives or parents' friend(s)
   e. Adoptive or Foster parents
   f. Other same-age peers
   g. By myself
   h. Other (please list)
   _____

Is there something we should have asked but didn't about your peer relationships or your experiences?

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you or your peer relationships? Please use the space below.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

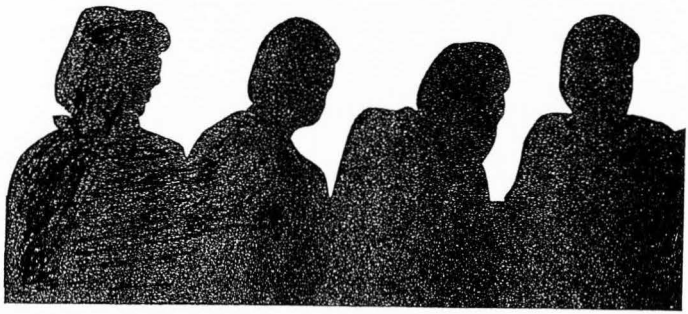
PLEASE TAKE A MINUTE TO LOOK BACK THROUGH THE QUESTIONNAIRE TO MAKE SURE YOU ANSWERED ALL OF THE QUESTIONS, THEN GIVE YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE TEACHER, PRINCIPAL, OR RESEARCH ASSISTANT IN YOUR CLASS.

Appendix B

Peer Relationships: A Personal Opinion Survey (Version II)

Survey II ID # _____

Peer Relationships: A Personal Opinion Survey



We, from the department of Family and Human Development at Utah State University are interested in your beliefs and opinions about you, your peers, and your school experiences. We want to better understand the important part that social relationships play in young adults' lives.

Dear Student:

This questionnaire requests information about peer relationships and your attitudes and experiences relating to school and other activities. We are interested in adolescent experiences and in finding out how peers influence choices related to school participation. Peers are generally a source of positive influence, encouraging our success, but sometimes, peer relationships make it more difficult to do well in school. It's important to understand why and under what circumstances peers influence school participation. It may be interesting for you to think about how your peers relationships might influence your school experiences.

We feel the best way to learn about peer influences is by asking adolescents themselves. Because the statements in this questionnaire are about personal feelings, attitudes, and behaviors there are no right and wrong answers. The BEST response to each of the statements is your PERSONAL BELIEF or ACTUAL EXPERIENCE.

If you are confused by a question or do not know how to respond to a particular question, please write next to the question "Don't Know" or ask the person passing out the questionnaires.

Please DO NOT ask another student what they think a question means.

If you have any further questions about this survey, feel free to call us at the number listed below.

THANK YOU for taking the time to fill this out, and for your honesty and houghtfulness.

Sincerely,

Randall M. Jones
Project Director
Utah State University

Diana Coyl
Researcher
Utah State University

Peers are kids that are about our same age and are the ones we spend time with while at school. Some of them may be our friends, others may be just part of a group we belong to or hang out with. Thinking about you and the peers you spent time with at Cache High, how well do the statements below describe those relationships?

Indicate your response by circling a number (1-6) according to the choices to the right of each statement:

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. **At Cache High**, my peers and I like to do all of the same kinds of things.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. **At Cache High**, my peers can be irritating a lot of the time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. It is easy for my peers and I to talk about anything, including personal problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Too often, my peers **at Cache High** act like they think I'm stupid.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. My peers seem to always be able to say the right thing at the right time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. No matter what, my peers always seem to be there if I need help.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. **At Cache High**, my peers seem to ask a lot more favors of me, than I ask of them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I have complete and total trust in my peers **at Cache High**.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Sometimes, I wondered if being liked by my peers is <u>too</u> important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10. **At Cache High**, my peers and I have similar attitudes about school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. My peers **at Cache High** encourage me to do well in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I consider **many** of my peers **at Cache High** to be good friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Use the list of Cache High Students provided by the teacher or reseracher to answer the next set of questions. Write your answers directly on the list of students.

1. Write a #1 beside the names of **three students** that **you like the best** at Cache High.

2. Write a #2 beside the names of **three students** that you think **are the most popular** at Cache High.

3. Write a #3 beside the names of **three students** that **you like the least** at Cache High.

4. Write a #4 beside the names of **three students** that you think **are the least popular** at Cache High.

5. Write a #5 beside the names of **three students who start fights or get into trouble.**

For the next set of questions, please provide your best answer to each question. You may need to circle an answer that is already provided, or you may need to write in an answer.

Most of the questions are about peer groups that existed at at Cache High. Peer groups are usually reputation-based or they are formed because of common activities, interests, or similarities among group members.

Keeping this in mind, please write in answers for the following questions.

1. List five of the most well-known peer groups at at Cache High.

   1. _____
   2. _____
   3. _____
   4. _____
   5. _____

Please write a number after each group you list. This number will represent the group's social status at your old school. For example you may list "Skateboarders" and write #3 next to that peer group, indicating that they had the third highest status among all the groups at Cache High.

2. If you belong to a group, or more than one group please write in the name of your group(s) here. Please write "NO GROUP" if you don't belong to a particular group.

Please circle the best answer for you.

3. At Cache High I spent most of my time with . . ."
   a. no one in particular
   b. one friend
   c. one group of peers
   d. several peer groups

4. How important was it for you to belong to a peer group at Cache High?
   1. Very important
   2. Somewhat important
   3. Not very important
   4. Not important at all

5. If you are part of a peer group at **At Cache High,** please circle all of the reasons that being a part of a group is important for you. IF you do not belong belong to a peer group, please circle the reasons why you think other kids want to be in certain peer group.

a. helps provide an identity
b. provides opportunities to make friends
c. provides opportunities for social activities
d. for social status
e. for emotional support
f. for protection
g. enhances my reputation
h. a way to fit in with other kids

6. If there are other positive reasons why kids want to belong to peer groups, please list those reasons here.

_____

_____

_____

7. If you believe there are drawbacks to belonging members to a peer group, please circle all the reasons why being part of a peer group was bad or resulted in negative experiences for you. If you do not belong to a peer group, please circle the reasons why you don't want to belong to a peer group **at Cache High.**

a. having to be like the group
b. having to spend time with kids you didn't really like.
c. low social status
d. bad for your reputation
e. being involved in behaviors like ditching school, smok ing, drinking, stealing, lying to parents
f. the threat of violence because of group member ship

8. If there are other negative reasons why kids avoid or dislike belonging to peer groups **at Cache High,** please list those reasons here.

_____

_____

_____

_____

PLEASE READ THIS FIRST

Some of these statements may not seem to apply to your life right now; still, give us your opinion, as they might be appropriate to you in the future.

If a statement seems to have more than one part, respond to the statement as a whole.

Some statements will sound similar. This is deliberate; we want to know if different wordings lead to different responses. Please answer each question according to your own beliefs.

Indicate your response by circling a number (1-6) according to the following guide:

		Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	My parents know what's best for me in terms of how to choose friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	I haven't thought much about what I look for in a date-I just go out to have a good time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	My own views on a good life-style were taught to me by my parents and I don't see any reason to question what they taught me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	My parents had it decided a long time ago what I should go into for employment and I'm following their plan.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	My education is not something I really spend much time thinking about.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	I guess I just kind of enjoy life in general, I don't spend much time thinking about it	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.	Even if my parents disapprove, I could be a friend to a person if I thought she/he was basically good.	1	2	3	4	5	6

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8. I believe my parents probably know what is best for my future education.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. When I'm on a date, I don't like to have any particular plans.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I just can't decide what to do for an occupation. There are so many that have possibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. After a lot of self-examination, I have established a very definite view on what my own life-style will be.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I'm really not interested in finding the "right career", any job will do. I just seem to go with what is available.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I know my parents don't approve of some of my friends, but I haven't decided what to do about it yet.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Some of my friends are very different from each other, I'm trying to figure out exactly where I fit in.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I couldn't be friends with someone my parents' disapprove of.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. My parents' views on life are good enough for me, I don't need anything else.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I'm not so sure about what I want for my education, but I am now actively exploring different choices.	1	2	3	4	5	6

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
18. I can be flexiable in my dating standards, but for me to really change my standards, it must be something I really believe in.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. I've had many different kinds of friends, and now I have a clear idea of what I look for in a friendship.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. I've done a lot of thinking about my education, and I've got a specific plan laid out.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. I don't have any close friends-I just like to hang around with the crowd and have a good time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. The standards or "unwritten rules" I follow about dating are still in the process of developing-they can still change.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. I would never date anyone my parents disapprove of.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. I've never had any real close friends-it takes too much energy to keep a friendship going.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. Sometimes I wonder if the way other people date is the best way for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. After considerable thought, I've developed my own individual viewpoint of what is for me an ideal "life-style" and I don't believe anyone will be likely to change my views.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. School is just something I'm supposed to do, not much more.	1	2	3	4	5	6

28. I haven't chosen the job or occupation I really want to get into. I'll just work at whatever is available unless something better comes along.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

29. My rules or standards about dating have remained the same since I first started going out and I don't anticipate that they will change.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

30. In finding an acceptable viewpoint about life itself, I often exchange ideas with friends and family.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

31. It took a lot of effort to decide, and I now have definite intentions about my education.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

32. There's no single "life-style" that appeals to me more than another.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

33. It took me a while to figure it out, but now I really know what I want for a career.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

34. I'm still trying to decide how capable I am as a person and what jobs will be right for me.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

35. There are so many subjects to learn about in school. I'm trying out as many as possible so I can make a better decision about my future education.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

36. I might have thought about a lot of different jobs but there's never really been any question since my parents said what they wanted.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

37. I'm looking for an acceptable perspective for my own "life-style" view, but I haven't really found it yet.

38. My parents have taught me the most important goals about my education, I've seen no reason to doubt them.

39. It took me a long time to decide, but now I know for sure what direction to move in for a career.

40. I've dated different types of people and I now know exactly what my own "unwritten rules" for dating are.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

Next, we would like to know about your experiences at CACHE HIGH and some of your attitudes about education. How well do the following statements describe you?

1. My natural academic abilities are above average.

2. I'm usually satisfied with the grades I get.

3. I would have quit school if I had the chance.

4. School was not worth my time.

5. I work carefully on most homework assignments.

6. I'm absent less than most other students.

Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7. I seem to get in trouble with my teachers a lot.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I intended to miss no classes, except for legitimate reasons.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. At Cache High, I think high grades are important for getting a good job or for going to college.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. If I did too well in school my peers probably wouldn't like it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. I get a lot of positive recognition when I got good grades.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Overall, Cache High is a very good school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I have the most control over whether or not I do well in a class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. I have won one or more service or academic awards since I've been attending Cache High.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I often miss homework assignments.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. I sluff a lot at Cache High.	1	2	3	4	5	6

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17. Since I've been attending Cache High, I have gotten in trouble with the law more than most other kids.	1	2	3	4	5	6

18. My average grade since I've been attending Cache High is about: (circle one letter)

a. A
b. B
c. C
d. D
e. F

19. For grades this term at Cache High, I intend to get an average of about:

a. A
b. B
c. C
d. D
e. F

20. After high school, my <u>main</u> goal is to:

a. Get a job
b. Take some time off
c. Go to a technical/ trade school
d. Go to a college/ university
e. Work for my family
f. Not sure
g. Other (Please write it)

_____

Next, we would like to know about your experiences with alcohol and tobacco.

1. How often have you used alcohol in the LAST MONTH?
   a. None
   b. 1 or 2 times
   c. 3 or 4 times
   d. 5 to 7 times
   e. 8 or more times

2. Which of the following best describes you and alcohol?
   a. I drink now, and I have no plans to change.
   b. I drink now, but I plan to quit within the year.
   c. Though I have before, I don't drink right now, and my goal is to never start (try it) again.
   d. Though I don't drink now, I have in the past, and I am likely to try it again.

3. Did members of your peer group at **Cache High** use alcohol?
   a. Yes, often
   b. Sometimes
   c. Seldom
   d. No, never

4. How often have you used tobacco in the LAST MONTH?
   a. None
   b. 1 or 2 times
   c. 3 or 4 times
   d. 5 to 7 times
   e. 8 or more times

5. Which of the following best describes you and tobacco?
   a. I use tobacco now, and I have no plans to change.
   b. I use tobacco now, but I plan to quit within the year.
   c. Though I have before, I don't use tobacco right now, and my goal is to never start (try it) again.
   d. Though I don't use tobacco now, I have in the past, and I am likely to try it again.

6. Did members of your peer group at **Cache High** smoke cigarettes or chew tobacco?
   a. Yes, often
   b. Sometimes
   c. Seldom
   d. No, never

Finally, we need some basic information about you and your family. Please circle the answer that best describes you or your family members.

1. My gender is
   a. Female
   b. Male

2. I am now _____ years old.

3. My grade in school now is
   a. 10th
   b. 11th
   c. 12th

3. My Ethnicity is
   a. White/Anglo
   b. Asian
   c. Native-American Indian
   d. African-American
   e. Hispanic / Latino
   f. Other (please list)

   _____

4. I have lived in Cache County
   a. 0 to 1/2 year
   b. 1/2 to 1 year
   c. 1 year to 3 years
   d. 4 to 8 years
   e. 9 or more years

5. My natural parents are
   a. Married
   b. Divorced
   c. Separated
   d. Not married, but living together
   e. Father is not living
   f. Mother is not living
   g. Neither parent is living

6. I now live with
   a. Both my natural parents
   b. With my mother, my father doesn't live with us
   c. With my father, my mother doesn't live with us
   d. Relatives or parents' friend(s)
   e. Adoptive or Foster parents
   f. Other same-age peers

Is there something we should have asked but didn't about your peer relationships or your experiences?

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you or your peer relationships? Please use the space below.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

PLEASE TAKE A MINUTE TO LOOK BACK THROUGH THE QUESTIONNAIRE TO MAKE SURE YOU ANSWERED ALL OF THE QUESTIONS, THEN GIVE YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE TEACHER, PRINCIPAL, OR RESEARCH ASSISTANT IN YOUR CLASS.

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

The following are a set of open-ended questions that could be asked during face-to-face interviews with individual students at Cache High. Each interview should take no longer than 15 to 20 minutes.

1. What grade are you in now?

2. When did you begin attending Cache High?

3. How long have you been attending Cache High?

4. What are your reasons for attending this school?

5. Are you aware of any differences between your old high school and Cache High? Differences in experiences with teachers, school staff, with peers?

6. Have you noticed any changes in yourself since you began attending Cache High? In whwat ways have you changed? Attitudes about school? Grades? Relationships with peers? Adults?

7. Has the group of kids that you hang out with changed since you started attending school here?

8. If you have started to spend more time with other students at Cache High, are they different fromyour peers at your old high school?

    a. In what ways are they different?

    b. In what ways are they similar?

9. Have your feelings about school changed since you began attending Cache High?

10. Have your goals regarding school or a career changed since you began attending school here?

11. If you have gone through some changes in your attitudes and intentions about school, what do you think lead to these changes?

12. Do you think people in this valley think about Cache High and the students who attend here?

13. What is a dirthead? What qualifies someone for membership in that peer group?

Appendix D

Informed Consent

Utah State UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
College of Family Life
2905 University Blvd
Logan UT 84322-2905
Phone (801) 797-1501
FAX (801) 797-3845

Peer Relations

Dear Parent:

The purpose of this project is to better understand how peer relations impact school experiences and attitudes about education. Approximately 100 students at Cache High will participate in this study. Your adolescent child's participation in the study will involve completion of two questionnaires that ask about students' peer relations and school peer groups, educational attitudes and experiences, and their self-concept. Some students may also be selected to participate in a short, face-to-face interview. In addition, we would like access to your child's previous school record to verify their grades. This information is for research purposes only and will be kept strictly confidential. Diana Coyl, a research assistant will be conducting the interviews. She can be reached at 797-3578.

Your adolescent's participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw your adolescent from the research project at any time without consequence and without loss of benefits or services to which you or s/he are otherwise entitled. Your signature at the end of this consent form will indicate that you consent to have your youth's participation in this study. Two copies have been provided. Please sign both copies, keep one for your files and return one to Cache High with your child.

Information related to you and your adolescent will be treated in strict confidence to the extent provided by law. His or her name will be coded and will not be associated with any published results. It will not be possible to recognize your adolescent by any reports created from this study. Your adolescent's code number and name will be kept in a locked file cabinet by the Principal Investigator. Information about participants' names will be destroyed within 8 months of the study's completion.

If you have additional questions about the study or your rights, or if any problems arise, you may contact Dr. Randall M. Jones (435-797-1553). Your adolescent's participation in this study is voluntary and s/he may discontinue participation at any time without consequence and without affecting future services that they would otherwise receive.

I have read and understand this Informed Consent Form and I am willing to have my adolescent participate in the study.

Name of Parent or Guardian: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____ Date: _____

(I understand my mother/father/parent(s) is/are aware of this research study and that permission has been given for me to participate. I understand that I may refuse to be involved even if my parent(s) say yes. If I do not want to be in this study I do not have to and no one will be upset if I don't want to participate or if I change my mind later and want to stop. I can ask any questions that I have about this study now or later. By signing below I agree to participate.

Name of Adolescent: _____

Signature of Adolescent: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Principal Investigators: _____ _____
Randall M. Jones, Ph.D. Diana D. Coyl

Appendix E

Internal Review Board Information

Utah State
UNIVERSITY

VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH OFFICE
Logan UT 84322-1450
Telephone: (435) 797-1180
FAX: (435) 797-1367
INTERNET: [pgerity@champ.usu.edu]

July 6, 1999
Approved 6/25/99

MEMORANDUM

TO: Randall Jones
Diana Coyl

FROM: True Rubal, IRB Administrator T. Rubal

SUBJECT: The Influence of Peer Relations on Educational Attainment and Attitudes.

The above referenced proposal was reviewed and approved by the IRB. You may consider this letter to be your approval for your study.

Any deviation from this protocol will need to be resubmitted to the IRB. This includes any changes in the methodology of procedures in this protocol. A study status report (stating the continuation or conclusion of this proposal) will be due in one year from the date of this letter.

Please keep the committee advised of any changes, adverse reactions or the termination of this study. I can be reached at extension 7-1180.

Cache County School District
Summary of Proposed Research Project

(To be completed by investigator(s) seeking district's participation in research)

The information on this form will assist the district in reviewing the research request, recognizing the value of good research and its impact on educational programs. The researcher is asked to complete this form and furnish any other information as requested as promptly as possible to allow the district to make an informed decision. If more space is required, please attach pages with reference to the question number.

A. Source of Request

1. Principal Investigator(s) Randall M. Jones Ph.D.
   Diana D. Coyl (student researcher)
2. Project Title Peer Influences on Educational Attainment
3. Person making request Randall Jones
   Position (indicate if student) Associate Professor at USU
   Address Dept. of Family and Human Development
   Utah State University, Logan, UT 84322-2905
   Telephone 797-1553
4. This research is: (Check and complete all that apply)
   (a) ✓ faculty/staff research sponsored at
   Utah State University
   (Name of institution or agency)
   (b) ✓ conducted in partial fulfillment of requirements for a course or degree.
   Department Family and Human Development.
   Institution Utah State University
   Candidate for following degree Ph.D.
   Name of advisor/supervisor Randall Jones
   Position Associate Professor

5. Support for project: (Check one)

____ primarily by institution making the request
X personal funds of the investigator(s)
____ grant or contract from another agency
Name of agency _____

B. General Project Description

6. Purpose(s) of the research To investigate the influence of peer relations on attitudes about school, and how pass influence educational attainment.

7. Outline of procedures (number of schools, total population to be involved, treatment, data to be gathered, etc.)
The sample will be drawn from Cache High. Anticipated sample size is 100 students. No treatment will be administered. Data will be collected via anonymous self-report questionnaires, teacher ratings, school records, a sociometric measure

8. Date the investigator plans to initiate the project in the district Beginning of next school ye

9. Description of student/subjects from this district (number, ages, grade level, etc.)
Approximately 100 10-12 grade students.

10. Description of information required from district records or personnel, if applicable.
Grades, attendance record, teacher or other school personnels' reports concerning students who transfer to Cache High from other high schools.

11. Description of procedures involving students, graduates, parents, or district staff (If tests, questionnaires, etc. are used, please furnish copies)

See attached page, entitled: "Description of Procedures"

12. Estimate of total time requirement for each subject. 1-2 hours

C. Benefits and Risks

13. Indicate the benefits likely to result from this research.

Obtaining information about how or what factors contribute to the high success rate of students at Cache High.

14. What risks, if any, would be involved for participants?

None

15. (a) Does the sponsoring institution have an Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects which complies with federal regulations?

✓ Yes ____ No

(b) If yes,

____ This project had been approved by the IRB (attach a copy of the IRB decision)

✓ Plans are to submit this project to the IRB before initiating the project in the district. (Please include a copy of the IRB submission form)

D. Agreement

In the event the project is approved, the investigator(s) agree to the following conditions:

1. To adhere to the purpose and procedures of the project as approved by the district and to restrict the use of data gathered in cooperation with the district to this project, unless further approval is obtained.
2. To furnish the district with progress reports upon request.

3. To provide the district with one copy of all publications (articles, reports, etc.) or in the case of a dissertation or thesis, an abstract describing the completed project.

4. To acknowledge the cooperation of the district in any published report of the project.

5. To give the district permission to cite the ongoing or completed project in its own publications, with credit to the investigator(s).

6. To comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and amendments thereto.

7. To comply with federal regulations for the protection of human subjects.

8. With regard to student data, to report only group data and no information that can be traced directly or by inference to a specified student, or family member; destroy all materials gathered which contain identifiable information after the project is completed.

Investigator(s) Signature

If student research, signature of advisor

5/12/99
Date

Appendix F

Peer Relationship Quality, BAIs, and Indentity Status Variables

Table F1

Items Used in Construction of the Peer Relationship Quality Variable (Survey I) and Recodes

Variable names	Item	Recode
osprq01	At my old school, my peers and I liked to do all of the same kinds of things.	
osprq02	At my old school, my peers could be irritating a lot of the time.	Yes
osprq03	It was easy for my peers and I to talk about anything, including personal problems.	
osprq04	Too often, my peers acted like they thought I was stupid.	Yes
osprq06	No matter what, my peers always seemed to be there if I needed help.	
osprq07	My peers seemed to ask a lot more favors of me, than I asked of them.	Yes
osprq08	I had complete and total trust in my peers.	
osprq09	Sometimes, I wondered if being liked by my peers was too important to me.	
osprq10	At my old school, my peers and I had similar attitudes about school.	
osprq11	My peers encouraged me to do well in school.	
osprq12	I consider many of my peers to be good friends.	
osprq13	I still spend time with some of my peers from my old school.	

Table F2

Items Used in Construction of the Peer Relationship Quality Variable (survey II) and Recodes

Variable names	Item	Recode
chprq01	At Cache High, my peers and I like to do all of the same kinds of things.	
chprq02	At Cache High, my peers can be irritating a lot of the time.	Yes
chprq03	It is easy for my peers and I to talk about anything, including personal problems.	
chprq04	Too often, my peers at Cache High act like they think I'm stupid.	Yes
chprq06	No matter what, my peers always seem to be there if I need help.	
chprq07	My peers at Cache High seem to ask a lot more favors of me, than I ask of them.	Yes
chprq08	I have complete and total trust in my peers at Cache High.	
chprq09	Sometimes, I wondered if being liked by my peers at Cache High is too important to me.	
chprq10	At Cache High, my peers and I have similar attitudes about school.	
chprq11	At Cache High, my peers encourage me to do well in school.	
chprq12	I consider many of my peers at Cache High to be good friends.	

Table F3

Items Included in the School-Related BAIs

Variable names	Description
Positive BAIs (surveys I & II)	
osed06, ched06	I worked carefully on most homework assignments.
osed07, ched07	I was absent less than most other students.
osed09, ched09	I intended to miss no classes, except for legitimate reasons.
osed10, ched10	At my old school (Cache High), I thought high grades were important for getting a good job or for going to college.
osed12, ched12	I got a lot of positive recognition when I got good grades.
Negative BAIs (surveys I & II)	
osed03, ched03	I would have quit school if I had the chance.
osed04, ched04	School was not worth my time.
osed08, ched08	I seemed to get in trouble with my teachers a lot.
osed17, ched17	I often missed homework assignments.
osed18, ched18	I sluffed a lot at my old school (at Cache High).
Extracurricular Participation (survey I)	
osed05	I participated in many school- sponsored activities.
osed15	I was involved in school athletics.
osed16	I have won one or more service, athletic, or academic awards when I was at my old high school.

Note. All items for each variable were recoded so that higher scores reflected stronger agreement with each statement.

Table F4

Items Included for the Identity Statuses Subscales

Variable names	Description
Achievement (surveys I & II)	
osis07, chis07	Even if my parents disapprove, I could be a friend to a person if I thought she/he was basically good.
osis11, chis11	After a lot of self-examination, I have established a very definite view on what my own life-style will be.
osis18, chis18	I can be flexible in my dating standards, but for me to really change my standards, it must be something I really believe in.
osis19, chis19	I've had many different kinds of friends, and now I have a clear idea of what I look for in a friendship.
osis20, chis20	I've done a lot of thinking about my education, and I've got a specific plan laid out.
osis26, chis26	After considerable thought, I've developed my own individual viewpoint of what is for me an ideal "life-style" and I don't believe anyone will be likely to change my views.
osis31, chis31	It took a lot of effort to decide, and I now have definite intentions about my education.
osis33, chis33	It took me a while to figure it out, but now I really know what I want for a career.
osis39, chis39	It took me a long time to decide, but now I know for sure what direction to move in for a career.
osis40, chis40	I've dated different types of people and now know exactly what my own "unwritten rules" for dating are.
Moratorium (surveys I & II)	
osis10, chis10	I just can't decide what to do for an occupation. There are so many that have possibilities.
osis13, chis13	I know my parents don't approve of some of my friends, but I haven't decided what to do about it yet.
osis14, chis14	Some of my friends are very different from each other, I'm trying to figure out exactly where I fit in.
osis17, chis17	I'm not so sure about what I want for my education, but I am now actively exploring different choices.
osis30, chis30	In finding an acceptable viewpoint about life itself, I often exchange ideas with friends and family.
osis34, chis34	I'm still trying to decide how capable I am as a person and what jobs will be right for me.

(table continues)

Variable names	Description
Moratorium items continued	
osis35, chis35	There are so many subjects to learn about in school. I'm trying out as many as possible so I can make a better decision about my future education.
osis37, chis37	I'm looking for an acceptable perspective for my own "life-style" view, but I haven't really found it yet.
osis22, chis22	The standards or "unwritten rules" I follow about dating are still in the process of developing-they can still change.
osis25, chis25	Sometimes I wonder if the way other people date is the best way for me.
Foreclosure (surveys I & II)	
osis01, chis01	My parents know what's best for me in terms of how to choose friends.
osis03, chis03	My own views on a good life-style were taught to me by my parents and I don't see any reason to question what they taught me.
osis04, chis04	My parents had it decided along time ago what I should go into for employment and I'm following their plan.
osis08, chis08	I believe my parents probably know what is best for my future education.
osis15, chis15	I couldn't be friends with someone my parents' disapprove of.
osis16, chis16	My parents' views on life are good enough for me, I don't need anything else.
osis23, chis23	I would never date anyone my parents disapprove of.
osis29, chis29	My rules or standards about dating have remained the same since I first started going out and I don't anticipate that they will change.
osis36, chis36	I might have thought about a lot of different jobs but there's never really been any question since my parents said what they wanted.
osis38, chis38	My parents have taught me the most important goals about my education, I've seen no reason to doubt them.
Diffusion (surveys I & II)	
osis02, chis02	I haven't thought much about what I look for in a date-I just go out to have a good time.
osis05, chis05	My education is not something I really spend much time thinking about.
osis06, chis06	I guess I just kind of enjoy life in general, I don't spend much time thinking about it
osis09, chis09	When I'm on a date, I don't like to have any particular plans.
osis12, chis12	I'm really not interested in finding the "right career", any job will do. I just seem to go with what is available.
osis21, chis21	I don't have any close friends-I just like to hang around with the crowd and have a good time.
osis24, chis24	I've never had any real close friends-it takes too much energy to keep a friendship going.

(table continues)

Variable names	Description
Diffusion items continued	
osis27, chis27	School is just something I'm supposed to do, not much more.
osis28, chis28	I haven't chosen the job or occupation I really want to get into. I'll just work at whatever is available unless something better comes along.
osis32, chis32	There's no single "life-style" that appeals to me more than another.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education:

2000	Ph.D. Family and Human Development: Utah State University. Dissertation Title: Peer groups and adolescent development in traditional and alternative high schools. GPA 4.00.
1997	M.S. Family and Human Development: Utah State University. Thesis Title: Attachment, identity development, and sexual behavior among college students. GPA 3.95.
1987	B.A. Sociology: San Diego State University. Emphasis in Family & Intimate Relationships, minor in Women Studies. GPA 3.49.

Awards:

1998	President's Doctoral Fellowship, Department of Family and Human Development. Utah State University.
2000	Research Assistant of the Year, Department of Family and Human Development. Utah State University.

Employment and Related Experience:

2000-	Assistant Professor, Family Studies, University of New Mexico.
1999-2000	Research Assistant, Department of Family and Human Development; Utah State University. Early Head Start Evaluation. Data management, analysis, and archiving. Training and supervising undergraduate students. Lori Roggman, Ph.D (Supervisor).
1998-2000	Research Assistant, Department of Family and Human Development; Utah State University. Adoption Research Project using Add Health Data. Collaborating on publications and preparing conference presentations. Brent C. Miller Ph.D (Supervisor).

1999-2000 General Graduate Assistant:, Department of Family and Human Development; Utah State University. Team-teaching undergraduate research methods courses and collaboration on research. Randall M. Jones, Ph.D. (Supervisor).

1998-1999 Program Coordinator. Department of Family and Human Development; Utah State University. "Youth and Families with Promise" mentoring program. Recruiting and interviewing volunteer mentors, working with at-risk families within the community, creating training and supervising mentors, public relations, and data collection for the program. Glen Jenson, Ph.D & Thomas Lee, Ph.D (Supervisors).

1998-1999 Graduate Student Representative for the doctoral students in the department of Family and Human Development; Utah State University. Acting as a intermediary between faculty, staff and students. Providing information for both parties, presenting the graduate students' perspective, concerns, and interests to the department faculty, advising graduate students.

1996-2000 Instructor: Department of Family and Human Development, Utah State University. *Marriage and Family Life* (Fall 1995), *Research Methods* (Winter1996, Spring 1997, Fall 1999, Spring 2000), and *Adolescent Development* (Spring 1998, Summer 1997, Summer 1996, Spring 1996).

1995-1996 Teaching and Research Assistant, Department of Family and Human Development, Utah State University. Research Methods and Adolescent Development. Preparing and presenting lectures, grading, meeting with students. Randall M. Jones, Ph.D. (Supervisor).

1994-1995 Teaching Assistant, Department of Family and Human Development, Utah State University. Research Methods and Adolescent Development. Randall M. Jones, Ph.D. (Supervisor).

1987-1988 Internship: Counseling children in elementary and junior high schools. San Diego State University, Department of Counselor Education, specialty in multi-cultural/ethnic approaches to counseling children, youth, and adults. Sharon Grant-Henry, Ph.D. (Supervisor).

Publications:

Akers, J.F., Jones, R. M., & Coyl, D.D. (1998) Adolescent friendship pairs: Similarities in identity status development, behaviors, attitudes, and intentions. Journal of Adolescent Research, 13, 178-201.

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Research Grants:

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Newland, L. A., Roggman, L. A., Coyl, D. D., Boyce, L., & Cook, G. Mother and Infant Play Preferences in Relation to Infant Language Competence. Submitted to Southwestern Society for Research in Human Development Conference, April, 2000. Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

Professional Affiliations & Membership

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References

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