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EFFECT OF PEER GROUP DISCUSSION ON SELF-CONCEPT IN THE GIFTED ADOLESCENT POPULATION

by

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Abstract

The dynamics of being gifted and an adolescent may impede a successful transition through adolescence and result in a low self-concept. All adolescents, gifted or not, become peer oriented, making group interaction an effective process for intervention. There has been limited research regarding the psychosocial and emotional needs of gifted adolescents. The purpose of this research study was to determine whether peer group discussions improve self-concept in the gifted adolescent population. The researcher also sought to ascertain what reflective themes emerged from journals written following the peer group discussions. The Theory of Modeling and Role-Modeling served as the theoretical framework for this quasi-experimental study. The sample consisted of 21 students enrolled in the 11th grade of a residential high school for mathematics and sciences. The school was located on a university campus in the southern region of the United States. The 21 students were randomly assigned to either the experimental (n = 11) or the control (n = 10) group. The experimental group participated in five weekly sessions of peer group discussions on self-concept. The curriculum focused on the components of self-concept. The experimental subjects were asked to provide weekly journals after each meeting. The Pyryt-Mendaglio Self-Perception Scale was used to determine self-concept scores. The posttest scores of the two groups did not reflect any significant differences. The researcher concluded that peer group discussions did not significantly alter the self-concept of the experimental group. However, content analysis

of the journals revealed evidence of the impact of the group discussions. Three themes emerged, including self-concept, group development, and facilitator recognition. Implications for nursing include the need to become more knowledgeable of gifted adolescent behavioral characteristics, and group dynamics, group interventions. The nurse practitioner needs to be proficient in these areas in order to assist this population in establishing stable self-concepts and healthier behaviors. Recommendations include replication of this study with a larger population and extending the intervention time frame. Research should continue to investigate other applications of peer group discussions and additional interventions for improving the gifted adolescent's self-concept.

Dedication

To my husband,

Harry F. Rizer

and my children,

Jeremy and Amber Rizer

for without their love, support and above all their patience,
I could not have
achieved this incredible feat.

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Chapter I

The Research Problem

Adolescence is a challenging and often difficult transitioning period. According to Erikson (1963) American adolescence is described as "the standardization of individuality and the intolerance of differences" (p. 437). A gifted adolescent is often perceived by peers, parents, and teachers as being "brainy," "creative," "eccentric," or "nerdy." This identification and labeling highlight gifted adolescents' differences from peers and complicate the already turbulent lives of gifted adolescents. Combining the stress of adolescence with the characteristics associated with being gifted may predispose these adolescents to possessing low self-concepts in that they often have high expectations of self, tend to be self-critical, and demonstrate a propensity towards perfectionism. The gifted adolescent perceives his/her giftedness as positive in relation to personal growth and academic performance but as negative in social relations with others, such as family, friends, and teachers (Kerr, Colangelo, & Gaeth, 1988). These external negative perceptions influence the gifted adolescent's self-concept and may lead to underachievement, poor social adjustment, anxiety, and depression.

The literature regarding the gifted has been most prolific in the past 15 years but has focused mainly on children and not adolescents (Bireley & Genshaft, 1991). The majority of this research has been directed towards identifying the characteristics of giftedness, the impact of being labeled as gifted, the self-concept of gifted children and

meeting the gifted child's academic needs. The research relating to the gifted adolescent appears to have focused on facilitating career decision-making and the possible increased incidents of suicide (Bireley & Genshaft, 1991; Silverman, 1993). There has been limited exploration of gifted adolescents' guidance, psychosocial or emotional needs.

Establishment of the Problem

Adolescence is a turbulent development stage as one transitions from childhood to young adulthood. The adolescent struggles to establish him/herself as an independent, functional, stable entity separate from the family while maintaining necessary linkages for love and support. He/she also risks self-esteem in forming new friendships and relationships in order to achieve acceptance and belonging as these are of critical importance to the maturing adolescent. Erikson (1963) referred to adolescence as a period of identity versus role confusion. He maintained that the adolescent must develop a stable identity or remain confused thus complicating adulthood with struggles from the past. There are several reasons for confusion during adolescence. These include rapidly changing appearance, developing sexual characteristics and libidinal urges, planning for the future, and realizing the responsibilities of adulthood (Erikson, 1963). Adolescents struggle with leaving the comfort and familiarity of childhood for the untested world of adults. They must experiment with new roles, which are significantly influenced by expectations of family, peers, teachers, and societal norms. He/she must pursue independence from the family in order to establish a sense of individuality. The adolescent also must identify with a peer group in order to avoid role confusion and obtain an outlet for experimentation of new roles and behaviors. Inability to maneuver through this stage not only results in confusion but also in lack of identity or low self-

concept (Erikson, 1963). The adaptation to these developmental milestones may be augmented by peer group interaction. Adolescents tend to hear and accept limits from peers rather than from adults; they are more willing to acknowledge feedback, negative or positive, from peers versus adults. The peer group can provide the support for dealing with adaptation problems and attaining needed change. Group interaction may allow the adolescent to share his/her feelings and identify with peers who have similar feelings. In addition, group interaction may provide an opportunity for learning how to develop and maintain relationships with others as well as for testing new behaviors. Furthermore, involving the adolescent's peers may offer an avenue in diluting the conflict with adults that often exists in one-to-one interactions. Group interaction provides an acceptable forum for peer interaction and discussion of difficult topics.

The complexity of adolescence is more pronounced for gifted adolescents because of their unique abilities, attributes and vulnerabilities (Colangelo & Davis, 1997). Leta Hollingworth, a noted expert and pioneer regarding gifted education, believed that gifted children were predisposed to social and emotional difficulties (cited in Sowa, McIntire, May, & Bland, 1994). And Roedell (cited in Sowa et al., 1994) explained that the greater the giftedness the more likely the individual to experience poor social and emotional adjustment. Another aspect to consider is a theory proposed by a Polish psychiatrist, Kazimierz Dabrowski, which links the concepts of intelligence and creativity to a surplus of or an increased ability to respond to stimuli (cited in Silverman, 1993). His theory describes five types of psychic overexcitabilities: psychomotor, sensual, imaginational, intellectual and emotional. These overexcitabilities are believed by Whitmore to make the gifted more "perceptive, sensitive... analytical and critical of themselves and others"

(cited in Silverman, 1993, p. 12). Possession of any or all of these overexcitabilities differentiates the gifted adolescent from his/her peers and may result in embarrassment; negative feelings regarding being gifted; and alienation from peers, parents, and teachers.

The following list of personality characteristics is representative of most gifted individuals: "insightfulness, need to understand, need for mental stimulation, perfectionism, need for precision, logic, excellent sense of humor, sensitive/empathy, intensity, perseverance, acute self-awareness, non-conformity, questioning of rules/authority, and a tendency toward introversion" (Silverman, 1993, p. 53). These traits can predispose the gifted adolescent to certain problems such as boredom, rebelliousness, decreased social skills and alienation. In addition, Roedel (cited in Sowa et al., 1994) identified several vulnerabilities that troubled the gifted, which are "perfectionism, pressures from adult expectations, intense sensitivity to the messages of others, self-definition, alienation from the peer group because of disparate abilities, frequent placement in inappropriate environments, and societal, age, or gender conflict because of disparate development" (cited in Bireley & Genshaft, 1991, p. 9). The intellectual differences, overexcitabilities, and personality traits of the gifted all interact to create a unique and challenging individual with special needs. The developmental stage of adolescence may be exacerbated by these special characteristics, thus creating the risk of developing a low self-concept and the inability to successfully negotiate through adolescence towards adulthood.

Gifted adolescents also experience ambivalence regarding their giftedness as demonstrated by their tendency to view it in a positive light while believing that others do

not. The gifted adolescent places value on his/her giftedness in relation to personal growth and academic achievement but not in regard to social relations with others (Kerr et al., 1988). Several studies provide confirmation of this inconsistency (Kerr et al., 1988; Robinson, 1990; Swiatek, 1995). Colangelo and Kelly (1983) noted that gifted children had positive feelings towards being gifted, but they believed that their non-gifted peers and teachers were not positive about their giftedness. However, these researchers established that peers and teachers possessed neutral rather than negative attitudes towards these gifted students. Studies performed by Colangelo and Brower (1987a; 1987b) confirmed gifted youth as being positive about their giftedness but believing that their siblings and parents were negative regarding it. The perceptions held by the gifted youth were incorrect; in actuality their siblings and parents were very positive about the label. The results of these studies indicate the conflict experienced by gifted children regarding their special abilities, the gifted label, and the social implications associated with the label. Another aspect highlighted by these research findings was the incongruence of the adolescents' perception of reality with how others feel about their giftedness.

The average adolescent is sensitive to what others believe or think of him/her (Erikson, 1963). This sensitivity may be magnified for gifted adolescents due to their potential for overexcitabilities and vulnerabilities as previously discussed. Their external negative perceptions combined with their internal needs for perfectionism may impact the gifted adolescents' self-concept and possibly lead to ineffective coping or harmful behaviors, requiring intervention.

Self-concept has many facets and should be evaluated in an approach that is multidimensional, especially when working with the gifted population (Pyryt & Mendaglio, 1995). Gifted adolescents may score high on a single-score approach to a self-concept measurement (Janos, Fung, & Robinson, 1985), but this does not reflect the complexity of self-concept (Hoge & Renzulli, 1991). Pyryt and Mendaglio (1995) suggested that "gifted students score higher on four factors (academic, social, athletic, and evaluative) than students of average ability, but the major contributor to that difference is the academic self-perception" (p. 41). Cooley, Festinger, Kelley, Mead, and Sullivan explain that one's self-concept reflects the beliefs and feelings about oneself and is formed based on (a) feedback from significant others, (b) input obtained from roles and experiences, (c) social comparisons, and (d) self-observation (cited in Pyryt & Mendaglio, 1995). This researcher concluded that it is not necessarily the feedback or input but the perceived feedback or input that impacts self-concept. Thus, self-concept can be viewed as having internal and external loci especially within the gifted adolescent. This population demonstrates a positive feeling regarding giftedness as it relates to personal growth (internal) but indicates concern as to how parents, peers/friends, and teachers perceive their giftedness (external).

Harter (cited in Hoge & Renzulli, 1991) postulated a multidimensional model of self-concept which included factors that impact its development as well as the outcomes of self-concept. The model addresses the internal (competence/importance discrepancy) and external (social support/positive regard) factors that contribute to the evolution of the global self-concept. The model depicts self-worth or self-concept impacting two other factors--affect and motivation. Affect refers to one's emotional state, which then

influences one's motivation. The model contends that a strong self-concept is linked to a positive affective state and, thus, higher levels of motivation. A low self-concept is then correlated with decreased levels of performance and motivation.

In summary, completion of the developmental tasks of adolescence in order to become a competent adult is the driving force of adolescence. The gifted adolescent confronts the same issues as the non-gifted adolescent but from a more complicated platform. The combination of adolescence and giftedness has the potential for development of a low self-concept. Research studies have provided support for concluding that gifted children usually possess a positive internal self-concept with a negative external self-concept derived from their perceived feedback of external sources (Kerr et al., 1988). This aspect of self-concept formation plays a crucial role in successful transition through adolescence. Self-concept also is significant in stimulating and directing motivation. Group settings have been noted to be an effective means of intervention for adolescents because they are more likely to respond positively to group processes and interactions with peers (Cauce & Strebnik, 1989; Tuck & Keels, 1992). In other words, gifted adolescents need support in learning to value themselves as unique persons. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine if peer group discussion sessions will improve self-concept in the gifted adolescent population.

Significance to Nursing

Janos et al. (1985) suggest "gifted children need increased psychological support if they are to optimize their personal and social development" (p. 78). The nurse practitioner often encounters adolescents in his/her practice and can play a key role in identifying adolescents, gifted or not, experiencing difficulties and facilitate intervention

strategies specific for this population. The nurse practitioner is responsible for planning and implementing educational programs to address such issues and would benefit from a greater understanding of effective interventions for the gifted adolescent.

There is limited research regarding gifted adolescents and self-concept. The majority of the research that has been performed relates to gifted children in their elementary years. The current study related to the effects of peer group interaction and self-concept in the adolescent population may provide the nurse practitioner insights into the educational, social, and emotional needs of the gifted adolescent. The findings from this study may then contribute to the development of interventions that are more effective, efficient, and cost-effective. These interventions could be applied not only in the clinical setting but also in the educational system. The outcomes of the research study may be applicable to the general population of adolescents, thus providing additional opportunities for nursing research. The present investigation also may contribute to nursing practice and nursing education in identifying a greater need to incorporate the study of group dynamics and interventions into curricula.

Conceptual Framework

The Theory of Modeling and Role-Modeling by Erickson, Tomlin, and Swain (1983) proposes an interactive and interpersonal process that incorporates theoretical bases from Abraham Maslow, Erik Erikson and Jean Piaget. This theory provided the conceptual framework for this study. Modeling is defined as a procedure by which the nurse or care provider "develops an image and understanding of the client's world--an image and understanding developed within the client's framework and from the client's perspective" (Erickson et al., 1983, p. 95). The way a person perceives life, thinks,

communicates, believes, behaves and feels, makes up that person's world. This information provides insight into what motivates an individual and a greater understanding of the choices made by that person. This concept is grounded in the work of Milton Erickson (Erickson et al., p. 84). Modeling is the analysis of the information gathered about the client's world. One of the goals of this study was to foster a better understanding of the gifted adolescent's external self-concept and the use of group discussions as a dynamic process of modeling. This goal was accomplished by obtaining data related to self-concept prior to and after the treatment of six peer group discussions as well as themes garnered from their journal entries. The science of modeling is the analysis of the information collected about the person's world in light of the theoretical bases in the physical and social sciences.

Another major concept within this theoretical framework is that of role-modeling. Role-modeling is the individualization of care for the person based on the data analysis. It is the "facilitation of the individual in attaining, maintaining, or promoting health through purposeful interventions" (Erikson et al., 1983, p. 95). The findings of this study could be utilized in the role-modeling process to develop and assess future interventions related to the gifted adolescent population.

A third pertinent concept within this theory that is applicable to the population of this study is affiliated-individuation. Erickson et al. (1983) define this concept as "a need to be dependent on a significant other while simultaneously enjoying autonomy from that individual. This delightful relationship of independence with dependence is a common need for all humans" (p. 69). Everyone has basic needs that motivate behavior, including a drive for affiliated-individuation. Erikson (1963) recognized this similarity among

humans as evidenced in his developmental theory that describes eight stages of psychosocial development through which all humans must progress. The adolescent's task is to move from childhood to adulthood, develop an affiliated-individuation relationship with his/her family and peers and establish a stable identity. Therefore, affiliated-individuation was of significance to this study as it relates to the gifted adolescent and external self-concept.

The Modeling and Role-Modeling Theory also includes five aims of nursing intervention derived from the similarities among humans. The five aims of intervention include "1) building trust, 2) promoting the person's positive orientation, 3) promoting the person's control, 4) affirming and promoting the person's strengths, and 5) setting mutual goals that are health directed" (Erikson et al., 1983, p. 170). Individualized interventions are based on the person's view of the world and guided by these aims of intervention. These aims formed the foundation of the structure for the six peer group discussions utilized as the treatment in this research, ensuring that the treatment was theory based and met the needs of the gifted adolescents who participated in this study.

The Modeling and Role-Modeling Theory effectively accommodated the gifted adolescent population. It is multidimensional, well grounded in theory, and purports that reality is in the perception of the individual. According to Erickson et al. (1983) this person's reality of the world is the point where intervention begins. The researcher utilized the Modeling and Role-Modeling Theory not only to guide the study but also to promote the effectiveness of the intervention.

Assumptions

For the purposes of this study, the following assumptions were made:

1. Adolescents attending the residential school for high achievers in math and science are gifted.
2. Adolescents act on their beliefs and perceptions, thus impacting their self-concept.
3. Gifted adolescents possess ambivalence regarding their giftedness.

Purpose of the Study

The traits of gifted adolescents may predispose them for possessing low self-concepts in that they often have high expectations of self, tend to be self-critical, and demonstrate a propensity towards perfectionism. The gifted adolescent perceives his/her giftedness as positive in relation to personal growth and academic performance but as negative in social relations with others, such as family, friends, and teachers. These external negative perceptions influence the gifted adolescents' self-concept and may lead to underachievement, poor social adjustment, anxiety, and depression. The purpose of this research study was to utilize a multimethod approach to determine if peer group discussions will improve self-concept in the gifted adolescent population.

Hypotheses

In order to investigate this problem the following hypotheses were generated:

Null Hypothesis.

There is no difference in posttest and follow-up self-concept scores between gifted adolescents who attend peer group discussions and those who do not attend.

Research Hypothesis.

Posttest and follow-up self-concept scores of gifted adolescents who attend peer group discussion will be higher than of those who do not attend.

Research Question

Since this is an integrated research study, the following question was addressed in addition to the testing of the identified hypotheses: What reflective themes emerge following peer group discussions?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of the this study, the following terms were defined:

1. Self-concept: One's perception of worth or esteem as a person in relation to the following four factors: academic, social, athletic and evaluative (Pyryt & Mendaglio, 1995) to be determined by the Pyryt-Mendaglio Self-Perception Scale in the areas of valence (domain/significant others) reflected appraisals, and social comparison/attribution.

2. Operational: Gifted Adolescent: Eleventh grade students enrolled in a residential high school of the southern region of the United States, with a focus on math and sciences and whose ages range from 16 to 17 years. Each student possesses a record of school performance that is above average in most subjects and is superior in mathematics and science, and each has been recognized for intellectual curiosity.

Theoretical: Federal definition: "Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or

services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society" (Clark, 1992, p. 204).

3. Operational: Peer group discussions: Six weekly sessions, each lasting between one and one and a half hours, that utilize the interaction among peers and integrates educational and group dynamics to address the various aspects and components that make up self-concept. Each peer group will be comprised of 12 members and the researcher as the adult facilitator.

Theoretical: Peer group: "refers more specifically to the cluster of associates who know each other and who will serve as a source of reference or comparison for one another. The peer group that has direct impact is the one that dominates the adolescent's daily life settings" (Wolman, 1982, p. 526).

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Studies related to the self-concept of gifted children and adolescents as well as influences that impact their social and emotional adjustment are presented in the review of literature. Research that has assessed the gifted adolescents' perception and acceptance of their giftedness and its impact on their behaviors also is included. Issues pertinent to adolescence such as role identification and peer affiliation are addressed. A summary of the significant points of the research then concludes the chapter.

The researcher noted that while an increasing amount of research regarding the gifted has occurred in the past 15 years, most of it has been focused on children and not adolescents (Bireley & Genshaft, 1991). The majority of the research explores the characteristics of giftedness, the effects of being labeled as gifted, self-concept development, and meeting the academic needs of gifted children. Research that has been directed towards the gifted adolescent centers on career decision making and the potentiality of increased suicide within this population (Bireley & Genshaft, 1991; Silverman, 1993). Due to the limited availability of research related to gifted adolescents and self-concept, this review of literature has included studies that address gifted children and self-concept.

Recent research studies on self-concept of gifted students depict inconsistent results. Some studies suggested there is no difference in the self-concept of the gifted and

non-gifted students while others concluded gifted students' self-concept is below that of the average child (Jenkins-Friedman & Murphy, 1988). Chan (1988) suggested that the social and instructional environments of gifted students affect self-concept. The controversy may lie in the variety of definitions of self-concept and the diversity of instruments employed to perform the research as well as the fact that the evolution of one's self-concept may vary from one developmental stage to another.

Several studies have explored the self-concepts of gifted children, attempting to understand the various circumstances that contribute to the development of positive or negative self-concepts. One of those studies was performed by Janos et al. (1985) between the years of 1981 to 1982. Their study focused on high IQ children who related that they believed themselves to be different from their peers and the effects of that "differentness" on their self-concepts (Janos et al., 1985, p. 78).

The study subjects came from a group of children who were participating in a longitudinal study on the early identification of intellectual ability. The selection of subjects for the longitudinal study was a two part procedure. The first step was to have the parents who contacted the researchers in response to newspaper articles complete a questionnaire regarding their children's early mental development. The research team selected those children with parental documentation of the child's high intellectual aptitude to complete additional tests and surveys.

The subgroup utilized for the Janos et al. (1985) study included 139 boys and 132 girls. The age ranged from 5.6 to 10.6 years with a mean age of 8.1. All of the data analyzed was garnered from questionnaires mailed to parents and their children. The parents were asked to complete four questionnaires. These included the Child Behavior

Checklist, which assessed social competence and behavior problems, the Survey Form of the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, which assessed the child's maturity in a variety of domains, and the Family Environment Scale in order to obtain variables relating to family mood. The last questionnaire included demographic information and data relating to the academic path and satisfaction with that avenue for the child. The children were asked to complete the following questionnaires: an 80 item Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, designed for research on the development of children's self-attitudes, a questionnaire regarding their friendships and another inquiring as to whether they thought they were different from other children.

The results indicated that 88 (37%) out of 238 children answered yes to the question of whether they thought of themselves as different from their peers. Out of the 71 who listed specific reasons for thinking this, 35 (50%) depicted the difference in positive terms (bigger, stronger, smarter, draw better, read better), 32 presented "neutral" statements, such as "I don't know," "I act different." Four children indicated a negative connotation to being different. The mean Total Positives score on the Piers-Harris for the 88 children who perceived themselves as different was significantly lower than the mean score of the remaining 150 children $t(236 = 2.22, p < .001)$. Children who viewed themselves different were more likely to share that they had fewer friends

> (chi square (1) = 3.49; $p < .01$) and that being smart made it harder to make friends (chi-square (1) =12.6; $p < .001$). Children who saw themselves as different more often reported that their friends were older or younger than themselves (chi-square (1) = 4.47; $p < .005$ and that they rarely played with other children (chi-square (1) = 3.85; $p < .01$. (Janos et al., 1985, p. 80)

The researchers confirmed their hypothesis that "a substantial portion of high IQ children would think of themselves as being different from peers of their own age, that they would

conceptualize the difference in positive terms, and that they would exhibit diminished self-esteem" (p. 80).

Feeling different from one's peers is one of many factors that impact self-concept. The following study explores some other issues that may influence self-concept within the gifted. Chan (1988) performed a study that provided some insights into the effects of the "composition of the instructional environment and social comparison group on gifted students' self-perception of cognitive competence" (p. 314). She compared the perceived competencies of cognitive, physical, social, and general self-worth of (a) gifted students in full-time segregated gifted programs, (b) gifted students in part-time programs and (c) non-gifted students who attended regular classes. She also considered gender differences within these same groups.

The subjects included gifted students from two different programs for the Intellectually Talented in Western Australia. The Full-Time Extension classes (FUTEC) was a full-time separate gifted program for students in grades five through seven. The other gifted program, Primary Extension and Challenge (PEAC) provided part-time enrichment classes for those who are intellectually talented in grades five through seven. These classes provided academic programs on specific topics. Students attended the class one morning or afternoon each week for about 10 to 12 weeks and were in regular classes otherwise. Selection or screening for either of these programs involved an initial screening via a teacher, parent, or by peer nominations. Those screened were then given the Raven's Progressive Matrix and the ACER Test of Learning Ability (TOLA 4) as a group. TOLA 4 is an Australian test designed to measure a person's general ability as an indicator for success in academic learning. Those in the top 2% to 3% were invited to

attend FUTEC classes and those in the top 5% were invited to participate in the PEAC program.

A total of 378 students in grades five through seven from four state elementary schools in the metropolitan area in Western Australia participated in Chan's study. Forty-two were FUTEC students (all in the seventh grade), 75 students from the PEAC program (29 seventh graders, 19 sixth graders and 27 fifth graders) and 261 non-gifted students from grades five through seven. Chan utilized Harter's Perceived Competence Scale for Children as her rating scale. The scale consists of four subscales for assessing perceived competence in four different dimensions: cognitive, social, physical and general self-worth. The scale comprises 28 items with 7 items per subscale. The Harter's Perceived Competence Scale for Children was administered via a group format to the FUTEC, PEAC, and regular class students in their respective classes. The scale was administered by a graduate research assistant, who read each item aloud to the class, and students marked their responses. In all cases the scale was completed in no more than 30 minutes.

The data for the seventh grade were analyzed by means of a 4 (subject-group) x 2 (sex) multivariate analysis of variance with scores from the four subscales as the four dependent measures. In order to compare the groups, a three a priori orthogonal contrast was developed. The first contrast compared the gifted groups (FUTEC and PEAC) with the non-gifted group; the second contrast compared the two gifted groups; and the two regular groups made up the third contrast (regular students who attended classes on site of gifted programs and those who did not).

The multivariate F-test for the subject group main effect was significant, $F(12,474) = 3.67$, $p < .0001$, and demonstrated significant mean differences among the

four groups on perceived competence as a shared measure. The univariate analysis of the groups indicated there was significant mean differences among the four subject groups on perceived cognitive and physical competence ($F(3,182) = 10.35$, $p < .0001$ and $F(3,182) = 3.67$, $p < .014$, respectively) but not on perceived social competence nor on the general self-worth dimension.

In relation to the three a priori contrasts, the first and second contrasts demonstrated significance on the multivariate F-tests, $F(4,179) = 6.37$, $p < .0001$, and $F(4,179) = 3.84$, $p < .006$, respectively. The univariate analysis indicated that the gifted groups possessed higher perceived cognitive competence than the regular groups, $F(1,182) = 23.42$, $p < .0001$, as well as a higher general self-worth competence, $F(1,182) = 3.46$, $p < .06$. The analysis of the two gifted groups suggested the PEAC on average had significantly higher self-perceptions of cognitive and physical competence than the FUTEC group, $F(1,182) = 7.33$, $p < .01$, and $F(1,182) = 10.33$, $p < .01$, respectively. No significant differences were noted in the third contrast.

In relation to the sex main effect the multivariate F-test was likewise significant, $F(4,179) = 3.33$, $p < .05$. The univariate data demonstrated the significant sex differences was found within the perceived physical competence domain, $F(1,182) = 9.99$, $p < .01$, and that it was across all the groups. The boys possessed a higher self-perception of physical competence than the girls. There were no significant sex differences noted in the other three domains tested between the two genders.

The data for the fifth and sixth grades were analyzed by means of 3 (subject-group) x 2 (sex) multivariate analysis of variance, and the scores from the four subscales were the four dependent measures. Two contrasts were developed for the subject-group

element. "The first contrast compared the PEAC with the two regular groups combined, and the second compared the on-site regular with the off-site regular" (Chan, 1988, p. 312).

The subject group main effect was significant with $F(8,358) = 6.99$, $p < .0001$. The univariate results indicated that the significant main effect centered on the cognitive competence and general self-worth subscales, $F(2,182) = 24.33$, $p < .001$, and $F(2,182) = 9.50$, $p < .0001$, respectively. There was no significant effect related to the physical and social competence scales.

In regards to the two contrasts, the first was the only one to demonstrate significance on the multivariate F-statistics, $F(4,179) = 13.52$, $p < .001$. The univariate data and the means disclosed that the PEAC group had higher perceived cognitive competence and general self-worth than the non-gifted groups, $F(1,182) = 48.66$, $p < .0001$, and $F(1,182) = 19.01$, $p < .0001$, respectively.

The sex main effect also indicated significance with a multivariate F-test of $F(4,179) = 4.19$, $p < .003$. The univariate data demonstrated that the significant sex difference was within both the perceived cognitive and physical competence domains. The girls possessed higher perceived cognitive competence than the boys, $F(1,182) = 4.03$, $p < .05$. The boys, however, had higher perceived physical competence than the girls, $F(1,182) = 7.15$, $p < .01$.

Chan (1988) concluded that gifted students in the upper elementary grades had higher perceived competence in general than their non-gifted counterparts. This perception was most evident in the cognitive and general self-worth areas. The researcher also determined that gifted students in a full-time separated program such as the FUTEC

had lower perceived cognitive and physical competence than those in the part-time PEAC program; however, their perceptions of general self-worth were not significantly different. The study indicated specific sex differences in perceived competence. Boys in general demonstrated higher perceived physical competence than girls, regardless of their ability, for all three grade levels. Girls in grades five and six were observed to have higher perceived cognitive competence scores than the boys; however, this was not true for the seventh graders. The last domain, perceived social competence, yielded no significant difference between the gifted and the non-gifted nor between the girls and the boys. Chan's overall conclusion was that the make-up of their classroom environment and their social group greatly influenced the gifted students' self-perceptions of cognitive competence.

While these studies explored influential aspects related to self-concept of the gifted, Hoge and McSheffrey (1991) sought to investigate the various components of self-concept within the gifted population. The researchers utilized a teacher rating scale in addition to Harter's Self Perception Profile for Children to investigate self-concept in gifted children in grades five through eight. The results of their study demonstrated social and scholastic competence and physical appearance as significant indicators of positive self-concepts.

The study performed by Hoge and McSheffrey (1991) was designed to investigate several aspects relating to self-concept as postulated by Harter. These aspects included "a) the relative independence of the specific components of the self-concept, b) the components of global self-worth, and c) the developmental process whereby the components become more differentiated with age" (Hoge & McSheffrey, 1991, p.239).

Their research expanded prior endeavors of this kind by utilizing the Self-Perception Profile for Children, which was revised from the Perceived Competence Scale for Children by Harter in 1985.

The sample for this study was comprised of 280 students in fifth through eighth grades who were participating in a segregated enrichment program. The selection process for this gifted program was based on group and individual IQ scores, standardized achievement test scores, and teacher ratings. Students had to score in the top ninetieth percentile on the standardized tests in order to be included in this program.

As noted before, the researchers utilized The Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC), which is a self-report procedure designed to evaluate self-perception of competence. The instrument is composed of six subscales. Five of the six subscales address distinct elements of self-concept: Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, and Behavioral Conduct. The sixth subscale deals with Global Self-Worth. The individual subscales consist of six items. Each item required two steps: the student was first asked to denote which one of the two alternatives best described him/her and then indicate the extent to which the description was true of him/her. The purpose of this two step procedure was to decrease the potential for socially desirable responding.

Another instrument employed in the study was the Scale for Rating Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (SRBCSS). This is a teacher rated procedure developed to assess the potential of children for gifted programs. The researchers utilized this tool to provide information regarding the cognitive, social, and academic competencies of the students. The information derived from the SRBCSS was included in

their analysis of the determinants of global self-worth. The SRBCSS is composed of 37 items divided into fours subscales, which include Learning, Motivation, Creativity, and Leadership. A four-point rating scale is furnished for each item.

An analysis of variance of the SPPC scores indicated significant gender effects for the Physical Appearance, $F(1,224) = 11.16$, $p < .001$, Behavior Conduct, $F(1,224) = 5.06$, $p < .05$, and Athletic Competence, $F(1,253) = 21.44$, $p < .001$, subscores. The data demonstrated that the boys displayed higher scores on Appearance and Athletic Competence, while the girls possessed higher scores on Conduct. Results pertaining to Global Self-Worth indicated no significant differences between boys and girls for any grade level.

The researchers also compared the scores of the present sample to scores for children in regular classes. Students from the gifted program scored slightly lower for Social and Athletic Competence but considerably higher on Scholastic Competence. The girls in the gifted sample scored significantly higher on Scholastic Competence and Global Self-Worth than did the girls from the regular classes.

An analysis of the data also was performed to ascertain if there were any correlations among the subscores. A low to moderate correlation was found among the five specific subscales with a range of $r = -.05$ between Physical Appearance and Athletic Competence to a high of $r = .42$ between Scholastic and Social Competence. The researchers investigated correlations among the five subscales through the four grade levels. The average correlation for each grade was very close. The fifth grade had a mean $r = .22$, the sixth grade's mean was $r = .20$, the seventh grade's mean was $r = .17$, and the eighth grade had a mean of $r = .22$.

To examine the components of global self-worth, the researchers performed a multiple regression analysis with the five subscales of the SPPC as the predictor variables and the Global Self-Worth factor as the criterion variable. These analyses were performed for the group as a whole, by gender and grade level. The Social Competence element obtained the heaviest weight, followed by Physical Appearance and Scholastic Competence. Male and female students demonstrated similar relationships between the specific subscales and Global Self-Worth. For fifth through seventh grades, Social Competence and Physical Appearance received the greatest weights in predicting Global Self-Worth, but for the eighth grade, Physical Appearance and Scholastic Competence received the highest weights.

Another multiple regression analysis was applied in which the predictor variable was the four subscales of the SRBCSS and the criterion variable was the Global Self-Worth. This analysis was performed to determine how the teacher's perceived strengths of the students related to self-esteem in the student. Hoge and McSheffrey (1991) found a significant weight linked with the Leadership score and the Creativity score with a significance of $p < .05$. Higher scores on Leadership were linked with higher levels of self-esteem. The relationship between Creativity and self-esteem was a negative correlation. For both genders, the Leadership Competency related the highest to Global Self-Worth while the statistics on a grade by grade analysis was limited.

Hoge and McSheffrey (1991) concluded from the data obtained that the specific aspects of self-esteem (scholastic, social, appearance, athletics, and conduct) exist to some degree, independently of each other. They also concluded that social acceptance plays a significant role in one's development of self-esteem with perceived scholastic

competence being a factor as well among the gifted students. This pattern was not observed for students who attended regular classes. And lastly, Hoge and McSheffrey's research findings did not support Harter's conclusion that there is a developmental process in the evolution of one's self-concept.

There have been several studies that have assessed the impact of specific programs or interventions on self-concept. One such study was performed by Feldhusen, Kolloff, Nielsen, and Saylor (1990). These researchers investigated the impact of participating in a segregated enrichment program on self-concepts of gifted students and if such a program affected boys and girls differently.

The instruments employed by the researchers included the Piers Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the ME: A Self-Concept Scale for Gifted Students. The Piers Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale possesses six cluster scales: (a) behavior, (b) intellectual and school status, (c) physical appearance, (d) anxiety, (e) popularity, and (f) happiness and satisfaction. The ME Scale focuses on students' self-perceptions associated to their intellectual and creative characteristics. As per the researchers' comments, the validity and reliability for the both the Piers Harris and ME Scale was significant enough for utilization within this study. The two instruments were administered as pretests at the beginning of the school year and as posttests at the completion of the school year.

Students were selected to participate in this enrichment program based on the following criteria: (a) mathematics or reading achievement test scores at the ninety-fifth percentile or above, or (b) an IQ test equal to or above 125, and (c) recommendations from teachers, parents and students. A pool of 60 students was formed with these criteria.

Based on student interest and time constraints, 40 students were ultimately selected to participate within the enrichment program. These 40 students were the experimental group and the other 20 were the comparison group. The students who participated were "in grades 3 through 8 and from a rural, midwestern school district" (Feldhusen et al., 1990, p. 381). The experimental group for third through sixth grades was comprised of 8 boys and 16 girls with the comparison group being made up of 9 boys and 5 girls. For the seventh and eighth grades, the experimental group had 12 boys and 4 girls with 3 boys and 3 girls in the comparison group.

The experimental groups participated in an educational program based on the Purdue Three-Stage Model developed by Feldhusen and Kolloff in 1986 (Feldhusen et al., 1990, p. 382). The program was designed to promote the student's higher level thinking skills, afford opportunities for independent research, and to heighten students' self-concepts. The students in third through sixth grades were provided activities that equally addressed these aspects timewise, while the students in the seventh and eighth grades experienced activities focused on higher level thinking skills with a limited emphasis on self-concept enhancement.

To test their null hypothesis, "gifted program participation does not affect students' self-concept," the researchers established a 2 x 2 factorial, quasi-experimental design with two fixed factors (Feldhusen et al., 1990, p. 383). The fixed factors were (a) experimental group, (b) control group, (c) male, and (d) female. The dependent variables were the posttest scores of the Piers Harris Children's Self-Concept and the ME: A Self-Concept Scale for Gifted Students. An alpha of .05 was selected as the test of significance. The researchers were able to demonstrate a significant difference between

the treatment groups for the pretest scores of the two instruments and a correlation between the pretest and posttest scores. Based on this information, the researchers elected to use analysis of covariance for the posttest scores with the pretest scores as covariates. The six cluster scales of the Piers Harris Scale were analyzed with the same analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) design.

The ANCOVA for the Piers Harris Scale posttest scores for third through sixth grades indicated a main effect for both the experimental and control groups. The experimental group's mean was 68.17 and the control's was 63.99. There was not a significant main effect for gender or for interaction of group and gender. The ANCOVA for the ME: Scale posttest scores demonstrated a significant main effect for the experimental and control groups with mean scores of 32.88 and 20.36 respectively. There was no significant effect noted for gender or for interaction between group and gender.

In regards to the seventh and eighth grades, the ANCOVA of the Piers Harris Scale posttests demonstrated no significant main effects for either group nor for gender or for the interaction of group and gender. The results of the ANCOVA for the ME: Scale posttest scores indicated a significant main effect for experimental and control groups at a level fixed at .05.

The data analysis of the cluster scales produced the following results:

> a) At the elementary level the comparison groups mean (19.62) was higher than the experimental group (17.67) for Physical Appearance; b) At the middle school level the comparison group mean (19.67) was higher than the experimental group (17.63) for Popularity; c) At the elementary level the mean for female experimentals (23.56) was higher than the comparison female group (21.00) for Anxiety. The difference was not significant for males. (Feldhusen et al., 1990, p. 385)

The researchers demonstrated a higher self-concept in those gifted students who participated in the gifted program versus those who did not. They also provided evidence that at all grade levels, taking part in the gifted program influenced the students' self-perceptions as related to several characteristics of gifted children. Feldhusen et al., (1990) concluded that a gifted program which emphasizes the promotion of the students' self-concepts can increase their general feelings of self-worth.

Sowa, McIntire, May and Bland (1994) performed a study to explore the common themes gifted children have related to their social and emotional adjustment. The researchers utilized qualitative techniques such as interview and observations over a time span of one year. The study included seven subjects, four girls and three boys, ranging in age from 9 to 14 years. The focus of the interviews and observations was on how the children adjusted and coped with stress. The children were observed at school, home, and at activities in other settings. Transcripts, field notes, and detailed observations were not only assessed by the researchers but also by those that were interviewed and with peer debriefers to clarify information. Cases were studied for common patterns indicating ways in which these children responded to stressors in their lives.

The study identified seven patterns or themes:

> 1) The children demonstrated process adjustment as described in Lazarus's cognitive appraisal paradigm, 2) The children used withdrawal or some form of self-initiated timeout to cope with or adjust to situations that were difficult or stressful, 3) The children created challenges for stimulation and for growth within their environment, 4) The children used assertiveness and defending their points of view as ways to create challenge or stimulation, 5) The children desired recognition or acceptance of themselves as individual, both of which were integral to their achievement adjustment, 6) Internal and external expectations and pressures influenced the adjustment of gifted children, 7) These children lived in child centered families which influenced the child's adaptation both to the family and to other settings. (Sowa et al., 1994, pp. 95-96)

The results indicated that gifted children utilize cognitive appraisal at earlier ages than their non-gifted counter parts. The patterns suggested that these children were using the cognitive appraisal paradigm of Lazarus and Folkman which is primarily a process used by adults (Sowa et al., 1994). This mature fashion of coping with stress could interfere or encourage their ability to cope or to fit into their environment. These children were more likely to try to manipulate their environments in order to make them more consistent with their perspectives. It was also noted by the researchers that when the subjects tried to incorporate others' perspectives into their cognitive appraisal, it often resulted in stress and conflict between their desires for academic and social achievements. The result is ambivalence towards their giftedness as they become adolescents. There are several studies that support this observation.

A research project by Cross, Coleman, and Stewart (1993) explored the self-perceptions and self-reported behaviors of gifted adolescents in order to understand their social cognition and the stigma paradigm. The authors defined social cognition "as how people think and reason about social situations as they watch and interact with the world" (p. 37). The Stigma of Giftedness Paradigm is based on a theory developed by Goffman (cited in Cross et al., 1993, p. 38) which states that being "tainted makes apparent a set of variables which influence the tainted persons to alter the way they typically interact with others." The researchers utilized the stigma paradigm to explain gifted adolescents' perceptions of how others in school perceive them, how they see themselves, and their subsequent behavior. The subjects were 1,465 high school students who attended the 1986 and 1987 Tennessee Governor's School Program. The age ranged from 14 to 18 years. Most of these subjects attended regular high schools and did not participate in

special programs that recognized their giftedness. The researchers utilized a Student Attitude Questionnaire which consisted of 75 questions covering several areas, but the focus of this report was on the social aspects of being gifted. The results supported the belief that gifted students can guide how others interact with them by controlling the information others have about them. Over 50% shared that they did not feel comfortable being themselves in their high schools and 85% stated that there were only a few students like them in their schools. Perceiving themselves as different was noted in over 40% of the subjects, and the difference was more significant in the area of academics. Their perception of difference was not demonstrated when related to social considerations. The authors believe that these perceptions in combination with the reported coping behaviors of limiting comments and hiding differences strongly indicates the need for the gifted adolescent to promote and maintain normal social interactions. The results also indicated a pattern where the subjects reported that their friends and others perceive them as different. The authors demonstrated support that gifted students believe that others treat them differently once they realize they are gifted. It was also reported that 80% of these students stated their teachers view them as different from other non-gifted adolescents.

The issue of gifted adolescents' feeling different was examined in a phenomenological study performed by Cross, Coleman, and Terhaar-Yonkers (1991) as they explored the stigma of giftedness. This study was motivated by the numerous reports from gifted students who shared feelings of being stigmatized by their label. Cross et al. reference E. Goffman for his description of stigma. Goffman (cited in Cross et al., 1991, p. 45) explains stigma as "the difference between a person's 'virtual social identity' and 'actual social identity'." He further explains that stigma implies the stigmatized person

has failed to accomplish or live up to the standards of that label. Cross et al. utilized interviews and scenario analyses to address some of the psychosocial issues of the gifted student by exploring the "schooling effects on the social cognition of gifted adolescents" (p. 49). The subject interviews included 15 gifted adolescents (eight females, seven males) who were attending a four week residential summer program, the Tennessee Governor's Schools. Students who attended these schools were selected based on their performance in the following six parameters: (a) achievement scores, (b) intelligence scores, (c) school grades, (d) teacher recommendations, (e) an essay, and (f) a guidance counselor recommendation.

Cross et al. (1991) developed a Student Attitude Questionnaire (SAQ) from these interviews and utilized this as a tool to gather data over a two year period from 1,465 students whose ages ranged from 14 to 18 years. The researchers performed a factor analysis to assess how well the SAQ measured discrete characteristics, an analysis which resulted in several factors becoming evident. The end result of these factors was the addition to the SAQ of a section called Social Experience of Giftedness. The new section was made up of six familiar school situations presented as scenarios that asked the students to show how they would behave in these specific situations. There were five categories from which the students could choose to indicate their responses:

> 1) Truth (statement reflecting agreement between what the subjects were told they believed in the scenario and the behavior they chose to engage in), 2) Placate (students made a prefacing remark which tried to play down their 'expertise' in the situation and then telling the truth), 3) Cop-out (when asked a question, the student does not answer but rather deflects the conversation toward someone else), 4) Cover-up (the student makes a prefacing remark trying to play down his/her expertise, but then does not follow up with an answer to the question), and 5) Lie (the student answers in a way diametrically opposed to his/her true beliefs about the question). (Cross et al., 1991, p.49)

The following excerpt describes the scenarios utilized in this study:

> The first scenario considered the impact of others knowing the subject's experience of a particular test (Biology Exam). This situation was noted often during the interviews as being a direct indicator of giftedness (differentness). In the second scenario a substitute teacher is taken advantage of by a classmate (Substitute Teacher). This situation differs from the previous example in that it represents a combination social/academic setting while the Biology Exam scenario was limited to an academic performance variable. The four remaining scenarios consisted of the following situations: a word being used in a class which was not known by the subject's classmates (Class Lecture), a group of students wanting to go to the mall when the subject plans to attend an extra credit work study session (Extra Credit), a group of students making fun of a slow student (Ted and Class Lecture), and a group of students comparing test scores (Test Scores). (Cross et al., 1991, p. 49)

Cross et al. (1991) tested their hypothesis that if students did not attempt to regulate the information others had about them, they would select the "truth" category throughout all the scenarios. This test was accomplished by reviewing each category to assess if a meaningful percentage of students selected it as an option. The researchers also compared all the categories to determine which behaviors were most often utilized within the scenarios. And lastly, a comparison of each category was performed to learn whether these situations could be employed as predictors of how these students would choose to behave. The results were as follows:

> Biology Exam, Truth (24.6%), Placate (28.2%), Cop-out (22.0%), Cover up (13.1%), Lie (12.2%); Substitute Teacher, Truth (21.3%), Placate (63.5%), Cop-out (4.7%), Cover up (8.4%), Lie (2.0%); Class Lecture, Truth (39.0%), Placate (46.5%), Cop-out (8.6%), Cover up (3.3%), Lie (2.5%); Extra Credit, Truth (58.0%), Placate (34.9%), Cop-out (1.4%), Cover up (1.8%), Lie (3.9%), Ted and Lecture, Truth (33.4%), Placate (53.4%), Cop-out (8.7%), Cover up (0.8%), Lie (3.8%), Test Scores, Truth (28.1%), Placate (55.2%), Cop-out (2.5%), Cover up (11.9%), Lie (2.4%). (Cross et al., 1991, p. 50)

The results of these comparisons indicated varying degrees to which the students regulated or controlled the information regarding them and depended on the students'

perceptions as to how stigmatizing each situation was (Cross et al., 1991). In all of the situations except for Extra Credit, the students selected Placate most often. The comparisons also indicated that the Biology Exam scenario was the most threatening to the students. The other scenario of significance was the Substitute Teacher. This situation stimulated answers of Placate from 63.5% of the students.

Cross et al. (1991) explained that their results supported other research findings that gifted high school students do feel stigmatized and, therefore, try to control such labeling by practicing various coping strategies. In this study, the coping mechanism was managing the information others are permitted to have. The choice of Placate was the most popular preference across all five scenarios. The scenario that related to test performance, such as the Biology Exam, illustrated how the students employed all five of the strategies provided. However, situations that dealt mostly with appropriate behavior such as Substitute Teacher and Ted and Class Lecture, demonstrated a limited array of behaviors with Placate being the principal coping mechanism. Placating in these two scenarios was selected 67% and 55% of the time, respectively. The Truth category scored the highest for the scenario, Extra Credit, where the student chooses extra studying over a social activity, with 58%.

Cross et al. (1991) summarized their findings to state that "students are attempting to control the information others have about them in an effort to engage in and maintain normal social interactions" (p. 53). The researchers further explained that gifted students do not seem to be concerned that others are aware that they consider school important and strive to succeed in school, but they do want to control the amount of information others

have or to control how others perceive them. Gifted students do not want their differences to become the focus and interfere with their social interactions.

The persistent theme of ambivalence towards being gifted also was demonstrated in a study by Kerr et al. (1988) as they assessed "the gifted adolescent's view of their own giftedness and their perceptions regarding how giftedness is viewed by others" (p. 245). The authors supported the belief that people act on their beliefs and that gifted young people's beliefs or perceived beliefs relating to what others feel about them impact their behaviors more than the real feelings or behaviors of others towards them. One hundred and eighty-four gifted students, ages ranging from 15 to 17 years, participated in this study. The researchers assessed the students' attitudes with the Attitude Toward Giftedness questionnaire, which included five open-ended questions. In relation to the first question which related to the meaning of giftedness, the students rated their giftedness as performance more than as a trait and felt that it took effort and work. The second question dealt with the advantages of being gifted. Kerr et al. categorized the responses into three groups: personal, academic, and social. The category of personal focused on opportunity for personal growth, more self-confidence, and inner accord; the academic focused on the easiness of school work, advanced classes, increased problem solving abilities, and opportunities for scholarships; the social focused on recognition by peers, parents, and the ability to contribute to society. In response to the second question the breakdown was as follows: 33% personal, 37% academic, and 29% social. The third question addressed the disadvantages of being gifted, and again the three categories were applied and are as follows: 5% personal, 5% academic, and 90% social. The fourth question related to affirmation of giftedness: 91% accepted the label as accurate, and 9%

did not. These findings seem to support the conclusions by Colangelo et al. (1987a; 1987b) in that adolescents are already aware of their ability, and the label is a form of validation. The fifth question inquired about the effects of being labeled as gifted on themselves and on others. In regards to themselves 79% viewed it as positive, 2% negative, and 19% were neutral. As it related to others, 5% viewed it as positive, 43% negative, and 52% were neutral. This information has several implications: (a) the label of giftedness is powerful and multidimensional, (b)the adolescent experiences conflict over special abilities and the label, and (c)there is significant concern relating to potential social rejection.

A more recent study by Robinson (1990), relating to acceptance of the gifted, indicated some similarities to the Kerr et al. (1988) research but noted that adolescents whose parents gave them the label of gifted were more comfortable with it than those who were labeled by the school. Robinson studied adolescents labeled gifted to determine differences in acceptance and social perceptions of others.about the label . Labeling was defined as meaning the assignment of a categorical descriptor to a child or youth in order to obtain necessary educational services. The researcher explored the conflict between service and stereotype by comparing and contrasting adolescents comfortable with the gifted label with those who were not.

Robinson (1990) presented an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of labeling. For labeling to really be effective, there must be a labeled individual who accepts society's categorization, and there must be a labeling group who recognizes deviations from the norm and responds to them in some way. Labeling was described as a

social process which occurs because society defines and then reacts to certain deviations from the norm.

The focus of Robinson's (1990) study was on the variations of individual responses to labeling on the part of the students. The study was part of a larger study of talent development, using 396 rising high school seniors attending the Arkansas Governor's School. These students were administered a survey which obtained their perceptions of and their reactions to the gifted label. The current phase of the study focused on those students who reported either extreme comfort ($n = 155$) or extreme discomfort ($n = 71$) with the gifted label as it applied to them ($N = 155$). Of the total population, 87 were girls and 68 were boys.

The survey tool consisted of both open-ended items and Likert Scales. Responses to the open-ended items and requests for further explanations were coded by two raters. A percentage of agreement of .80 was created. Within the sample, 18.6% reported extreme comfort; 15% reported extreme discomfort. From this point on, Robinson (1990) referred to the students as either "Comfortable" or "Uncomfortable."

Comfortable and Uncomfortable differed significantly in their degree of acceptance of the label ($t = - 9.01$, $p < .01$). While Uncomfortable were primarily neutral or moderate in disagreement ($M = 2.6$), Comfortables demonstrated strong agreements ($M = 4.3$). These results indicated that a person can report rejection of the label and still be affected by it. In terms of others' acceptance, Uncomfortables were observed to reject more often while Comfortables tended to accept the gifted label. Both the Uncomfortables ($M = 4.2$) and the Comfortables ($M = 4.7$) agreed that parents viewed them as gifted, but the Comfortables' agreement was significantly stronger ($t = - 3.0$,

$p < .01$). In terms of differential treatment, Uncomfortables ($M = 1.6$) strongly disagreed that they were treated differently while Comfortables ($M = 2.3$) moderately disagreed.

Content analysis of the open-ended rationale demonstrated that each group felt they had no foundation for comparison. In regards to addressing whether they felt their parents treated them differently, 60.7% (51 of 84) of the Comfortables and 74.6% (53 of 71) of the Uncomfortables stated their parents did not treat them differently because of the label. Nevertheless, 34.5% of the Comfortables and 11.2% of the Uncomfortables shared that their parents' expectations were increased by the label. In regards to friends treating them differently, 83.1% of the Uncomfortables and 84.% of the Comfortables disagreed that their friends treated them differently. No significant differences were obtained relating to brothers, sisters, or other students in the high school.

There were two items that were associated with the concept of feeling different. The Uncomfortables were neutral about feeling different ($M = 3.1$), and the Comfortables leaned toward moderately agreeing ($M = 3.8$). The difference was noted to be significant ($t = 2.92$, $p < .01$). The other question inquired if they liked feeling different. The Uncomfortables responded neutrally ($M = 2.8$), and the Comfortables were moderate in their response ($M = 2.1$). Again the difference was statistically significant ($t = 2.72$, $p < .01$).

After content analysis of the questions regarding the definition of giftedness, several categories appeared, one of which was that the Uncomfortables were eight times more likely to report negative feelings than the Comfortables (46.4 % and 5.9%, respectively). Other content analysis was performed relating to who, when, and how the students were informed of their giftedness. Both groups had a high response rate that

they were informed by school personnel (Uncomfortables = 56.3%, Comfortables = 53.5%). Also noted in the analysis was a small percentage of the Comfortables that were informed of their giftedness by their parents (Uncomfortables = 14.0%, Comfortables = 22.6%).

Robinson (1990) formulated several conclusions. The greatest percentage of adolescents accepted the gifted label or were somewhat apathetic regarding it. There was a good-sized group, approximately one out of every six youths, who reported extreme discomfort. Students rarely related a proactive program of individual conferences on the part of the school during their initial "labeling." Adolescents who shared that their parents were the first to label them were more likely to express comfort with the label. Robinson (1990) further concluded "that a study of the extreme groups is a promising direction both for further study and for guiding educational practice" (p. 225). The researcher also identified areas of concern for students who do not respond favorably to the gifted label and who may be affected in terms of social and emotional well-being.

Gifted adolescents intentionally utilize strategies or specific behaviors to minimize or deny their giftedness. Swiatek (1995) sought to demonstrate empirical evidence that gifted adolescent students purposefully utilize discrete strategies to cope with their perceived social differences during the period of adolescence when personality and other characteristics of one's behaviors are forming. The author capitalized on an abundance of previous research that suggested, with variance in actual research results, that a number of coping strategies could indeed be identified that might be used by the individual gifted student. These strategies included (a) minimizing the visibility of

giftedness, (b) denying concern about possible social rejection, (c) extracurricular involvement, and (d) fear of failure.

The subjects were junior high school students who attended a special summer program at Iowa State University for three weeks. Each student was enrolled in an accelerated class in the area of his or her choice. Qualification for the program was determined through the use of the Scholastic Aptitude Test or the American College Testing Program. To participate in the summer camp required qualifying scores in the top 1% of students for mathematical and/or verbal reasoning. A total of 238 students participated in the research.

The author utilized a panel study as her research design and two instruments for cross analysis of the survey results. The first was the Adjective Check List (ACL) by Gough and Heilburn, a standardized measure of various personal attributes by response to 300 adjectives which the subject considers for self-descriptiveness. The second instrument was the Social Coping Questionnaire for Gifted Students (SCQ), developed by the author, which consisted of 35 items that addressed beliefs and activities relating to various social aspects of intellectual giftedness.

The ACL was administered to the students at the beginning of the summer session attended. The SCQ was mailed to selected students one or two years after their participation in the summer program. A factor analysis was conducted with the SCQ to determine whether the relationships among students' responses verify the existence of distinct approaches to giftedness. Individuals' scores on the factors were compared to one another with a multivariate analysis of variance. In all comparison of means, both statistical significance and effect size were considered.

Four of the five scales that were identified produced reliability values greater than 0.06. Swiatek (1995) interpreted this to mean that the scales reflecting denial of giftedness, popularity/conformity, peer acceptance, and fear of failure can be considered reliable for research purposes. Thus, these factors were perceived to support the validity of certain previously suggested social coping strategies: denial of giftedness, management of perceptions of the importance of popularity, and strong involvement in organized activities. A factor score procedure for scoring the scales was also utilized for comparing the responses by gender, ability level, and ability area to ascertain if there were major differences. The results demonstrated that students in the top quartile of ability were more likely to deny their giftedness than students in the lowest quartile ($\underline{M} = 1.29$, $\underline{M} = .76$, respectively, $\underline{t}(64) = 2.59$, $\underline{p} < .05$, $\underline{d} = 0.64$). Additional results indicated that students who were verbally strong reported less peer acceptance than those student who were gifted mathematically ($\underline{M} = -1.93$, $\underline{M} = -0.36$, respectively, $\underline{t}(31) = 2.20$, $\underline{p} < .05$, $\underline{d} = 0.82$).

Swiatek (1995) concluded that the students' responses revealed that no single coping strategy was predominant among the members of the sample. The study revealed that the most highly capable individuals were most likely to deny being gifted. Additionally, students with predominant verbal skills reported lower levels of peer acceptance then did those with predominant mathematical skills.

The outcomes of the study were perceived by the researcher to support the validity of certain previously suggested social coping strategies: denial of giftedness, management of perceptions of the importance of popularity, and strong involvement in organized activities. A review of the students' responses revealed that no single coping

strategy was predominant among the members of the sample. Several observations that were noted were that the most highly able individuals were those most likely to deny being gifted, and that students with predominant verbal abilities reported lower levels of peer acceptance than did those with predominant mathematical abilities.

Peer affiliation is a strong motivator for the average adolescent and it would seem to hold true for the gifted as well. Erikson (1963) postulated that the process of forming one's identity is fostered by the establishment of well-defined peer groups. The significance of peer alliance was demonstrated in a study performed by Jenkins (1996) in which he examined the relationship between students' academic performance level and extracurricular activities as predictors of drug involvement relative to peer influence. The sample included 2,229 eighth, tenth, and twelfth grade students from 17 districts in northeastern Ohio. Caution was taken to assure a random sampling of the overall school districts by having school personnel review the lists of randomly chosen names to subjectively verify that the lists were representative of the overall student population regarding issues of race, residency, and other factors. Teachers were trained in the administration of the questionnaires, based on pilot testing results, to avoid any chance of identification of the individual student responses. All questionnaires were reviewed by the school districts and the research was announced to all parents.

Data were collected using a 163 item questionnaire assessing drug use, demographic characteristics, and psycho-social variables thought to be related to drug use. Responses were indicated on a Likert-type scale for each question. Questions pertained to personal drug use, drug use of friends, self-reporting of grades, and self-reporting of extracurricular activities, including after school employment. The researcher

demonstrated internal consistency for each composite of the tool utilizing Cronbach's alpha. Zero-order relationships were initially computed for bivariate comparison between self-reported drug use and the six predictor variables. Step-wise multiple regression analyses were later performed to test whether friends' use, after-school jobs, academic performance, and extracurricular activity explained a significant proportion of the variance in self-reported frequency of gateway and hard drug use.

Jenkins (1996) found that the strongest correlate of gateway drug use across all grade levels was affiliation with drug-using friends ($p < .001$). The frequency of gateway drug use also was significantly related to self-reported academic performance level ($p < .001$) and to involvement in enjoyable extracurricular activities ($p < .05$). Similarly, frequency of hard drug use was significantly correlated with number of friends using hard drugs ($p < .001$).

The researcher concluded that at all three grade levels, academic performance and enjoyable extracurricular involvement explained a small proportion of the variance in self-reported gateway drug use relative to peer influence. The researcher noted that enjoyable extracurricular involvement and after-school employment have little predictive significance for hard drug use. Peer influence remained the most influential variable to drug involvement across the three adolescent groups.

In summary, self-concept is multidimensional (Chan, 1988; Hoge & McSheffrey, 1991; Hoge & Renzulli, 1991) and studies are inconsistent regarding the relationship of self-concept and the gifted child (Jenkins-Friedman & Murphy, 1988). Factors that impact one's self-concept include social and instructional environment, social and scholastic competence, and physical appearance (Chan, 1988; Hoge & McSheffrey, 1991;

Janos et al., 1985). Gifted adolescents score higher in the domains of self-worth and academic when their self-perceptions are assessed (Chan, 1988; Pryrt & Mendaglio, 1995). Several researchers concluded that participating in specific programs can improve the gifted adolescent's self-concept (Chan, 1988; Feldhusen et al., 1990). Peer alliance is significant for all adolescents whether they are gifted or not (Jenkins, 1996; Swiatek, 1995; Robinson, 1990). The review of literature supports the fact that gifted adolescents are ambivalent towards their giftedness and that they are at risk to experience difficulty during their social and emotional adjustment (Kerr et al., 1988; Robinson, 1990; Swiatek, 1995). Gifted adolescents complain of being stigmatized and will attempt to manipulate or manage the information others have about them (Cross et al., 1991). The conclusion that people act on their beliefs and that gifted young people's beliefs or perceived beliefs relating to what others feel about them impacts their behaviors more so than the real feelings or behaviors towards them was supported in the literature (Kerr et al., 1988; Sowa et al., 1994; Swiatek, 1995). The gifted adolescents' ambivalence towards their giftedness, their struggles to achieve social and emotional adjustment, their perceived beliefs that others view their giftedness negatively, combined with the normal conflicts of adolescence such as role identity and peer affiliation, potentiates their risk of developing a low self-concept. The researcher wishes to identify there is still a need to explore theoretical bases applicable to the gifted adolescent and peer interaction.

Chapter III

The Method

The purpose of this research study was to determine if peer group discussions will improve self-concept in the gifted adolescent population using a multi-method approach. In this chapter, the methods employed to investigate the variables of interest are identified. The research design, population, and sample are specified, and the method of data collection and instrument utilized for measurement of variables are discussed. Procedures for data collection and techniques for data analysis are explained.

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental, pretest/posttest design. The quasi-experimental design is suitable when the subjects cannot be randomly selected but controls or techniques can be utilized to decrease threats to internal validity of the study (Polit & Hungler, 1995). The convenience sample included eleventh grade students attending a residential high school for high achievers in mathematics and science. This design deviated from the researcher's proposed design in that the four week posttest was deleted due to lack of timely responses from the subjects. The resulting design still provided the ability to investigate the possible cause and effect relationship of peer group discussions and self-concept in gifted adolescents. An experimental and a control group assisted the researcher in determining the treatment effect.

Variables

The independent variable was weekly peer group discussions addressing components or aspects of self-concept. The dependent variable was the self-concept scores of the gifted adolescents as measured by the Pyryt-Mendaglio Self-Perception Scale (PMSPS). The self-concept scores were measured on two different occasions for both the control and the experimental groups, prior to the application of the intervention and immediately after the intervention. The self-concept scores were assessed on the Valence (8 variables), Reflected Appraisals (16 variables), and Social Comparison/Attributes (8 variables). The researcher attempted to implement control for extraneous factors by confining the study to gifted adolescents attending a specific residential high school. Several intervening variables not within the ability of the researcher to control include the possibility of a cross-over effect between the control and experimental groups and honesty in completing the questionnaires.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses were modified as a result of the deletion of the follow-up self-concept scores and are as follows:

Null Hypothesis

There is no difference in posttest self-concept scores between gifted adolescents who attend peer group discussions and those who do not attend.

Research Hypothesis

Posttest self-concept scores of gifted adolescents who attend peer group discussion will be higher than those who do not attend.

Setting, Population, and Sample

The setting for this study was a university campus of the southern region of the United States in which a public residential high school is located. The residential school's curriculum focused on mathematics and science. Each enrolling student had to possess a record of school performance that was above average in most subjects and was superior in mathematics and science, and had been recognized for intellectual curiosity. The population included the eleventh grade students enrolled in the residential high school whose ages ranged from 16 to 17 years and who had parental consent. This sample (N = 21) of convenience consisted of 10 male and 11 female students who met the criteria and gave written permission to participate. The students were randomly assigned to one of the two groups. There were 5 females and 6 males in the experimental group and 6 females and 4 males in the control group. In order to match the pretests and posttest scores for analysis of each individual student, the researcher utilized their birth dates as their code numbers. This was implemented to ensure confidentiality.

Data Collection

Techniques/instrumentation

The instrument utilized within this study was the Pyryt-Mendaglio Self-Perception Scale (PMSPS) and was designed to promote the ability of teachers to assess the needs of adolescents as related to education (Pyryt & Mendaglio, 1995). The developers of the instrument created it to address the following needs: "1.) to develop a scale that can be readily administered in the classroom, with a straightforward scoring technique..., 2.) a measurement device that assists the teacher in intervention..., 3.) a scale should also reflect the complexity of self-concept" (Pyryt & Mendaglio, 1995, p. 40). The

content of the instrument incorporates several theoretical concepts, which include reflected appraisals, social comparison, and attribution. Also, self-concept is defined in terms of academic, social, athletic, and evaluative (see Appendix A).

> [The] self-concept component consists of 24 items and students are asked to rate themselves on a four point scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. For the reflected appraisals portion, the students are asked to rate themselves as they believe each of the four significant others perceive them. . . . For the social comparison portion, the students are asked to rate how they perceive themselves compared to age peers for each of the four factors. . . . For the attribution portion, they are asked to acknowledge demonstrations of competence in the four domains...Under the valence portion of the scale, the students are also asked to rate the importance of both the areas that the items address and the significant others. These are rated on a three point scale, with 1, 2, 3 indicating Not important, Important, and Very important, respectively. The PMSPS is suitable for individual or group administration. Administration takes approximately 15 minutes. (Pyryt & Mendaglio, 1995, p. 42)

The PMSPS gives two general categories of scores, a Model X Self-concept Area Matrix and Valence. The remainder of the ratings relate to social comparison and attributes. The internal consistency reliability of the instrument is demonstrated by the following Cronbach alpha coefficients, .88 (academic), .75 (social), .95 (athletic), and .79 (evaluative) (Pyryt & Mendaglio, in press). Convergent validity was indicated by correlations with the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, which is a well-known and used tool to measure general self-esteem. The correlations were as follows: .51 (academic), .42 (social), .23 (athletic) and .61 (evaluative) (Pyryt & Mendaglio, in press). Permission to utilize the instrument was obtained from Dr. Michael C. Pyryt and Dr. Sal Mendaglio (see Appendix B).

The researcher designed the curriculum for the six weekly peer group discussions in collaboration with the research committee (see Appendix C). Each session was to have lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and was devoted to a specific aspect or component of

self-concept. The sessions met on Tuesday evenings from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. The meeting time for these sessions was the result of an agreement with the administration of the school and the researcher. This time frame took up the last 30 minutes of their "study period" and the first 30 minutes of their free time, which afforded flexibility for the members to stay longer if the group felt it was necessary. None of the sessions extended beyond 90 minutes. The researcher had proposed six sessions; however, due to the students' schedule and limited time frame, the sessions were decreased to five. The content of the six sessions were consolidated so that all topics were covered as originally planned. Various activities were omitted or limited in order to accommodate the shortened number of sessions. The researcher initially was to act as the facilitator of the group activities, but by the second session the role became more that of the identified leader. This latter discretion was necessary in order to expedite the group process and to ensure the group accomplished its objectives. The first session focused on initiating group identity and the promotion of cohesiveness. This was facilitated by having the members establish group rules based on group input and developing their own definition of self-concept. The researcher reinforced the purpose and expectations of the group but gave the group final ownership for decisions and outcomes. The remaining sessions focused on various topics such as living purposefully, self-acceptance, guilt, and self-worth.

The sessions were held in a neutral place convenient for the members. The seating arrangements for the members was always in a circular fashion; however, at the first meeting the students sat around a large table. The table was removed for the following sessions to eliminate any barriers. The members were provided various snacks and beverages at each session. The researcher utilized several activities such as the group

developing definitions of specific terms, completing statements, and providing thought provoking questions or statements for discussion. Activities were performed individually and in group formats. Thoughts and statements were written on flip charts by a member of the group using fragrant markers. The researcher displayed these pages on the walls at each session to demonstrate their work and to serve as the foundation for future activities. Plain note book paper and pencils also were provided for individual activities. The objectives of the final session included summarizing the sessions, bringing closure to the group, and a celebration of self and accomplishments. The researcher sent each of the members an invitation to this final session. This session was held in a different location. The new site was an apartment-like setting reserved for special dignitaries and had access to a rooftop patio and a city-wide view. The patio served as the site for all group activities. The members reviewed their efforts which had been summarized in a written handout developed by the researcher (see Appendix D). They were then asked to write down five personal goals related to living purposefully, self-acceptance, and self-responsibility. These were not intended to be shared with the group. The final activity included having the members and the researcher stand in a circle and turn to their right and state a positive statement and an expression of appreciation to that person. This continued until all members had been addressed. The final social activity was sharing cake and ice cream. The cake had been decorated with the words "self-concept" in the center with components surrounding it.

At the first session, the members of the peer group discussions were provided instruction regarding making weekly journals and such instructions were reinforced at following sessions. The researcher requested that they forward a journal discussing that

week's session and the topics of discussion. There was no formal guideline established for the journal entries. The researcher suggested the journals could include the participants' perceptions of the process, their feelings regarding the process and the topics, whether they agreed or disagreed with group discussions and outcomes or whatever thoughts or feelings the discussions may have stimulated. There were two students who opted to hand write their journals and give them to the researcher personally. The researcher had not intended to respond to any of the journals but felt compelled to do so as the intervention progressed. The members often shared very personal thoughts and experiences in their journals and the researcher believed that it was both appropriate and important to the process to recognize them.

Procedures

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Committee on Use of Human Subjects in Experimentation at Mississippi University for Women (see Appendix E). Following approval, a letter explaining the study was submitted to the director of the residential school (see Appendix F). Subsequently, verbal permission and support for the study was obtained from the director of the residential school. The researcher mailed a letter to 146 parents and guardians requesting permission for their son or daughter to participate in the study (see Appendix G). Those students with parental consent to participate were contacted by the researcher and a one-to-one interview was scheduled. During the interview, the researcher (a) provided an overview of the study, (b) explained the expectations of a participant, and (c) ensured that the participant understood the type of commitment required for the study, that this was on a voluntary basis, and that the student could withdraw at any time. The students who agreed to participate in the study

signed a consent at the end of the interview (see Appendix H). In collaboration with the school staff, the researcher administered the pretest to the experimental group immediately preceding the first session and to the control group within 24 hours of the experimental group's first session.

The experimental group participated in the weekly peer group discussion sessions over a five week period, with the researcher as their facilitator and leader. The researcher obtained the support of the school counselor for the peer group discussion groups in the case that a student identified a crisis or indicated any suicidal tendencies. The researcher had access to him via the phone and could make an immediate referral. The students provided weekly journal entries focused on that week's session, via e-mail or hand written. The researcher administered the post-test to the experimental group immediately following the completion of the fifth and final session and to the control group the next day. The follow-up post-test was mailed four weeks after the final session to each of the students for completion. A stamped, addressed envelope was provided for return to the researcher. The follow-up posttest was deleted from the study because of limited timely responses by the subjects and the researcher's limited timeframe.

The e-mail journals were transmitted to the researcher's computer, which was located in a locked office. The computer itself was locked as well and protected by a password. The procedure for the journals was as follows: (a) print out one copy, (b) delete the journal from the computer data base, (c) cut off and destroy any type of identification of the transmitting student from the printed copy, (d) print two more copies for a total of three copies. The two committee members who assisted in performing the content analysis each received a copy, and the researcher kept the third copy. These

journals were collected at the end of the analysis and are to be destroyed one year after completion of the research study. The questionnaires were maintained similarly and will be destroyed one year after completion of the study.

Data Analysis

The tool contained three areas, each with variables, that were analyzed separately. These areas included Valence (8 variables), Reflected Values (16 variables), and Social Comparison/Attributes (8 variables). The pretest and posttest scores comparing the experimental and control groups were analyzed utilizing the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) using the Pillais' trace as the test statistic and significance at .05. The pretest scores were tested to determine the equality of group dispersion. The posttest scores were analyzed to determine the impact of the intervention.

This research study addressed the question of what reflective themes emerged following peer group discussions. The researcher applied content analysis to the students' journal entries, which were generated on a weekly basis. This procedure allowed for "analyzing written or verbal communications in a systematic and objective fashion, particularly with the goal of quantitatively measuring variables" (Polit & Hungler, 1995, p. 38).

The researcher applied content analysis in order to describe the "characteristics of the content of the message" (Polit & Hungler, 1995, p 638). The researcher and two committee members examined the anonymous journals independently for themes that emerged and then met as a group to share their analyses. The analysis included surveying the journals for points or ideas and then categorizing them. The numerous reviews of the journals included examining the journals in sequence several times and then randomly

mixing them up and then re-examining the entries. The next step included identifying themes that evolved from the categories. The delineation of the final themes was determined by the researcher.

Limitations

A quasi-experimental design was used for this study in that the researcher incorporated a pretest/posttest design utilizing control and experimental groups obtained from a convenience sample. The convenience sample was additionally restricted to those students who had parental consent and agreed to participate. The researcher did employ the principles of randomization when assigning the participants to either the control or experimental groups. The intervention was shortened thus limiting its intensity and impact on the participants. The administering of the posttest survey at the end of the last session may not have allowed for enough time for the change to have occurred. All of this has decreased the generalizabilty of the conclusions of the study.

Chapter IV

The Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine if peer group discussions improve self-concept in the gifted adolescent population. This study employed a multi-method approach to investigate the possible cause and effect relationship of peer group discussions and self-concept in gifted adolescents. The data collected and analyzed for this study are presented in this chapter. Characteristics of the participants are described first, followed by the outcomes of data analysis related to the research hypothesis and research question.

Description of Sample

The researcher mailed 146 letters to the parents of the eleventh grade students of the residential high school requesting permission and obtained responses from 56 (38%) of these parents. Parental permission was obtained for 28 (50%) of the 56 responses and out of these 22 (79%) students agreed to participate. The age range for these students was 16 to 17 years. Ethnic background was predominantly white (n = 20, 91%) the remaining two (8%) were black. Subjects were randomly assigned to either the control or experimental group utilizing a table of random numbers. The control group (n = 10) consisted of six females and four males. The experimental group (n = 11) was initially made up of five females and seven males. One of the male students opted not to participate just prior to the initiation of the peer group discussions citing too much school

work as the reason. Of the experimental group members, all attended regularly except for one female student who developed some time conflicts and missed sessions three and four. Also, within the experimental group two male members each missed session three because their instructor called for a mandatory class meeting during the same period of time.

Results of Data Analysis

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to compare the pretest scores of the experimental and control groups on the PMSPS. The areas that were analyzed included the following: (a) Valence, which was divided into two sections (domain and significant other), each containing 4 variables, (b) reflected appraisals which contained 16 variables, and (c) social comparison and attributes which contained 8 variables. None of these areas demonstrated a multivariate difference between the experimental and control groups at pre-treatment. The results were as follows: the four variables of the Valence/Domain—Pillais' trace (4, 16) = .085, F = .37, p = .83; the four variables of the Valence/Significant Other—Pillais' trace (4, 16) = .066, F = .28, p = .89; the 16 variables of the Reflected Appraisals—Pillais' trace (16, 4) = .70, F = .59, p = .80; and the eight variables of the Social comparison and attributes—Pillais's trace (8, 12) = .44, F = 1.17, p = .37. Since no significance emerged at the .05 level, the groups were determined to have equality of group dispersion.

The MANOVA was then utilized to compare the posttest scores of the experimental and control groups on the PMSPS. The same areas as in the pretest comparisons were analyzed and are as follows: the four variables of the Valence/Domain—Pillais' trace (4, 16) = .091, F = .40, p = .81; the four variables of the

Valence/Significant Other—Pillais' trace (4, 16) = .147, F = .69, p = .61; the 16 variables of the Reflected Appraisals—Pillais' trace (16, 4) = .827, F = 1.19, p = .48; and the eight variables of Social Comparison and attributes—Pillais' trace (8, 12) = .380, F = .92, p = .53. Since there were no significant differences between the two groups on these variables, the null hypothesis is supported. The researcher concludes there is no difference in posttest self-concept scores between gifted adolescents who attend peer group discussions and those who do not attend.

The members of the experimental group provided journals weekly following peer group discussions for five weeks either by e-mail or in hand written notes. The content of these journals were subjected to qualitative analysis by the researcher and two members of the research committee individually and then met as a unit. There was agreement that three themes clearly emerged including self-concept, group development, and facilitator recognition.

Self-Concept

Most of the members indicated an increased awareness and recognition of the importance of self-concept.

"I'm not a person who pays much thought to self-concept, but after tonight, I feel that it is an important aspect of social well-being, without a good self-concept, a person really doesn't have much to live for,..."

"To me the real self is the most important part of self-concept"

"...it is necessary to have a strong stable inner self.."

Self-concept was defined as possessing four sub-themes: (a) conflict, (b) introspection, (c) value system, and (d) self-responsibility.

Conflict

The sub-theme conflict is differentiated into internal and external, where internal appeared to be on a personal level or from within oneself and the external was related to one's environment, peers and family members. The following are examples of internal conflict:

"The only reason I hesitate to share what I think about with most people is because they usually don't understand at all and they either are scared or think that I am a freak."

"...people might not want to be aware of everything that impacts our lives."

"...one might be able to have an idea about what their purpose is but, it is more of a subconscious thing."

"It is strange how things can change in such a short period of time. ...It has to because life is change."

"As for guilt, I'm not quite sure how to define that. Is it regret?"

"Maybe it is not that it goes back to the self-concept things as so much as there is just a circle that we go around in which affects our daily life. ...I refer to it I guess as my conscience."

Examples of external conflict seem to be evident in the following quotes:

"...I don't take advantage of some opportunities because I am afraid what others will think or say."

"... even though I like helping the teacher I am perceived as a kissup."

"it allows them to be misled by accident and for the truth of belief of others to mislead them when they should have nonfaith."

"...goals, and the reason for which a person lives are totally individual, no two people will live for exactly the same things."

"I was the perfect son, grandson, friend, and everything else. And I hated it, it wasn't me."

"...the people in our little group care more about peer pressure more than anything in the world..."

"Even I succumb to peer pressure. I am not my true self around most people because that would frighten them."

Introspection

The second sub-theme of self-concept is introspection which includes self-discovery. The members of the group seemed to utilize the journals as an opportunity not only to share their feelings and thoughts but also as a vehicle for exploration and reflection of self. Their introspection often resulted in more questions.

"I really think that I discover a great deal about myself in these little meetings we are having...I learn a lot about others, too."

"Could some people, by trying, striving, and desiring to be aware, not be hindering their development as much as they help it? How can they intake all the information around them if half of their brain is being used making decisions that a millionth of it would suffice?"

"If I purposefully live to attain spiritual "oneness" with God, will I experience spiritual oneness with fellow brothers, and sisters, and vice versa?"

"Our own thoughts, ideas, desires and commitments demand that we consider the truth about ourselves."

"Awareness is the best thing that ever happened to anyone...it makes you think, wonder 'what if' and 'why."

Value System

Another sub-theme of self-concept is value system which includes philosophy/beliefs and motivation. The members often utilized free association to share their philosophies of living and life. The examples of philosophical thoughts and reasons or motivating factors for one's behavior abounded. Examples of quotes that support philosophy will be presented first, followed by some of their suggestions for behavior motivation.

"...those who live for now, whom see day to day, can consider each day as it comes and deal with it as a special occasion."

"All that you can do is your best and accept that what you do when you do your best is good enough."

"Our actions are the manifestation of our being..."

Examples of motivation or reasons for behaviors included, "...there is a reason for all actions...for their own personal benefit and that reason only." "...to be number 1..." "To get attention...Attention is power and life is power." "...man's search for trust and hope." "What we think does reflect the type of person we are. (thoughts influence behavior)." "...to live in harmony with one's beliefs/morals." "...abiding by the rules in order to be happy."

Self-Responsibility

A fourth sub-theme of self-concept began emerging towards the end of the five week sessions was self-responsibility. Group members seemed to reflect on the question

as to who is responsible for one's behaviors and decisions. Most came to the conclusion that each person is responsible for his/her actions and behaviors in the end.

"I think that people are ultimately responsible for and do make his/her own decisions."

"One may let others influence what they do, but the decision is finally up to them."

"I live... and I grow...and I let life direct me...I see opportunities and I take them...and I feel life will guide me and show me paths...but I am always open to improvement, advancement...I am not focused on a peak of my life...if I have focus, it is only to live, purposefully or not, but live."

Group Process

The second theme recognized was group development and was defined as the identifiable stages a group may go through during its existence. Lacoursier (cited in Tappen, 1995) described five stages of development: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

Forming

The first stage of development is forming and is characterized by the members' feelings of uncertainty and insecurity. The focus of the members' behaviors in this stage include "assuring acceptance, avoiding rejection, increasing feelings of comfort, reducing anxiety, reducing ambiguity, and attempting to clarify roles and expectations" (Tappen, 1995, p. 231). The following quotes provide evidence of the group experiencing this stage.

"I was quiet because I was taking this all in."

"I got a lot out of the meeting and appreciate my opportunity to be apart of it."

"This was our charter meeting. I had so much fun. I love getting into discussions, I really think that I will like this group. The group I think is great."

"Meeting rules are set and everyone is in agreement with them—sets a good foundation for the meetings. Very nice atmosphere and everyone is relaxed and open—comfortable."

Storming

Storming is the second stage. It is characterized by increased tension and conflict as differences between individual members become more obvious. Power struggles may occur with individual members developing alliances with those of similar ideas and opinions (Tappen, 1995).

"I feel that, as a group, we were quite capable of conveying our individualistic ideas to other group members. Though I worry that group sessions may often be dominated by one or two persons..."

"That is the totality of any and all discussions we can possibly have. No two people are alike, can be alike, or ever will be alike."

"I feel that these discussions are great. However, I am unsure of how I feel about some of the people in the groups. I like them all, the problem is that I feel like, well, I get sad when I hear them talk and call me IDEALISTIC."

"First of all I would like to voice my comments about last week's session. It was not as enjoyable as the first session. I really enjoyed the first session, even though I didn't say much."

"When I made a comment it seemed to me that it was just shot down before it was given thought to. I do not mind if someone disagrees with me, but at least give me the respect to

think about what I say. I have discussed this with one other member of the group and she agreed with my opinion."

"I had a large problem last week with the views of certain people in the group relating to the rest of how one self-purpose/concept can be wrong and not a decent/acceptable purpose/concept."

Norming

Norming is the third stage and is distinguished by the members being more relaxed with less feelings of anxieties and tension. The group members experience increased feelings of progress, openness, cohesiveness, and trust (Tappen, 1995).

"The bits and pieces make no sense until the day they all come together and SNAP! You have reached a higher level of awareness."

"I thought that this meeting was the best that we have had as of yet. It was informative and made me think about a lot of things that were discussed. Many of the ideas that we put forth were thought provoking."

"I feel that the session this past week was much more beneficial to all of those involved. There was a greater sense of community, I think...all opinions, for the most part, were taken into account and viewed in an open light."

"I finally see where the discussion is going and I'm developing somewhat of a cycle in my mind of how self concept and living consciously are linked. The group discussions are getting better as everyone begins to open up.

"It pulled everything we talked about together. We came to some pretty definite conclusions."

Performing

The fourth stage of group development is performing and is best described as the most productive period of the group. The climate is one of openness and a high level of trust. The individual members have a sense of belonging, an understanding of what behaviors are expected of them and of what they can expect from each other. Performing reflects the maturity of the group and indicates its ability to accept individuality and disagreement among its members (Tappen, 1995).

"I have enjoyed the experience and hope to become even closer to many of the other people in the group eventually."

"I have no idea why in the world I told all of those folks those crazy intimate things...what was I thinking? But I must admit that I did feel tons better after [name omitted] talked about being..."

"This past week's session was really cool. I love it when a group becomes close enough that they can trust one another with painful secrets."

"I though that last week's was the definitive meeting. We were finally able to share what was needed to be shared, and we also respected each other's positions and experiences. [name omitted] brought us all together, and we all learned from the things she shared."

"I thought that the definitions we came up with were major accomplishments."

Adjourning

Adjourning is the fifth and final stage of group development. It is in this stage that the group attains closure and comes to an end. Adjourning is described as one of mixed emotions such as pleasure in its accomplishments and sadness that it is ending. Often

times it is one of evaluation as well. Evaluation may include how well they worked together and did the group achieve its objectives (Tappen, 1995).

"I have talked with some people about the meeting, and we all thought that it was important for us to share what we did last week. Too bad we have less time now..."

"I have really enjoyed the experience...thank you."

"This experience has been good to me in more ways than I can describe. Thanks again for giving me the opportunity."

"I really enjoyed the group sessions. I'm kind of sad that they are over now."

"The Experimental Group started out as a bunch of people saying stuff on what they felt. We ended up as a group that communicated."

"Sad way to end a group meeting—strangers at first, good friends at he end..."

Facilitator Recognition

The third theme that emerged was facilitator recognition and is defined as acknowledgement by group members and conveyed their approval and/or satisfaction with the facilitator.

"I would like to say how much I appreciate your help and assistance in this time..."

"I also must commend you for a job well done in conducting the meetings."

"I have really enjoyed the experience...thank you."

"I really enjoyed the group sessions."

"Yesterday's meeting was very successful to me."

Chapter V

The Outcomes

Gifted adolescents are in many ways quite similar to their agemates. They too long for being liked and accepted as they struggle for independence and establishing their individuality. However, gifted adolescents are different from average, non-gifted adolescents. What distinguishes gifted adolescents from other adolescents are their special and unique characteristics and behaviors. These students usually possess advanced vocabulary and thought patterns, a greater emotional intensity, and a heightened awareness of the needs and feelings of others. These differences often set gifted adolescents apart from their age peer group. It is these same characteristics that create several vulnerabilities for gifted adolescents such as perfectionism, sensitivity to the perceived messages from others, and pressures of adult expectations. The review of the literature also suggests that gifted adolescents demonstrate ambivalence regarding being gifted and an increased likelihood of experiencing difficulty in adjusting socially and emotionally.

Gifted adolescents confront the same issues as non-gifted adolescents but the complexity of adolescence is more pronounced for gifted adolescents. The dynamics of being gifted may interfere with transition through adolescence and can have a negative

impact on self-concept. Self-concept plays a significant role in initiating and directing motivation and is crucial for successfully achieving the developmental tasks of adolescence.

All adolescents, gifted or not, become more peer oriented, making group interaction an effective process for intervention. The group can provide its members the support needed for dealing with problems and achieving changes. Group interaction and process can provide a setting that is safe and open for its members. Such an environment may allow for honest and sincere peer interaction and confrontation of challenging issues. The purpose of this research was to determine if peer group discussion sessions would improve self-concept in the gifted adolescent population. The research also sought to determine what reflective themes emerged from journals following such peer group discussions. The Theory of Modeling and Role-Modeling by H. Erickson, E. Tomlin, and M. A. Swain was used to guide this quasi-experimental study.

This chapter includes a summary of the findings, both quantitative and qualitative. A discussion of the findings will follow the summary. The conclusions, implications for nursing, and recommendations which emerged from the findings also are reported.

Summary of Findings

The sample consisted of 21 students drawn from eleventh graders enrolled in a residential high school located on a university campus in the southern region of the United States. Each enrolling student possessed a record of school performance that was above average in most subjects and was superior in mathematics and science, and had been recognized for intellectual curiosity. The age range for these students was 16 to 17 years. The 21 students were randomly assigned to either the experimental or the control

group. The control (n = 10) consisted of six females and four males. The experimental group (n = 11) consisted of five females and six males.

The instrument utilized to assess self-concept prior to and post treatment was the Pyryt-Mendaglio Self-Perception Scale (PMSPS). The tool contained three areas, each with variables, Valence (subdivided into Domain and Significant Other), Reflected Appraisals, and Social Comparison/Attributes, that were analyzed separately. The pretest and posttest scores comparing the experimental and control groups were analyzed utilizing the MANOVA with the Pillais' trace as the test statistic and significance set at the .05 level.

The pretest analysis demonstrated no significant difference between the two groups. The following is a summary of the relevant statistics: the valence/domain (four variables)—Pillais' trace (4, 16) = .085, F = .37, p = .83; the valence/significant other—Pillais' trace (4, 16) = .066, F = .28, p = .89; the reflected appraisals (16 variables)—Pillais' trace (16, 4) = .70, F = .59, p = .80; and the social comparison/attributes (8 variables)—Pillais' trace (8, 12) = .44, F = 1.17, p = .37. Since no significance emerged, the groups were determined to have equality of group dispersion.

The posttest scores were analyzed in the same format and are as follows: the valence/domain (4 variables)—Pillais' trace (4, 16) = .091, F = .40, p = .81; the valence/significant other (4 variables)—Pillais' trace (4, 16) = .147, F = .69, p = .61; the reflected appraisals (16 variables)—Pillais' trace (16, 4) = .827, F = .1.19, p = .48; the social comparison/attributes—Pillais' trace (8, 12) = .380, F = .92, p = .53. Since there were no significant differences between the two groups, the null hypothesis was

supported. The researcher concludes there is no difference in posttest self-concept scores between gifted adolescents who attend peer group discussions and those who do not attend.

The researcher also determined what reflective themes emerged following peer group discussions. The members of the experimental group provided journals weekly for five weeks either by e-mail or in hand written notes. The content of these journals was subjected to qualitative analysis by the researcher and two members of the research committee individually and then as a unit. There was agreement that three themes clearly emerged, including self-concept, group development, and facilitator recognition.

The members of the group indicated an increased awareness and recognition of the importance of self-concept. The theme of self-concept was defined as possessing four sub-themes, which included conflict, introspection, value system, and self-responsibility. The sub-theme of conflict was determined to have both an internal and an external component. The second sub-theme, introspection, included self-discovery, and the third sub-theme, value system, embodied the members' philosophy/beliefs and motivation. The fourth and final sub-theme of self-concept emerged towards the end of the five weekly sessions and was identified as self-responsibility.

The second theme identified was that of group development. Despite the short time span over which the group met, all five stages of development were demonstrated in the journals. The five stages of development include: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

The final theme designated was that of facilitator recognition. This was defined as acknowledgment by the members of the group that indicated their approval and /or

satisfaction with the facilitator. This included declarations of appreciation for being able to participate in such a group or for the experience, and commendations for a job well done.

Discussion of Findings

The quantitative findings of this study statistically indicated no differences in the posttest self-concept scores between the control and the experimental groups. This supports the null hypothesis that there would be no difference in posttest self-concept scores between gifted adolescents who attend peer group discussions and those who do not attend. These findings have been quite challenging for the researcher to confront in that the qualitative analysis would suggest otherwise. Several questions have arisen as a result of this conflict and the researcher will address these in the following discussion of the findings.

The first issue to consider is the design of the study which includes addressing sample characteristics, the intervention, data sampling, and the tool utilized within this study. The quasi-experimental pretest/posttest design controlled for a number of factors. However, the sample size was small and was restricted to those students who had parental consent and agreed to participate. These conditions decreased the study's power and elicited questions as to how representative the sample was of the residential high school junior class. Another interacting factor to consider is the possible cross-over effect between the control and experimental groups which may have been enhanced by the fact they not only attend school together but they also reside together in dormitories on the university campus. Additionally, their honesty in completing the questionnaires needs to be taken into account. The students may not have been honest in their answers on the

questionnaires. There may have been bias in their responses meaning that they may have answered in such a way that is more consistent with social norms and not truly their feelings. This is referred to as response bias and the specific type referenced is called "social desirability" (Polit & Hungler, 1995).

The intervention poses a significant issue within this design. Initially, the intervention was to have occurred over a period of six weeks instead of five weeks. The difference of one week is difficult to assess but should be mentioned. The true issue at hand is whether the intervention implemented was powerful and distinct enough to have produced a measurable change. This aspect includes consideration of the duration and curriculum content of the intervention, the effectiveness of the facilitator/leader, and the sample subjects' prior experiences.

In order to address the issue of the intervention itself, a review of self-concept and its components should occur. It has been noted that self-concept is multi-dimensional and has several facets, including academic, social, athletic, and evaluative (Pyryt & Mendaglio, 1995, Hoge & Renzulli, 1991). The evaluative component relates to how a person evaluates or assesses the various aspects of his/her personality, achievements, or social status. Some experts may refer to this component as self-esteem (Hoge & Renzulli, 1991). It has been supported in the literature that these facets are not only complex but also exist to some degree independently of each other (Hoge & McSheffrey, 1991, Hoge & Renzulli, 1991). The theories of development of self-concept are controversial but since the earliest investigations it has been assumed that self-concept emerges through a developmental process (cited in Hoge & Renzulli, 1991). It has been postulated by Harter that one's true awareness of self-worth does not appear until middle childhood. This

suggests that young children do not differentiate among these facets or competencies of academics or athletics as do older children and adolescents. And Erikson's (1963) theory of personality states that one's acceptance and approval by peer groups becomes more significant over the childhood and adolescent years. Erikson also suggests that there are fluctuations in one's self-concept through the years as a result of changing the importance associated with the different areas of competencies or facets. This information suggests to the researcher that self-concept as a whole is essentially stable in nature with one facet, evaluative (self-esteem), possibly being more susceptible to daily changes within the environment. And if one's global self-concept is positive, one will be able to adapt successfully to the challenges related to the situational and maturational crises that occur in one's life. This being stated, it seems evident that an intervention of such a short duration would most likely have little or no measurable effect on self-concept. Additionally, in light of Harter's theory, implementation of this intervention may be more appropriate or effective in the middle school years.

Another aspect of the intervention to consider is the curriculum and the facilitator. The curriculum was developed and implemented by the researcher. References and consultation with experts in the field occurred during curriculum development. However, the curriculum may have lacked the necessary uniqueness required to make the intervention powerful enough to result in positive changes in the subjects' posttest self-concept scores. The researcher as facilitator for the intervention may have lacked the expertise necessary to implement the curriculum effectively.

The final consideration relating to intervention of this study is associated with prior and present experiences of the students. The students within this study attended

regular schools prior to coming to the residential high school. They may or may not have participated in other gifted programs while in the regular school setting. However, these students had been a part of this new school and setting for approximately seven months prior to participating in this study. There has been research performed regarding the impact of specific programs on gifted students and their self-concept (Chan, 1988; Hoge & McSheffrey, 1991; Feldhusen et al., 1990). The evidence or results of such research has been inconsistent. It is postulated by some that by changing the gifted student's environment, such as moving him/her from the regular classroom to one designed for the gifted, may negatively affect self-concept. A hypothesis proposed by Marsh is based on the belief that the student's self-concept regarding academic performance depends on the average level of the performance exhibited in the class or school (cited in Hoge & Renzulli, 1991). Others have indicated positive impacts on self-concept (Chan, 1988). The subjects of the present research study may have been unhappy and frustrated in their past academic settings because of their differences from the other students and/or the limited and unchallenging curriculum offered. Now, they are in an environment that is accepting of them and that offers a challenging curriculum, and they are among students who have similar characteristics and behaviors. This issue was not addressed within this study but merits mentioning. Another aspect of the students to consider is that as adolescents, they have been living away from home and family for seven months, thus contributing to or perhaps enhancing their transitioning through adolescence.

The timing of data collection merits discussion. The posttest self-concept scores were obtained immediately after the last session. The students may not have had enough time to process or assimilate the information obtained in the five sessions. The four-week

follow-up self-concept scores may have addressed this issue but were deleted. However; such changes may not be observable or measurable even then; the changes to self-concept may not be evident for months or years.

The last issue relating to the research design is the tool utilized. The PMSPS was designed to promote the ability of teachers in assessing the needs of adolescents as related to education. It is a measurement device that assists the teacher in intervention and addresses the complexity of self-concept. However, its use may have been intended for dealing with individual cases and not for comparisons of groups. It seems logical to question whether this particular tool was appropriate to be utilized in this fashion and for this study.

The qualitative aspects of the study emerged from the weekly journals of the experimental group. The first theme was that of self-concept. This was expected since the focus of the sessions was self-concept and its components including living purposefully, self-acceptance, guilt, and self-worth. The journals demonstrated a heightened awareness and recognition of the significance of self-concept subsequent to these sessions. The students capitalized on the journal writing as a way to explore and confront their concerns regarding self-concept. Many of them were able to put into words their philosophies and beliefs regarding life and living, others were able to verbalize their internal and external conflicts, and most came to accept self-responsibility and to understand what living purposefully means. They did not like the term living purposefully and changed it to "living in awareness." This information does not provide proof that the students' self-concepts underwent any changes but does strongly indicate the power of the sessions in stimulating thought and reflection regarding self-concept. Colangelo (cited in Colangelo

& Davis, 1997), a respected expert of gifted students, explains that gifted students "have the ability to be insightful about themselves, but seldom the opportunity to articulate and share their insights" (p. 355). Group activities such as peer group discussions can be an effective tool for the social and emotional growth of gifted students as long as it is within a structured situation with a trained leader (Colangelo & Davis, 1997).

The second theme to evolve was that of group development. The journals provided evidence the group experienced Lecoursier's five stages of development including forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning (cited in Tappen, 1995). This attainment of complete development by the group may reflect several things: (a) the higher intellectual level of the students and their ability to learn, process, and apply new knowledge quickly, (b) the appropriateness of the researcher becoming the leader versus the facilitator, (c) the effectiveness of the researcher as leader and her knowledge of group dynamics, and (d) the successful implementation and application of the Modeling and Role-Modeling Theory of nursing as the conceptual framework for this study.

The last theme to consider was that of facilitator recognition. This is consistent with a recognized characteristic of the gifted, a heightened sensitivity to the needs of others (Silverman, 1993). This also may reflect the positive impact of the peer group discussions for the students in that they shared throughout the weekly journals their appreciation for being given such an opportunity. Another consideration is that it may reflect the researcher's ability to be effective in her role as leader of the peer group discussions. Recognizing the facilitator for a "job well done" also suggests the group

discussions were successful and support the effectiveness of group interaction for this population.

The Theory of Modeling and Role-Modeling by Erickson et al. (1983) provided the conceptual framework for this study. Peer group discussions, weekly journals, and pretest/posttest self-concept scores were used to gather information regarding the gifted adolescent. The science of modeling was incorporated within the analysis of information. Modeling is the process of understanding the client's world from his/her perspective. In the strictest sense of this theory, Role-Modeling is the individuation of care for the person based on the data analysis. The researcher implemented and applied this aspect not only for individual subjects but also for the peer group as a whole. The researcher of this study utilized and incorporated the knowledge obtained from the on-going data analysis to modify the intervention as needed. Examples of such changes include changing the researcher's role from facilitator to leader in session two and electing to respond to journals. The study also incorporated the theory's concept of affiliated-individuation. This concept explains that everyone needs to be dependent on others while simultaneously being independent and serves as a motivation for behavior.

Another component of this theory includes the five aims of intervention which embody the following goals: (a) creating and instilling trust within relationships, (b) encouraging another's positive outlook, (c) enhancing an individual's level of control, (d) endorsing and confirming another's strengths, and (e) promoting goals that are healthy. The five aims of intervention formed the foundation from which the curriculum for the peer group discussions was developed and provided guidance to the researcher in her role as the leader of the discussions. These concepts within the Modeling and Role-

Modeling theory ensured that the intervention was grounded in theory and facilitated the ability of the researcher to meet the needs of the students who participated in the study.

Conclusions

The researcher concludes from the statistical analysis that there was no difference in posttest self-concept scores between gifted adolescents who attended peer group discussions and those who did not attend. The researcher also determined via the content analysis of the weekly journals three themes including self-concept, group development, and facilitator recognition. The emergence of the self-concept theme provides evidence that the peer group discussions heightened the subjects' awareness and recognition of the importance of self-concept. It also supports that the peer group discussions and journaling provided an effective vehicle for which the experimental group could express and share their feelings regarding self-concept. The recognition of the facilitator and comments of appreciation also demonstrate the positive feelings the students experienced as a result of participating within the peer group discussions.

The swiftness with which the experimental group successfully progressed through group development, combined with the subjects' recognition of the facilitator/leader, demonstrates the power and validity of the conceptual framework of the Modeling and Role-Modeling theory of nursing. The theory's concept of viewing and understanding a person's world from his/her perspective and providing value to that person formed the foundation for the curriculum content and provided guidance to the researcher in her role as group facilitator and leader.

Implications for Nursing

A number of implications for nursing were derived from this study. There is limited research regarding gifted adolescents and self-concept. The current study explored the effects of peer group discussions and self-concept in the gifted adolescent population and provided insights into the educational, social, and emotional needs of the gifted adolescent. The researcher concluded that there was no difference on the posttest self-concept scores between those students that attended peer group discussions and those that did not, but the qualitative analysis suggests that the students experienced an increased awareness and recognition of the importance of self-concept for them. The intervention and journals provided them a forum to openly voice and share their personal opinions, feelings, and insights. The journals also indicated the success the group had with its developmental process and the effectiveness of the researcher as leader.

The nurse practitioner in primary practice often encounters adolescents in his/her practice and can play a major role in identifying adolescents, gifted or not, experiencing difficulties and facilitate interventions specific to this population. The nurse practitioner can use these findings to develop new and better ways to interact with adolescents, such as peer group discussions. The group format is an effective tool that could be utilized by the nurse practitioner in modeling the gifted or non-gifted adolescents' worlds from their perspectives and providing guidance into meeting their needs. Achieving an understanding of adolescent behavioral characteristics is imperative in assisting this population in establishing stable self-concepts and healthier behaviors. Implications for nursing include the need to incorporate the study of group dynamics and group interventions into curricula as well as into practice. The nurse practitioner can use the

information generated by this study to design and implement further research regarding adolescents (gifted or not), additional applications of peer group discussions, the promotion of positive self-concepts, and the advancement of healthier behaviors.

Other implications for the advanced practice nurse is the importance of incorporating and applying a nursing theory within his/her practice. The utilization of the Modeling and Role-Modeling theory of nursing within this study contributed significantly to its success and effectiveness. The study contributes to and supports the body of knowledge within this theory as it recognizes its therapeutic efficacy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for future research and for nursing practice.

1. Replication of this study with a larger sample, extending the intervention timeframe over four to five months, collecting the data not only at post treatment but also at six and twelve weeks post treatment to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

2. Replication of the study with gifted adolescents who do not participate in residential gifted programs to determine its effectiveness of the intervention within such a population.

3. Replication of this study with non-gifted adolescents to determine the effectiveness of this intervention within the non-gifted adolescent population.

4. Replication of the study utilizing a tool that is recognized for measuring the multidimensionality of self-concept in an outcome type of study in order to determine the effectiveness of this intervention.

5. Replication of this study with younger gifted students to determine the effectiveness of this intervention with a younger population.

6. Conduction of more research using the Theory of Modeling and Role-Modeling for Nursing as a framework for exploring gifted adolescents and self-concept.

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Appendix A

Pyryt-Mendaglio Self-Perception Scale

Pyryt-Mendaglio Self-Perception Survey

School: _____ Grade: _____

Gender: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Please rate the importance of succeeding in each of the following areas. Indicate the number that reflects your rating: very important=3, important=2, or not important=1.

	Very Important (3)	Important (2)	Not Important (1)
Doing well in school			
Getting along with others			
Participating in athletics			
Developing positive feelings about oneself			

How important are the opinions of the people that follow? Indicate the number that reflects your rating: very important=3, important=2, or not important=1.

	Very Important (3)	Important (2)	Not Important (1)
Father			
Mother			
Favorite teacher			
Best friend			

Below you will find a series of statements describing your perceptions of what other people think of you. Please read each statement and indicate the extent of your agreement: strongly agree=4, agree=3, disagree=2, strongly disagree=1.

	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1. I perceive that my mother thinks that I am smart.				
2. I perceive that my father thinks I get along well with people.				

	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
3. I perceive that my favorite teacher thinks that I have athletic ability.				
4. I perceive that my best friend thinks that I am a good person.				
5. I perceive that my father thinks that I have athletic ability.				
6. I perceive that my favorite teacher thinks that I am a good person.				
7. I perceive that my best friend thinks I am smart.				
8. I perceive that my mother thinks that I get along with people.				
9. I perceive that my favorite teacher thinks that I get along well with people.				
10. I perceive that my best friend thinks that I have athletic ability.				
11. I perceive that my mother thinks that I am a good person.				
12. I perceive that my father thinks that I am smart.				
13. I perceive that my best friend thinks that I get along well with people.				
14. I perceive that my mother thinks that I have athletic ability.				
15. I perceive that my father thinks that I am a good person.				
16. I perceive that my favorite teacher thinks that I am smart.				

Below you will find some statements describing your perceptions. Please read each statement and indicate the extent of your agreement: strongly agree=4, agree=3, disagree=2, strongly disagree=1.

	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1. I am smarter than other students my age.				
2. I get along better with people than most students my age.				

	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
3. I have more athletic ability than other students my age.				
4. I feel better about myself than other students my age feel about themselves.				
5. I have accomplished a challenging academic task.				
6. I have demonstrated leadership ability.				
7. I have accomplished an athletic goal.				
8. I have proven to myself that I am a good person.				

Appendix B

Permission to Utilize Instrument

Michael Pyryt, 04:59 PM 11/27/96, Pyryt Mendaglio Self-Perceptio

Return-Path: <mpyryt@acs.ucalgary.ca>
Subject: Pyryt Mendaglio Self-Perception Scale
To: arizer@MUW.Edu
Date: Wed, 27 Nov 96 16:59:35 MST
From: "Michael Pyryt" <mpyryt@acs.ucalgary.ca>
Cc: mendagli@acs.ucalgary.ca (Sal Mendaglio)
Content-Length: 655

Dear Ann,
Thanks for your interest in our scale. As Sal indicated, we are happy to give you permission to use our scale. I'm curious as to what version of the scale you have. We have modified the original version that appeared in Teaching Exceptional Children and not have a 30 item scale that includes physical appearance as a dimension, honesty-trustworthiness instead of "evaluative self-concept. We have also significantly revised the "attribution" items.

Cordially,
Michael
--
Michael C. Pyryt, Ph.D.
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Calgary
Calgary, AB, T2N 1N4
mpyryt@acs.ucalgary.ca
(403) 220-7799 Phone
(403) 282-9244 FAX

Sal Mendaglio, 04:19 PM 11/27/96, Re: Pyryt-Mendaglio Self-Perce

Return-Path: <mendagli@acs.ucalgary.ca>
Subject: Re: Pyryt-Mendaglio Self-Perception Scale
To: arizer@MUW.Edu (Ann Rizer)
Date: Wed, 27 Nov 96 16:19:28 MST
From: "Sal Mendaglio" <mendagli@acs.ucalgary.ca>
Cc: mpyryt@acs.ucalgary.ca (Micheal Pyryt)
Content-Length: 999

Dear Ann
Thank you for your interest in our scale. Michael and I are very pleased to give you the permission to use the PMSPS. And we would like more information about your study.

Sincerely,

Sal Mendaglio

Appendix C

Curriculum for Peer Group Discussions

Session 1 **Theme: Self-Concept**

Objectives:

1. Initiation of group identity and cohesiveness.
2. Develop a group definition of self-concept
3. Obtain input from the group regarding group need for the remaining sessions.
4. Establish group ground rules.

Procedure:
Members will be sitting in a circle
Introduction
Reinforce purpose and expectations of the group
Establish ground rules with group input

Activity:
Using paper and pencils, have the participants quickly answer the following questions, stressing they do not have to share these with anyone.

1. What's important in my life?
2. The characteristics of someone I admire in this group.
3. The qualities I most admire of a famous person.
4. The talents that I have.
5. The stuff eat.
6. I spend my free time doing:
7. What is self-concept?

This is to be performed in a quick process.

Group Activity:
Using a flip chart or blackboard, go around the group soliciting what their definition of self-concept is, or elements of, and placing each one on the chart or blackboard, this is to be performed by on of the members. As a group formulate a group definition of self-concept. Allow members to share feelings, agreements, and disagreements.

Next, as a group share the importance of self-concept and how they perceive it to influence one's lives. Encourage discussion as to how it is formed and what factors play a role in whether one has high or low self-concept.

Suggested questions to stimulate discussion:

1. What is self-concept and how does it influence you life?
2. What is the importance of self-concept?
3. Respond to "self-concept shapes our destiny".
4. What are factors that affect or influence the development of one's self-concept?

As a group, summarize the discussion and finalize the definition of self-concept.

Once this has been accomplished address the needs of the group by inquiring if everyone understands the purpose of the group, its expectations, and responsibilities. Then inquire if the members have any questions or expectations of myself, as the facilitator, and of the group itself. Offer the opportunity to share these expectations now or allow them to share them privately via their e-mail journal. Have one of the members list those that are suggested on the chart or blackboard as they are presented.

Closure: Have two or three of the members summarized the major points of today's discussion and one thing they have learned today. Thank them for their work and participation. Remind them of their e- mail journals.

Session 2 **Theme: Living with a purpose**

Objectives:

1. Continue development of group identity and cohesiveness.
2. Initiate process to raise self-concept among participants by discussing self-confidence and self-respect.
3. Develop an understanding of what living with a purpose is and how this impacts one's self-concept.

Procedure:

Members are sitting in a circle with all being able to view the flip chart.

Pages from flip chart with the work performed from last session will be displayed on the walls for the group to view and refer back to as necessary.

Activity:

Review the ground rules and assess as a group if any need to be addressed, changed, or if additions need to be made.

Briefly review session 1 utilizing the work displayed, obtain feedback from members.

Introduce first group activity:

Ask them to discuss what the following sentence means to them.

OUR ACTIONS REPRESENT OUR ABILITY TO THINK

(this is written on the flip chart, had been hidden until now)

- Facilitate the discussion to include self-confidence and self-respect, and accountability.
- Facilitate the discussion to include the recognition that we as individuals make choices, and that we can make educated, knowledgeable choices or those made in a daze without information.
- Introduce the concept of living with a purpose and what it means.

DEFINITION: Striving to be aware of everything that effects our actions, purposes, values, and goals, and to behave in accordance with that which we see and know.

APPLICATION: Establishing a state of mind pertinent to the responsibility one is involved in, e.g. driving a car or a boat, studying, listening to a friend, taking a test, making a decision.

Relate self-concept is impacted by purposeful living, by the choices we make such as our awareness of our situation, the true reality of our situations, our personal integrity. Summarize this activity with their definition of living with purpose.

Group Activity:

Present examples of living with purpose and not living with purpose.

Discuss each example.

Summarize this activity by recognizing that living purposefully is a cause and effect of self-confidence, self-respect, and accountability. And when one has self-confidence, self-respect, and accepts responsibility for his/her choices and behaviors, there is an increase in one's self-concept. (reciprocal effect: positive behaviors build positive self-concept and positive self-concept builds positive behaviors)

Individual Activity:

Ask the members to contemplate their definition of living with purpose and the evening's discussion. On paper, which they do not have to share, what they think would be difficult about living more purposefully and what would be the benefits of living with purpose.

Closure: Have two or three members share their feelings about today's discussions and identify one thing they have learned today. Remind them of their e-mail journals.

Also, share your admiration for each of them, recognize how special and unique each member is, and thank them for their support and commitment.

Examples of living with purpose and not living with purpose

Mary Ann was performed research in the medical field and her specialty was shiloh disease.. She was in the process of developing a theory that many of her colleagues thought had validity and would have a great impact on reducing the occurrences of death related to shiloh disease. She was gaining recognition for her work. Mary Ann inadvertently found a article that cited findings of an experiment that provided contradictory results to her theory. Mary Ann replicated the study and confirmed that her theory was not valid. She then published a report of her findings. A colleague verbalized his shock that she jeopardized her position and career by doing what she did and asked her why. Mary Ann said she strives to learn the truth, that the reason for career and life. Her colleague sneered and commented what is truth?

The colleague in the prior scenario.

Jason is an incredibly bright and intelligent young man who has been offered an opportunity to attend a special school that would challenge him intellectually and allow him to begin college earlier. He enjoys being the smart one in his class now and does not have to work hard to maintain his A average. He opts to stay where he is.

Session 3 **Theme: Self-Acceptance**

Objectives:

1. Reinforce the lessons of session 2.
2. Introduce the concept of self-acceptance, facilitate the member's comprehension of what self-acceptance is and how this relates to one's self-concept.

Procedure:

Members sitting in a circle, able to view flip chart, past two sessions' work is displayed on the walls.
Allow time for members to review the displayed work, provide feedback, ask questions or clarify topics of past two sessions.

Group Activity:

Ask them if they have ever compared themselves to other people, physically, mentally, ability wise. Or have they ever just sat down and looked at themselves in the mirror?

Have them close their eyes and see themselves in the mirror, one in which they can see their whole bodies.
-have them think about what they like and what they may not like when they look in the mirror
-ask if they accept themselves just as they are
Share feelings.

Repeat the activity and have them say to themselves that they do completely accept themselves as they are. Encourage them to repeat this to themselves several times.

Share feelings and thoughts.

Lesson: Accepting does not necessarily mean that one likes it. What it does mean is accepting that what we see in the mirror is one's face and body. This is accepting or agreeing with the reality of the situation. Relate to last week's session. The desired outcome is that one becomes more comfortable with oneself.

The other point is that when one accepts the truth or reality of the situation it is then that one can make changes. One is not motivated to make changes if one denies or does not recognize the truth or the reality of the situation.

Another example of self-acceptance:

You are trying out for the lead of a play. Fear strikes resulting in anxiety, tension, difficulty breathing, and more. We often tell ourselves to not to be afraid, however; your body is in the fight or flight mode and your mind is saying don't be afraid, a battle ensues within you. More tension, heart racing, teeth gritting, etc. Try the opposite, recognize and accept your fear!

Once you accept it you can cope with it.
Teach slow deep breathing exercise to promote relaxation.

Share examples of self-acceptance and lack of self-acceptance. Encourage discussion of the examples. Encourage the members to share their own examples with the group.

Activity:

Complete or answer the following sentences:

1. One of me feelings that I have trouble accepting is
2. My looks bother me yes or no
3. My friends like my ideas yes or no
4. I am becoming more aware of

5. If I could change just one thing about me I would
6. If I were more accepting of my I would feel
7. I am just as nice as I should be yes or no
8. One of my favorite things about me is

Ask if anyone wants to share any of their feelings or responses. Continue group discussion of self-acceptance and its benefits.

Closure: Ask two or three members to summarize in their own words the past three sessions. Congratulate them and recognize their effort and work in this process. Remind them there are two more sessions and that the last one is to be a celebration.

Examples of self-acceptance and not

A. Jeremy wanted to be a great athlete, he was 18 years old now. As a child in elementary school he played on all the recreational teams, baseball, soccer, basketball. He was a fair player. His father would share with him that he was a smart player meaning that he understood the strategy of the games, why certain plays worked, when to use them. His father also share with him that he had the ability to think while in the thick of the game. This made Jeremy feel good to some degree but not completely. Jeremy wanted to be a great athlete, to be the one to make the plays, the powerhouse of the team. But, Jeremy did not possess the athletic ability he longed for. He had flat feet of which he had compensated for quite well but... In high school he rarely made the teams, so he kept playing on recreational teams, trained to be a referee or umpire depending on the sport and began assisting as a coach. Over time, Jeremy realized and accepted his limitations in athletics, it often saddened him. But as he accepted his limitations, he began to see more clearly his abilities. His father was right, he did possess a strong understanding of the strategy of the game, especially in soccer. He started devoting less energy into the sport as referee and more as a coach. He found great pleasure in working with the kids and promoting their own love and understanding of the sport. He decided that this is what he wants to do and had created a plan to achieve it.

B. Lack of acceptance: what if Jeremy had not been able to accept his limitations as an athlete? Where do you think he would be now?

C. When Genie looked in the mirror, all she saw were the freckles. She hated her freckles, they were on her arms, back, legs, everywhere. Her mother tried to sooth her by telling her how special they made her and that each freckle was a kiss from the sun. Genie cried often over her freckles for she viewed them as flaws, ugly marks, she was embarrassed by them. So much so that she always wore long sleeved shirts or dressed to cover her arms, she tried to hide the freckles on her face with make-up, she did not play sports or go swimming with her friends for fear of getting more freckles. Gradually she lost many of her friends and became more and more isolated. She was a very unhappy teenager and she blamed it all on the fact she had freckles. Her grades were poor, she was not involved in school activities, she had no boyfriends. Genie in reality was tall and slender, had long flowing auburn hair and beautiful brown eyes. When others looked at her they saw these physical traits as well. She used to have an engaging, beautiful smile but that was rarely seen now.

Session 4 **Theme: Guilt**

Objectives:

1. Develop group definition of guilt.
2. Develop examples of when one feels guilty and how this can impact one's self-concept.

Procedure:
Have members sit in different places today, still in a circle but sitting in someone else's seat.
Display on the walls the pages from the flip chart demonstrating their ideas, definitions and work.

Activity:
Ask how members feel about taking someone else's seat.

Guilty will most likely come up in the discussion.
Seek other examples of feeling guilty.
Promote the sharing of why one feels guilty in such situations and the true implications of such feelings.
Reality check if the guilt is appropriate.

Utilized examples if necessary:

1. I feel guilty for being so good looking
2. I feel guilty for being so smart
3. I feel guilty when I am chosen top in my class
4. I feel guilty being so happy
5. I feel guilty for

Facilitate the group in recognizing the impact of full self-acceptance and relieving oneself of unnecessary guilt.

Facilitate the discussion to integrate past sessions of self-respect, self-confidence, accountability, living with purpose, and self-acceptance. Has anyone experienced changes in the way they view their worlds, activities, etc.?

Ask the members who is ultimately responsible for the following?

- one's choices and actions
- use of one's time
- the way one treats their body
- the way one treats others
- for one being happy
- the meaning one gives or does not give to life

Encourage sharing of thoughts, reactions, and feelings. Promote the recognition that one does not have control over every thing but one has control how one reacts or what one will do.

Closure: Request several members to share responses or thoughts about today's session, try to encourage those who have not done so in the past. Provide recognition and appreciation for effort. Remind them that the last session is next week. Allow them to express feelings regarding this as indicated by their responses.

Session 5 **Theme: Self-Worth and Closure**

Objectives:

1. Promoting their own self-worth within themselves.
2. To successfully bring the group discussion sessions to a closure that is positive and accepting to the members.
3. To summarize the activities and discussions of the past five weeks and bring to completion the process of increasing their individual self-concepts within this setting.

Procedure:
Members sit in a circle later to be standing.
Display flip chart pages with all their work on it.
Provide a handout that summarizes their definitions and outcomes of the sessions.

Activity:
Acknowledge in general what they have shared in their journals regarding what hey have learned. Recognize their successes and triumphs over the past few weeks. As a facilitator, share feelings about the past few weeks and that it is coming to a close. Recognize their strengths as individuals and as a group.

Review all of their work and accomplishments of the past four weeks utilizing the flip chart pages and the summarized handout.

1. Have them now take paper and pencil and write down their top ten list about themselves. They do not have to share this list.

2. Have them write a top five list about the person to the right of them on another piece of paper, this will be given to that person.

3. Have them share what was written about them. No one will be forced to do so. Explore their feelings and thoughts about writing their own list and then the list about the other person.

Share that it is important to not only promote one's own self-concept but to promote others as well.

Activity:
Have the members write down 5 personal goals for the next four weeks as it relates to living with purpose, personal integrity, self-acceptance, and self-responsibility.

They are to promise to review these on a daily basis as the work towards achieving them. Let the group decide whether to share these or not.

Activity:
Have the members stand in a circle.
As the facilitator, I will turn to my right and state a positive statement and a thank you to that person. The member to the left of me will than say a positive statement to that person and thank you, this will continue until all members have been addressed.

Celebration with cake then follows.

Based on information from:

Arbetter, S. (1996). Taking a look at self-esteem: How to boost a person's self-esteem. Current Health, 22(8), 6-13.

Barish, E.B. (1993). Self-esteem: You may have it and not know it. Current Health, 19(7), 25-28.

Schmitz,C.C., & Galbraith, J. (1985). Managing the social and emotional needs of the gifted: A teacher's survival guide. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing.

Stanish, B. (1986). Mindglow. Carthage, IL: Good Apple, Inc.

Appendix D

Handout Summarizing Group Work

Culmination of Group's Efforts

SELF-CONCEPT: a person's individualistic perception of him/herself influenced by that person's actions as well as those of society and environment.

LIVING IN AWARENESS: living in awareness is when you are aware of your situations, your beliefs, and the consequences of your actions--- on an individual basis.

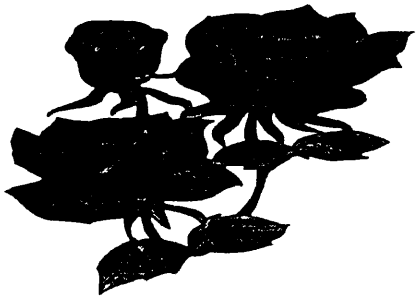
OUR ACTIONS ARE THE RESULT OF OUR DECISIONS:
which is influenced by one's:
Experiences Beliefs
Environment/society Circumstances
Consequences

YOUR ACTIONS INFLUENCE YOUR SELF-CONCEPT AND YOUR SELF-CONCEPT INFLUENCES YOUR ACTIONS. THIS IS CYCLICAL.

CONTROL YOUR DESTINY: makes some people feel fulfilled if they have definite goals.

SELF-ACCEPTANCE IS KNOWING YOURSELF, INCLUDING THE GOOD AND THE BAD---AND ACCEPTING IT.

REMEMBER TO ALWAYS CONSIDER YOUR "SELF."



Appendix E

Approval of Mississippi University for Women Committee on Use of Human Subjects In Experimentation

MISSISSIPPI UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN
Columbus, MS 39701

Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs
Eudora Welty Hall
P.O. Box W-1603
(601) 329-7142

February 26, 1997

Ms. Ann Rizer
c/o Graduate Program in Nursing
Campus

Dear Ms. Rizer:

I am pleased to inform you that the members of the Committee on Human Subjects in Experimentation have approved your proposed research with the following stipulations:

You must provide a stronger statement of how you propose to provide confidentiality safeguards. The consent form must be signed by the participants. Any work the student does should be returned to the student, or the student should have the option of releasing it or having it destroyed. You are reminded that if a harmful statement is made by a subject, you must, by law, contact the appropriate authorities.

I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Susan Kupisch, Ph.D.
Vice President
for Academic Affairs

SK:wr

cc: Mr. Jim Davidson
Dr. Mary Pat Curtis
Dr. Rent

Appendix F

Site Consent for Participation

Ann Rizer
634 Colony Road
Starkville, Mississippi 39759

Michael Neyman
Director
Mississippi School for Mathematics and Sciences
P.O. Box 1680
Columbus, Mississippi 39702

Dear Mr. Neyman,

My name is Ann Rizer and I am a graduate student in the Mississippi University for Women Division of Nursing Program. You know me as the Director/RN of the Campus Health Center.

I will be conducting a research study in order to meet the requirements of the program. One of my key interests is the gifted adolescent population, as we provide their health care while they are residing on the campus. My research proposal is to assess the effects of peer group discussions on self-concept in the gifted adolescent population. I would like to meet with you and discuss my proposal in greater detail and enlist your support in this project.

I will follow-up this letter with a phone call and schedule a meeting with you. I thank you for your time and attention to this matter. If you should desire to call me, you may reach me extension 7289 or at home at 323-3094.

Sincerely,

Ann Rizer

Appendix G

Parental Permission Consent Form

My name is Ann Rizer. I am a registered nurse and a graduate nursing student at Mississippi University for Women. As part of my program of studies, I am conducting a research study to assess the effect of peer group discussion and self-concept in the gifted adolescent population. My research study has received the approval of the MUW Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Experimentation. I am also working very closely with the administration of the Mississippi School of Math and Science.

I am also the Nurse/Director of the Mississippi University for Women's Campus Health Center. I have been in this role for the past two years and have had the privilege of working with your children. I am committed to promoting the health and well-being of your children in any way I can. It is from this commitment that my interest in this research project has evolved.

I am requesting permission for your son or daughter to participate. Participation's includes completing a questionnaire and attending 6 1-hour sessions of peer group discussion. Each session will incorporate educational and group directed activities focused on enhancing one's self-concept. I will be the facilitator promoting the discussion. Students will complete the same questionnaire at the end of the sessions and again 6 weeks later.

Participation is voluntary, and your son or daughter may refuse to answer any specific questions or stop answering questions at any time. Your child may withdraw from participation in the study at any time. This research is being performed independently from the Mississippi School for Math and Science and your child's participation or non-participation will in no way affect his or her grades or status in the school. The identity of your child will be protected.

The questionnaire being utilized is the Pyryt-Mendaglio Self-Perception Scale. It was designed by teachers to be used by teachers in assessing students' self-concept. Samples of the questions include: "I perceive that my best friend thinks that I am smart" or "I perceive that my favorite teacher thinks that I am smart." The student indicates the extent of his/her agreement with choices of strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

I appreciate your cooperation in returning this signed consent. If you have any questions please contact me at (601) 329-7289 or (601) 323-3094 or my Faculty Advisor, Dr. M.P. Curtis, at (601) 329-7323.

I understand the above information regarding the proposed study on peer group discussion and self-concept. I further realize that information obtained from my child is for research purposes only and that the Mississippi School of Math and Science is not participating within this study.

____ Yes, my child may participate in the study

____ No, my child may not participate in the study

Child's name: _____

Parent's signature: _____

Please return to Ann Rizer in the envelope provided.

Appendix H

Student's Consent Form to Participate

Student's Consent to Participate

My name is Ann Rizer. Some of you may know me as the nurse in the MUW Campus Health Center. I am a graduate student within the nursing program at the "W" and am conducting research to assess the effect of peer group discussion and self-concept.

Your parent/parents have provided permission for you to participate in this study. I am now requesting your personal consent to participate. Participation includes:

1. Taking part in peer group discussions in which you will be able to share your feelings and thoughts on a variety of topics. There will be 6 sessions total, each lasting one to one and a half hours and will be held during the day at a convenient location on campus. All discussions and participation will be kept confidential within the group.
2. Completing questionnaires on three different occasions. It will take about 20 to 30 minutes to complete a questionnaire.
3. Keep journals via e-mail. After each session you will make an e-mail journal entry to the researcher regarding your feelings and thoughts of that day's peer group discussion. These journals will be kept confidential.
4. The researcher will have a one to one meeting with you if you agree to participate in the study. The meeting will provide a more detailed overview of the study and the expectations of you. This meeting will only take about 15 minutes and will be at a time and place convenient to you as well as private.

By participating in this study you will be assisting myself and others in learning and developing effective ways to promote the well-being of adolescents and young adults.

Participation is voluntary, you may refuse to answer any specific question or stop answering questions at any time. You may withdraw from participation in the study at any time. This study is being performed independently from the Mississippi School for Math and Science and your participation will in no way affect your grades or status in school. Your identity will be protected.

I appreciate your willingness to consider participating in this study. If you have any questions please contact me at (601) 329-7289 or E-mail me at arizer@muw.edu.

I understand the above information regarding the proposed study on peer group discussion and self-concept. I further understand that information obtained from me is for research purposes only and that it will be kept confidential. I also understand that the Mississippi School of Math and Science is not participating in this study.

____Yes, I want to participate in this study.

____No, I do not want to participate in this study.

Name: _____

Please provide to Ann Rizer in the envelope provided.