

THE EFFECTS OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL ADVISORY PROGRAM
ON THE SELF CONCEPT OF SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

The present study explored the effects of the middle school advisory program on the self concept of 6th grade students. Two groups of varying socio-economic levels, intelligence and achievement were randomly chosen from the same middle school. The experimental group consisted of Twenty-two students and underwent five months of the advisory program. The control group consisted of twenty-one students. A pre- and post-test were given using the Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale (1969). The null hypothesis stated that there would be no significant gain in the self-concept of the experimental group as compared to the self-concept of the control group. A significant difference in self-concept was found with the experimental group. The null hypothesis failed to be rejected.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Self-concept is a hypothetical construct that encompasses all the attitudes, beliefs and values about the self and the environment (Pietrofesa, Bernstein, Minor, Stanford, 1980). The self-concept is a product of the social environment, learned from interaction with parents, peers and significant adults (Pietrofesa, et al., 1980). Since self-concept is so influenced, it is necessary that educators view the development of self-concept as a part of the educational process.

Powell (1981) states that a child needs a positive self-concept and a feeling of self-worth in order to have a life of happiness, fulfillment and success. Along with a positive self-concept comes the ability to deal with problems that may arise in a positive manner. Self-concept includes the child's interpretations of that child's abilities, and therefore affects all that is attempted in life (Mathews, 1983).

Research also indicates that academic achievement is related to feelings about self. Academic success and

self-concept reinforce each other (Pietrofesa et al., 1980). Felker and Treffinger (1971) found that feelings about self can inhibit curiosity and stifle creativity. Therefore, low self-concept can affect participation in academic tasks in school.

To develop a positive self-concept Durbin (1982) states that it is important to deal with all areas of the person. Since self-concept affects social and academic behavior in school, it is the task of educators to provide avenues of change to enhance the child's feelings of self-worth. The school should be a place where children can develop a more positive self-image. In light of the research linking positive self-concept with achievement in school, many school systems have adopted means by which self-concept can be enhanced.

It was the purpose of this research to measure the effect of middle school advisory programs on self-concept. Through current middle school programs feelings of self-worth are sought. The use of activities designed to teach about self and attempt to eliminate negative feelings is crucial to the middle school program. The understanding of the effects of these programs on self-concept will serve to (a) be of importance to school counselors, teachers, and other personnel in the development and implementation of programs, (b) make for more

effective programs in the middle school, and (c) improve the self-concepts of students.

Definition of Terms

Self-concept: A hypothetical construct that encompasses all the attitudes, beliefs, and values about the self and environment.

Middle school: A school having at least three grades, but not more than five, which includes grades six, seven, and eight.

Group guidance: A process for providing to students accurate and timely information which is nonacademic in nature; a unit or activity led by a teacher or counselor that uses principles of group dynamics for preventative and developmental objectives.

Self-esteem: Attribution of positive or negative attitudes towards oneself.

Teacher-advisor: One teacher who works with a group of twenty to twenty-five students and can relate to them personally on a daily basis. This teacher is responsible for carrying out planned activities to help students deal with life.

Transcendence: The stage of development which emerges prior to the onset of adolescence and extends through the early stages of adolescence (9-12).

Advisory period: A daily twenty-five minute period in which planned activities take place for the personal guidance of individual students in formulating positive attitudes.

T.A.: The teacher-advisor program in the middle school.

Background of the Study

The middle school movement can be seen as a result of dissatisfaction with the structures and program of the junior high (Educational Research Service, 1975). The middle school was designed to complement the developmental characteristics of the transescent. According to Thompson (1976), the middle school years are the most traumatic period in the life of a human being.

White, Anderson, and Cryder (1976) state that transcence is a time of extending the limits of self and that the concept of self develops thru this period. Therefore, education of transescents should be student-specific, that is, responsive to the unique needs of this age group (Goy, 1978). According to Dougherty (1980), Thornburg lists six developmental tasks for the transescent:

1. To develop and organize knowledge and concepts necessary for everyday life.

2. To accept changes in physical appearance.
3. To learn sexual and social maturation.
4. To develop friendships with peers.
5. To become an independent person.
6. To develop moral concepts and values
(pp. 127).

According to Erikson (1963) transescence is the crucial period in the development of self-identity. The purpose of the middle school is to provide the experiences to help children understand and help themselves (Hartzell, 1980). In the middle school the emphasis is on guidance and human relationships beyond those in traditional schools. Self-concept is listed frequently among the goals of the middle school.

According to Lipsitz (1984) preadolescents and young adolescents need to have a trusting relationship with one adult in the school. Students need to explore their feelings, share with an adult and identify with one person who will be there for them. In the middle school, the teacher-advisor is in charge of knowing everything academically about their advisees and also help with school adjustment problems and personal-social guidance.

The role of the teacher-advisor program is seen by the National Association for Secondary School Principals (1983) as having eight main goals:

1. to emphasize the worth of the individual student;
2. to foster a school environment in which each student can be known as a total human being by at least one professional in the school;
3. to recognize that each student possesses personal interests and needs;
4. to direct each student according to his or her potential;
5. to help each student develop a sense of self-direction;
6. to help the student schedule an appropriate program of study;
7. to help the student solve school adjustment problems;
8. to help each student establish useful career goals.

The daily twenty-five minute advisory period is an important way to meet the demand of developmental guidance: that guidance is for all kids, not just a few (Daugherty, 1980). During this time period selected guidance activities are presented. These activities are to help change and improve a student's self-concept, and also used as a screening process with more difficult

problems being referred to the counselor (Pietrofesa et al., 1980). These classroom experiences are a way of helping transescents cope and deal with their difficulties. The advisory period can also help students with self-awareness and self-affirmation.

The transcescent undergoes changes which affect self-concept (Gordon, 1962). Poor self-concept is in part due to a lack of confidence in facing and mastering the environment (Soares and Pumerantz, 1973). Through the implementation of the advisory program in middle school, students should be able to acquire a realistic and positive attitude towards self due to a better understanding of their world (Nearine, 1981).

Due to its effects on personal, social and academic growth within school, self-concept is a concern of the professional educator. Pietrofesa et al. (1980) states that self-concept can be changed through meaningful school experiences. As students feel more support from the advisor program and attempt to master new behaviors and educational concerns, improved self-concepts could be a result (Grossman and Retish, 1976).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the middle school advisory program improved self-

concept in 6th grade students as measured by the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale.

Two advisory groups were tested before and after treatment. The control group received no advisory activities while the experimental group received guidance for five months. The two groups were then retested with the Piers-Harris to determine whether or not self-concept was improved.

The hypothesis being tested was that there will be no significant gain in self-concept of 6th grade students due to the advisory program.

The major thrust of the guidance activities with the experimental group was toward self-concept. The three main elements of self-concept according to Pietrofesa et al. (1980) were explored. Those elements are (a) how I see myself, (b) how I think others see me, and (c) how I would like to be. Presentation and discussion of these topics were made with predetermined activities by the teacher-advisor.

Summary

Chapter I dealt with the background of the study, definition of terms to be used, and the purpose of the research itself. Explanations of the middle school concept, in particular the advisory program, were given.

The hypothesis to be tested was stated as well as generalities on the groups themselves.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The achievement of self-understanding and the development of a stable self-concept has been identified as a developmental task for transescents (Hartzell, 1980). Since a large part of the transescent's life is spent in school, the school should play a major role in the development of self-concept. Yet most of the research in professional literature deals with the nature of the middle school pupil, not so much the role the school plays in the development of self-concept.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of the middle school advisory program on self-concept. Chapter II deals specifically with the review of pertinent research and literature related to self-concept and the middle school advisory program. Studies demonstrating a significant relationship between self-concept and group counseling are cited since group counseling is the basis of the advisory program. Also reviewed are studies demonstrating non-significant relationships between self-concept and group counseling or

the advisory program. The final part of the chapter summarizes research findings.

The self-concept is learned, a product of the interaction of the social environment. Each child is born with the potential to develop the self, and social interaction shapes that development. In the course of development, each child discovers self by a process of action and feedback.

Early feedback comes from the family as well as those in the immediate environment. The parent-infant relationship is said to be the beginning of the child's self-concept (Yawkey, 1980). Coopersmith (1968) mentions appraisal of the parents as being highly important. The general manner in which the child is regarded as a significant person is reflected in that child's self-concept.

White, Anderson, and Cryder (1969) confirmed the idea that the concept of self continues to develop through adolescence. An increase in self-understanding at this time changes how the child sees self and subsequently behavior (Pietrofesa et al., 1980). Self-concept also plays a major role in academic and career success. Research indicates that the self-concept is related to scores on anxiety tests, adjustment, effectiveness in groups, honesty, defensiveness and achievements in school

(Soares, 1973). Therefore, teachers and counselors should concern themselves with the development of a positive self-image. The school can present a variety of activities dealing with the understanding of self and others. The teacher-advisor program is the middle school's attempt at helping students understand self and enhance self-concept.

Studies Showing a Positive Relationship Between Self-Concept and the Middle School Advisory Program

Few studies were specific to the middle school advisory program. Most research dealt with self-concept and group or classroom guidance. Due to the multiple synonyms for group guidance, the majority of the research cited in this chapter may deal with different terms. It must be kept in mind that the idea of group or classroom guidance deals with providing nonacademic information led by a teacher or counselor for preventative or developmental objectives. This definition coincides with the ideas inherent in the advisory program.

Thornton (1975) investigated the effects of group counseling on the self-concept of deprived inner-city students. In this study a randomly selected group of 68 students were divided into a treatment and control group. Over a four week period, students participated in group

discussions and related counseling techniques. A pre- and post-test were given using the Piers-Harris, the Florida Key: A Scale to Infer Learner Self-Concept and an achievement test. Significant results were given for the treatment group in gains in self-concept.

One study by Trauschke (1970) compared self-concept of students in middle school with elementary or junior high. Scores of 400 students on Gordon's How I See Myself Scale were compared. A significant difference at the .001 level was found in favor of the middle school at the seventh grade level.

Durbin (1982) used the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale to assess the self-concept of sixth grade girls. A multi-modal method was used with the goal of the group being to develop more positive self-concept in the participants. Sessions were of 35 minute duration and lasted for eight weeks. As a result of the pre- and post-test using the Piers-Harris all participants showed an increase in positive feelings and a decrease in negative feelings.

The Harlem School District encouraged the improvement of self-concept by the use of teacher-led circle discussions (Musholt, 1974). Using a Human Development Program dealing with feelings and self-awareness, a one year program was implemented. Circle discussions were

led in a 25 minute homeroom. Analysis of the first year's data indicates conclusive positive results in school participation, school atmosphere and lower truancy. The authors state this change is due to more positive feelings about self.

In agreement with this, Fletcher (1974) cites several studies centered around types and approaches of different types of group counseling on student self-concept. One investigation compared teacher led to counselor led group discussions. Fletcher reports significant gains in self-concept in the teacher led group.

Bear, Shever and Fulton (1983) investigated the usefulness of Thomas Gordon's Youth Effectiveness Training. Fourteen sessions focusing on self-esteem and self-concept were conducted. Students in the 5th and 6th grades were assessed using the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory. A pre- and post-test showed significant gains in self-esteem.

One study by Rutledge (1975) used short-term multiple treatment group counseling with 5th and 6th grade students. A significant gain was shown in students' self-concept from this treatment. Boyle found group counseling changed self-concept at certain grade levels, six, eight, ten, but not at others (Jones, 1980). Bredenbach also found that assertiveness training

enhanced self-worth in adolescents (Jones, 1980). Another investigation by Fitzpatrick showed significant gain in self-concept with seventh graders using values clarification (Jones, 1980).

Studies Demonstrating a Non-Significant Difference Between Self-Concept and Middle School Advisory Programs

Several studies demonstrated that there was not a significant relationship between self-concept and the middle school advisory program or group counseling. Daugherty (1980) states that there is little research showing that psychological education is effective. Martin (1973) conducted a study on educationally disadvantaged elementary school students. Once a week for eight weeks the children were exposed to group counseling. A pre- and post-test using the Piers-Harris and Coopersmiths was given at the end of the eight weeks. No statistical difference was found, although the author suggested that the duration of the sessions was not sufficient for any real change to have taken place.

One study by Hale (1973) investigated the self-concept of sixth grade Mexican-Americans. The basis of the study was to enhance students' feelings of worth through group guidance. No significant gains in self-concept were shown by the experimental group, although

they did maintain self-concept. The scores of the control group lowered significantly.

A study showing encouraging but not significant results for enhancement of self-concept through group counseling was done by Grossman and Retish (1976). This study investigated the effect of group counseling on educationally disadvantaged students. This study suggested, however, that there was a need for schools to become involved in long-term group counseling.

Mixed results were found in a study by Oxford (1979) on group counseling and self-concept in elementary school children. A program entitled "The Talking Circle" was carried out on an eight week daily basis with grades K, 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Oxford found the treatment groups to make significant gains in grades 3 and 4 and the control group to make gains in grades 5 and 6. Results of the study were not statistically conclusive, but the author noted that observation indicated otherwise.

Nargro (1973) studied four groups of behavioral problem girls in a middle school setting. The groups of eight girls met for sixteen sessions. Nargro compared counselor led, peer led, counselor and peer led and control groups. No significant change in attitude toward self or others was found.

Summary

Chapter II reviewed studies dealing with improvement of self-concept due to the middle school advisory program. This chapter also examined studies associated with the effects of group guidance on self-concept.

The single most outstanding purpose of the middle school has been to complement the developmental characteristics of students. Developmental tasks at this age include achieving self-understanding to reach a positive self-concept. The advisor program, through the use of group guidance activities, strives to meet this goal.

Several studies presented supported the hypothesis that self-concept can be improved through group guidance activities. Groups were found to be a therapeutic way to develop positive self-concept. Also reviewed were studies which showed no significant relationship between group guidance activities and self-concept. Mixed results were also found.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The 43 subjects in the sample for this study were chosen from the sixth grade class of Central Middle School, Kansas City, Kansas. A random sample was chosen from 244 students. The groups consisted of a variety of academic and ethnic backgrounds as well as a variety of males and females. Twenty-two students were randomly chosen from an experimental group in which units on group skills and self-concept were taught. The control group consisted of twenty-one randomly selected students not using the units on group skills and self-concept.

Instrumentation

The Piers-Harris Childrens Self-Concept Scale was designed mainly for research on the development of children's self-attitudes measuring self-concept. This self-report instrument is entitled "The Way I Feel About Myself" and can be completed within 15-20 minutes. The Piers-Harris requires a third grade reading level and can

be scored by hand. It contains 80 yes-no statements grouped into six subscales:

1. behavior
2. intellectual and school states
3. physical appearance and attributes
4. anxiety
5. popularity
6. happiness and satisfaction.

Reviews of the Piers-Harris were favorable.

Crandell (1973) stated that the Piers-Harris was the most highly recommended scale for children. When compared to other self-concept measures, Shreve (1973) found it to show the greatest promise in meeting the criteria set forth by the Technical Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests.

In his review of the Piers-Harris, Bentler (1971) suggested that the authors have produced a psychometrically adequate scale and recommends it for studies of changes in self-concept. Bentler made suggestions for improvements such as re-editing the manual. On the whole, however, the review suggested that the Piers-Harris shows sufficient reliability and validity to be used for research.

The Piers-Harris was used because short-term reliability coefficients show test-retest coefficients rang-

ing from .78 to .93 (Piers, 1972). The Kuder-Richardson Formula 21 was used to judge the homogeneity of the test. As a checking the Spearman-Brown odd-even formula was used with resulting coefficients of .90 and .87 for grade six and grade ten, respectively. Lefley (1974) found a split-half reliability of .91 with American Indian children.

The Piers-Harris is judged to have adequate temporal stability and good internal consistency. It is recommended by the author, however, that changes in individual scores of less than ten points be ignored.

Convergent validity coefficients using males and females as subjects range from .42 to .85 (Piers, 1972). Mayer (1965) compared scores on the Piers-Harris with Lipsitt's Children's Self Concept Scale and obtained a correlation of .68.

The Piers-Harris was chosen for this study for a variety of reasons. First, the short-term reliability of the test was good. It has been used in numerous studies and is considered to be an accepted measure of self-concept. Secondly, the reading level was such that all students in the study were able to read the items. Finally, the format was a forced-choice one which prevented the indication of a neutral response.

Procedure

The experimental group consisted of twenty-two students, randomly selected, who would be taught the guidance lessons specifically chosen for the advisory period. The control group consisted of twenty-one members, randomly selected, that would not be receiving group guidance at all.

It was decided to administer the Piers-Harris during the advisory time, which was at the beginning of the day, in the room where the students regularly met for the advisory period. The inventory was given to both groups four weeks after school had begun.

The groups were instructed that this was not an exam and there were no right or wrong answers. The individual advisors administered the scale as it was felt the students would feel the most comfortable with them.

The following five months the groups met three days a week for 25 minute sessions. At the beginning of the five months, students were instructed as to the rules of group counseling. Advisors discussed confidentiality, the right of each individual to speak and the right to refuse to discuss any subject.

Guidance material was chosen from activities in the district advisory book entitled Positively/Me. This book was compiled by district counselors and teachers the

previous year partially from existing advisory programs in other districts. Activities covered were on group activities and self-concept. Samples of group activities can be found in Appendix A.

At the end of the five months, students were re-tested using the Piers-Harris. Tests were hand scored and results analyzed using a T-Test for independent samples.

Hypothesis to be Tested

The current research was intended to examine the effects of the advisory program on student self-concept. The following null hypothesis was tested:

1. There will be no significant gain in self-concept of 6th grade students in the advisory program as compared with self-concept of students in the control group.

Summary

Chapter III has dealt with the methodology of the present study. The sample of the population was described. An explanation of the Piers-Harris was given in relation to reliability, validity and the reason for use. The procedure used was explained and the hypothesis was presented.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to examine the effects of the advisory program on student self-concept, the self-concept of sixth grade students from Central Middle School, Kansas City, Kansas. The Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale, The Way I Feel About Myself, was used as a pre-test and as a post-test after five months of the advisory program.

Data

The hypothesis stated that there would be no significant gain in self-concept of students in the advisory program as compared with self-concepts of students in the control group. The forty-three students, 22 in the experimental group and 21 in the control group, selected to be in this study were administered a pre- and post-test of the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale. Tests were hand scored and data analyzed using the computers in the central office of Kansas City, Kansas, Public Schools.

A one-way analysis of covariance was used to analyze the data. The criterion for acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis was established at the $p < .05$ level of significance. Mean scores and standard deviations were computed for both groups on the pre- and post-test. Table 1 presents the mean, standard deviation, and sample size of the pre- and post-test for the experimental and control group.

TABLE 1
GROUP MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION
FOR PRE- AND POST-TEST

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Pre-test SD	Post-test SD
Experimental	22	60.06	67.05	10.09	6.05
Control	21	50.86	53.00	10.82	10.24

These results indicate a greater change in means for the experimental group than the control group. The pre-test mean for the experimental group was 60.06 and the post-test mean was 67.05, a difference of 7.00. A look at the pre-test scores for the control group shows a pre-test mean of 50.86 and a post-test mean of 53.00, a difference of 2.14.

The standard deviations on the pre-test were similar, 10.09 for the experimental, and 10.82 for the control. The standard deviation scores on the post-test, however, indicate a lower score for the experimental group, 6.05, as compared to 10.24 for the control. This indicates more differences among students' self-concept in the control group than of those in the experimental group after the advisory program.

In order for a student's self-concept score to show a significant improvement, that student must score at least ten points higher on the post-test than the pre-test (Piers-Harris, 1969). The results in Tables II and III show those students in the experimental group and control group that scored at least ten points more on the retest. In the experimental group, seven students scored at least ten points higher on the post-test than the pre-test. In the control group, three students showed an increase of ten points or more on the post-test.

TABLE II
 SELF-CONCEPT RAW SCORES
 EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Student	Pre-Test	Post-test
1	54	63
* 2	41	70
3	65	69
4	58	67
5	79	58
* 6	60	72
* 7	38	62
8	59	57
9	74	75
10	67	73
11	70	71
12	60	69
*13	53	65
14	61	70
*15	61	72
*16	53	62
17	71	75
*18	53	65
19	69	71
20	64	66
21	63	71
22	48	52

*Students scoring at least 10 points more on the post-test.

TABLE III
 SELF-CONCEPT RAW SCORES
 CONTROL GROUP

Student	Pre-Test	Post-test
1	71	57
2	64	67
3	45	50
4	54	60
* 5	42	52
* 6	54	64
7	24	28
8	59	56
9	57	62
10	42	46
11	43	43
12	37	33
13	59	65
*14	40	53
15	57	58
16	45	42
17	59	58
18	50	46
19	63	58
20	52	60
21	51	55

*Students scoring at least ten points more on the post-test.

A critical F value was $F = .281$ (1,21 d.f.), $p < 4.08$, indicating that at the .05 level of significance no significant difference in self-concept was found between the two groups. Thus, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected. Table IV reports the sums of squares, degrees of freedom, mean squares, F values, and P values with the pre-test as the covariate.

The F value for the independent variable, the TA program, was $F = .281$, (1,21 d.f.), $p < 4.08$, indicating that at the .05 level of significance the TA program did not significantly contribute to differences in self-concept.

TABLE IV
ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE

Source	Sums of Squares	Degrees Freedom	Mean Squares	F-Value	F_{cv}
T.A.	31.703	19	31.703	.281	4.08

Summary

This research dealt with comparing the increase in self-concepts of sixth grade students who participated in the advisory program and those sixth grade students who did not participate in the advisory program.

The Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale, The Way I Feel About Myself, was given as a pre- and post-test. Data was analyzed using a one-way analysis of covariance.

Chapter IV presented the results of this research. The null hypothesis was that there will be no significant gain in self-concept of students in the advisory program as compared with concepts of students in the control group. The research indicated that no significant difference was found, thus failing to reject the null hypothesis at a significance level of $p < .05$.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Meeting the needs of the transescent is of extreme importance to the middle school program. One of the developmental tasks of the transescent is the achievement of a positive self-concept, and the middle school advisory program proposed to meet that need. The present study was conducted to examine the relationship between the middle school advisory program and improvements of self-concept.

Two groups were randomly chosen from the sixth grade class at Central Middle School, Kansas City, Kansas. A pre-test was given using the Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale. The experimental group, consisting of 22 students, then underwent a five month advisory program. The control group, consisting of twenty-one students did not participate in the advisory program. A post-test using the Piers-Harris was then given, and comparisons made between the pre- and post-test. A one-way analysis of covariance was used to test the hypothesis at the .05

level of significance. The hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance.

The hypothesis in this study was that there would be no significant gain in the self-concept of the experimental group as compared to the self-concept of the control group. There was no significant difference in the self-concept of the control group or experimental group due to the T.A. program. The null hypothesis failed to be rejected.

A review of the literature from the past twenty years on self-concept and group guidance, or the advisory program, yielded conflicting results. Thornton (1975), Durbin (1982), Musholt (1974), Bear, Shever, and Fulton (1983), Rutledge (1972), Boyle (1977), Brendenbock (1977) and Fitzpatrick (1975) all reported significant relationships to exist between self-concept and group guidance. Trauschke (1970) compared the self-concept of middle school versus junior high students and found a significant increase among the middle school students. Teacher-led group guidance was also found to have a significant impact on self-concept as reported by Fletcher (1974).

While the above studies showed a significant relationship between self-concept and group guidance, other research has shown a nonsignificant relationship to exist. Martin (1973), Hale (1973), Grossman and Retish

(1976), and Nargro (1973) found a non-significant relationship between group guidance and improvement of self-concept. Mixed results were reported by Oxford (1979) in improving the self-concept of third and fourth grade students in the experimental group and fifth and sixth grade students in the control group.

Discussion

Strengths of Results. The results of this study found no significant correlation between the middle school advisory program and improvement in self-concept. These findings are in conflict with the literature which found a great deal of support in favor of group guidance increasing self-concept. The results showing no significant relationship between self-concept and group guidance were oftentimes given with qualifications and findings that perhaps had the research been done differently, different results would arise.

The F value showed no significant relationship between the TA program and improvement in self-concept. The change in means for the experimental groups as compared to the control group cannot be ignored, however. Had the two groups been more homogeneous in the beginning, different results may have been found. It should also be noted that more students showed a significant increase of

more than 10 points in the experimental group than in the control.

Limitations of the Study. There were three major limitations which should be taken into consideration in this study. The first is the limited scope of the study. A larger sample size may yield different results as well as a more diverse population. The study could be replicated using schools from different communities of differing socio-economic background.

A second limitation of the study is the use of self-report as the assessment device. The validity of self-report in studies such as this has been questioned. Ambiguity of items and social desirability are both problems in self-report instruments.

A third limiting factor in this study is the fact that students were retested after only five months. Results could be different if the students were retested after the entire school year.

Implications for Further Research

This study is important to current research for several reasons. Most research deals with the nature of the middle school student and not with what happens to them as a result of the middle school program. The

present study was undertaken to determine if the middle school advisory program improved self-concept. Current research has not contributed much to the advisory program itself. Most literature deals with group guidance, and very little deals specifically with the advisory program. Further study needs to be done to investigate the advisory program and its impact on self-concept. Inconsistent results and the number of studies to be found indicate a need for more conclusive research.

A more thorough investigation using the Piers-Harris could yield needed results. Breaking the data into subscales could yield those constructs which are dominant for the group with improved concept. Areas which were low could show which areas needed to be dealt with further. Areas which were high could present valuable information on which constructs the advisory program did improve upon.

Further research could also expand the sample size and geographical region. Several different studies could be employed. Not only would a larger sample size change results, but also samples from varying populations could make a difference. Geographically, studies could be done comparing regions of the United States, urban versus rural, and differing ethnic populations.

Also, research could be done to see if those students whose self-concept increased also had a change in academics. Specifically, differences in achievement levels of those in the experimental group could be compared to the achievement levels of the control group.

The results from the study could also be used to compare the differences in improvement of self-concept between genders. Differences in different age groups could also be explored.

Implications for School Districts

This study could be of importance for school districts, particularly those planning to or currently undergoing change to the middle school system. These districts can gain information from the study that advisory programs should be an integral part of the middle schools.

For those already existing middle schools, the impact of the advisory program and students' self-concept needs to be considered. Yalom (1970) suggests that feelings of support found during group counseling can be generated to the school environment. Students who feel support will attempt to master new behaviors and learning during the entire school day. Existing advisory programs indicate a better school atmosphere in general.

The importance of principal support for the advisory program cannot be stressed enough. With the results of this study showing a significant change in self-concept for twice as many students in the experimental group as compared to the control group, principals can see the impact of such a program in their schools.

Implications for Teachers

Counseling needs to be seen as a function of the entire staff. As a result of this research, teachers should be aware that they can make a difference in directing students toward developing a better self-concept. By working in the advisory program, familiarity develops between teachers and students which in turn facilitates counseling.

The advisory program, through improvement of self-concept, should be seen by teachers as a way of improving the climate of their classrooms also. If self-concept is improved, the personal, social and academic growth of the student can also be improved.

Implications for Counselors

This study presents obvious implications for the counselor. It not only indicates a need for working with students, but also with teachers. Since the advisory

program is dependent on teachers conducting the groups, counselors need to help prepare teachers for this role. Counselors must work with teachers in the use of such skills as group guidance, active listening, and positive feedback.

Along with this, counselors need to recognize the importance of the advisory group as a screening process for referral for counseling. Teachers should realize that through the advisory program problems can be headed off before they become too large for the student to handle.

Through the advisory program teachers may also recognize those students who would benefit from specific group counseling as well as individual counseling. Referrals to the counselor could be made for those students who could use help dealing with such problems as divorce, drugs or alcohol abuse by themselves or family, social relationships and academics.

This study also provides a way to evaluate the advisory program itself. The results of a pre- and post-test using the Piers-Harris can show the strengths and weaknesses of the advisory program.

Overall, this study shows the need for support and continuation of the advisory program. The most important function of the program then is the improvement of self-

concept to help students through the awkward period of transescence. If middle school is to truly be a time of positive growth for the student, the advisory program needs to be an integral part.

APPENDIX A
Selected Self-Concept Activities

SELF CONCEPT - ACTIVITY 3

TOPIC

NAME TAG ACTIVITY

LESSON GOALS

To become better acquainted through self-disclosure
To set the stage for interaction within a group

MATERIALS AND PHYSICAL SETTING

A sheet of paper for each participant

TIME REQUIRED

Approximately one Teacher-Advisor period

PROCEDURE

Each participant will be given one small sheet of paper on which to write his/her first name in a vertical direction. The participant will then be asked to think of positive self-descriptive adjectives. The adjectives must begin with the letters of his/her first name.

Examples:

- M - odest
- I - nteresting
- L - ikeable
- L - oyal
- A - mbitious
- R - easonable
- D - ependable

Participants will then pin the paper on and mill around the group for approximately 10 minutes to observe the given information of the other participants in the group. Participants may question each other concerning the given information.

SUGGESTIONS

Another ten minute activity closely related to this one is ADJECTIVES. Divide the group into smaller groups of eight to ten students. Have eac student select an adjective which begins with the same letter as his/her first name and describe something about him/her (Shy Susan).

From: Human Relations Activities: A Handbook in Group Dynamics

SELF-CONCEPT - ACTIVITY 7

TOPIC

THE ME I WANT TO BE

LESSON GOAL

To help students to set goals for growth and change

MATERIALS AND PHYSICAL SETTING

One sheet of manila for each student, crayons, glue, old magazines

TIME REQUIRED

Two Teacher-Advisor periods

PROCEDUREDay One - Gathering

Have student cut out words and pictures which are descriptive of "the me I want to be." These may not be present, true descriptions, but aspirations and goals. Be sure that they include words telling how they will feel about themselves when these goals are attained.

Day Two - Glueing

Have students make a collage of their collections. When collages are dry, add them to the class journal.

SUGGESTIONS

Discussion:

How do you plan to reach your career goals?
How do you plan to reach non-career goals?
Who will provide the greatest assistance in meeting your aspirations?

SELF-CONCEPT - ACTIVITY 9

TOPIC

PERSONAL COAT OF ARMS

LESSON GOALS

To develop self-awareness
To share positive feelings about self
To give student an opportunity to clarify their own personal values

MATERIALS

Ditto sheet with "Coat of Arms" design
Paper, pencil, (crayons or markers optional)

TIME REQUIRED

One to two sessions

PROCEDURE

Each student is given a copy of the shield of his/her choice for making his/her personal coat of arms. (Black students may wish to use a "coat of arms" shaped like an African war shield.) The coat of arms shield is divided into six sections. Words are to be used in the sixth and seventh blocks only. All others are to contain pictures. Stress that this is not an art lesson. Only crude stick figures, etc. need be used.

ACTIVITY

1. Create an individual coat of arms by making a drawing in the appropriate section using the following directions:
 - (1) Draw two pictures--one to represent something you are very good at and one to show something you want to become good at.
 - (2) Make a picture to show one of your values from which you would never budge. This is one about which you feel extremely strong, and which you might never give up.
 - (3) Draw a picture to show a value by which your family lives. Make it one that everyone in your family would probably agree is one of their most important.

- (4) In this block, imagine that you could achieve anything you wanted, and that whatever you tried to do would be a success. What would you strive to do?
 - (5) Use this block to show one of the values you wished all persons would believe and certainly one in which you believe very deeply.
 - (6) In this last block, you can use words. Use four words which you would like people to say about you behind your back.
 - (7) In this space, write the one word to live by.
 - (8) Color the "Coat of Arms" your favorite color or colors.
2. When the drawings are completed, ask students to form groups of five or six and share what they have done.

SUGGESTIONS

An alternate format for creating the Coat of Arms:

1. Draw two things you do well.
2. Draw your greatest success.
3. Draw your life dream.
4. Draw your happiest moment in the past year.
5. Draw the place you feel most at home.
6. Draw three people that are important to you.
7. Write three words that describe you.

When the students have finished sharing, the "Coat of Arms" may be posted on the bulletin board or wall for a day or two, then filed in the student folders.

SELF-CONCEPT - ACTIVITY 13

TOPIC

LET'S TRY A LITTLE KINDNESS CHART

LESSON GOALS

To develop a positive self-concept
To identify positive qualities in others

MATERIALS AND PHYSICAL SETTING

Large sheet of paper or blank bulletin board with
caption "Let's Try a Little Kindness"
Small pieces of paper, pencils

TIME REQUIRED

Approximately 25 minutes

PROCEDURE AND ACTIVITY

Have each student write his/her name on a half sheet of paper, fold it and place in in a box or container. Let students take turns drawing names (like a Christmas gift exchange--they are not to tell the names of the person whose name they draw).

Provide a small piece of paper and instruct the students to write something kind or nice about the person. They should not sign their names to the comments. Collect the papers, read them and attach them to the "Let's Try a Little Kindness" chart on the bulletin board.

SUGGESTIONS

This activity should be preceded by a discussion of the fact that everyone has good things about them and it is much nicer to make people feel good about themselves than bad. If time permits, you might discuss, following the reading of the positive comments, how it made the students feel to have someone say something nice about them.

SELF-CONCEPT - ACTIVITY 14

TOPIC

IF I COULD BE . . .

LESSON GOALS

To explore yourself and others through mutual self-disclosure
 To help students clarify who they are, what they want to be, and what they want to do

MATERIALS AND PHYSICAL SETTING

Break into pairs and then form larger groups to share results

TIME REQUIRED

Approximately one Teacher-Advisor period

PROCEDURE AND ACTIVITY

Have the students work in pairs and talk about their written responses to such questions as, "If I could be any animal (bird, insect, flower, food, etc.) I'd be a(n) _____ because . . ." This done, have them form larger groups to share their choices and reasons. Here are some ideas to start with:

If I could be any animal, I'd be a(n) _____
 because . . .

If I could be a bird, I'd be a(n) _____
 because . . .

If I could be an insect, I'd be a(n) _____
 because . . .

If I could be a flower, I'd be a(n) _____
 because . . .

If I could be a tree, I'd be a(n) _____
 because . . .

If I could be a piece of furniture, I'd be a(n) _____
 because . . .

musical instrument	game
building	record
car	TV show
street	movie
state	food
foreign country	part of speech
	color

Students could complete these lists and place them in their journals. This activity could be used from time to time throughout the year.

SELF-CONCEPT - ACTIVITY 20

TOPIC

SELF-ESTEEM

LESSON GOAL

To help students become more aware of being left out or not accepted

TIME REQUIRED

One Teacher-Advisor period

PROCEDURE

Six students sit in circle with other students sitting around the room. One other student stands outside those in the circle.

ACTIVITY

The six students in the circle act as a close-knit group who are reluctant to let an outsider in their group.

Another student attempts to talk his way into the group. No physical means of getting into the group may be used.

After a few minutes the outsider changes places with an insider. The new outsider continues the attempt to become part of the circle.

Allow enough time at the end of the period to express their feelings about being left out of groups.

SUGGESTION

Have students express their feelings in writing.

SELF-CONCEPT - ACTIVITY 21

TOPIC

THINGS THAT DISCOURAGE ME

LESSON GOAL

To enable students to look at defeat rationally and to have students use defeats as stepping stones to self-improvements

PROCEDURE

One of the most difficult tasks for middle school students is to profit from defeat. Learning to take criticism calmly, to evaluate it, and to make use of just criticism is an important part of good mental hygiene.

ACTIVITY

Discussion of the meaning of defeat and examples of defeat are undertaken. Some examples include bad test scores, losing games, not being chosen for class officer or cheerleader.

Students attempt to decide if the pain of defeat is so great that people are better off not competing.

SUGGESTIONS

Students may want to list accomplishments and defeats they have had. Talking about famous people's defeats may be included.

SELF-CONCEPT - ACTIVITY 23

TOPIC

THE PAPER BAG SELF

LESSON GOALS

To share positive feelings about myself
To develop self-awareness
To develop positive feelings about others
To promote positive group discussion

MATERIALS AND PHYSICAL SETTING

Enough paper bags for all group members, glue, Scotch tape, scissors, plenty of magazines, colored paper, colored pencils/crayons
Chairs arranged in circle, after "Paper Bag Self" is completed, for group discussion.

TIME REQUIRED

Approximately two Teacher-Advisor periods

PROCEDURE

The facilitator explains to the Teacher-Advisor group members that they are to put on the outside of their paper bags those words, pictures, phrases, colors or whatever they think illustrates obvious things about themselves and/or things they would like people to know about them. On the inside they are to put what they think people don't realize about them and/or what they might not want others to know. The facilitator should make sure to say that discussion will follow the making of the bags and that whatever is inside the bag can be kept private.

ACTIVITY

Making of the Paper Bag Self
Discussion/sharing the making of the bags in the group circle in clockwise manner, beginning with the facilitator.

SUGGESTIONS

Discussion to follow:

Is it difficult to share positive characteristics about yourself?

If so, why? Does the "bag" make it easier to share?

Are there others within the circle who have the same likes as yourself? What are your feelings about that? (surprised, glad, etc.)

How do you feel that others know about some of your positive characteristics?

The facilitator might want the group members to save their bags for other discussion periods.

APPENDIX B

The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale

THE PIERS-HARRIS
CHILDREN'S SELF CONCEPT SCALE

(The Way I Feel About Myself)

Directions: Here are a set of statements. Some of them are true of you so you will circle the yes. Some are not true of you and so you will circle the no. Answer every question even if some are hard to decide, but do not circle both yes and no. Remember, circle the yes if the statement is generally like you, or circle the no if the statement is generally not like you. There are no right or wrong answers. Only you can tell us how you feel about yourself, so we hope you will mark the way you really feel inside.

1. My classmates make fun of me yes no
2. I am a happy person yes no
3. It is hard for me to make friends yes no
4. I am often sad yes no
5. I am smart yes no
6. I am shy yes no
7. I get nervous when the teacher calls on me . yes no
8. My looks bother me yes no
9. When I grow up, I will be an important
person yes no
10. I get worried when we have tests in school . yes no
11. I am unpopular yes no
12. I am well behaved in school yes no
13. It is usually my fault when something
goes wrong yes no

14. I cause trouble to my family yes no
15. I am strong yes no
16. I have good ideas yes no
17. I am an important member of my family . . . yes no
18. I usually want my own way yes no
19. I am good at making things with my hands . . yes no
20. I give up easily yes no
21. I am good in my school work yes no
22. I do many bad things yes no
23. I can draw well yes no
24. I am good in music yes no
25. I behave badly at home yes no
26. I am slow in finishing my school work . . . yes no
27. I am an important member of my class yes no
28. I am nervous yes no
29. I have pretty eyes yes no
30. I can give a good report in front
of the class yes no
31. In school I am a dreamer yes no
32. I pick on my brother(s) and sister(s) . . . yes no
33. My friends like my ideas yes no
34. I often get into trouble yes no
35. I am obedient at home yes no
36. I am lucky yes no

37. I worry a lot yes no
38. My parents expect too much of me yes no
39. I like being the way I am yes no
40. I feel left out of things yes no
41. I have nice hair yes no
42. I often volunteer in school yes no
43. I wish I were different yes no
44. I sleep well at night yes no
45. I hate school yes no
46. I am among the last to be chosen for games . yes no
47. I am sick a lot yes no
48. I am often mean to other people yes no
49. My classmates in school think I have
good ideas yes no
50. I am unhappy yes no
51. I have many friends yes no
52. I am cheerful yes no
53. I am dumb about most thing yes no
54. I am good looking yes no
55. I have lots of pep yes no
56. I get into a lot fights yes no
57. I am popular with boys yes no
58. People pick on me yes no
59. My family is disappointed in me yes no

60. I have a pleasant face yes no
61. When I try to make something, everything
seems to go wrong yes no
62. I am picked on at home yes no
63. I am a leader in games and sports yes no
64. I am clumsy yes no
65. In games and sports, I watch instead
of play yes no
66. I forget what I learn yes no
67. I am easy to get along with yes no
68. I lose my temper easily yes no
69. I am popular with girls yes no
70. I am a good reader yes no
71. I would rather work alone than
with a group yes no
72. I like my brother (sister) yes no
73. I have a good figure yes no
74. I am often afraid yes no
75. I am always dropping or breaking things yes no
76. I can be trusted yes no
77. I am different from other people yes no
78. I think bad thoughts yes no
79. I cry easily yes no
80. I am a good person yes no

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