

**Working With the "At Risk" Adolescent in the School System:
An Ecological Approach**

By

Delcy-Ann Selymes

**A practicum presented to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree**

Master of Social Work

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**WORKING WITH THE "AT RISK" ADOLESCENT IN THE
SCHOOL SYSTEM:**

AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH

BY

DELCY-ANN SELYMES

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree
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Abstract

An ecosystemic approach to social work practice suggests that understanding human behaviour involves considering the interaction of various systems at micro, meso and macro levels. In this practicum, an ecosystemic approach was used as a broad framework for understanding the complexities of the lives of adolescents identified within the school system as being "at risk". Working within the role of school social worker, interventions to facilitate adaptive transactions between the adolescent system and the school and family systems were explored. As well, the impact of macro issues of gender and culture were considered with a focus on how these influences could be addressed within the school context. Of particular interest was the effects that such interventions might have on the self-esteem of the adolescents.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Rationale of Practicum

As a result of my involvement with my own children and their struggle to find a sense of self at the adolescent stage, I was motivated to understand more about the adolescent within her social context. Why do some young people move through this life stage smoothly while others painfully struggle to find their way? How do the systems of family and school impact on this struggle and conversely, how does the adolescent's perception of and negotiation with her environment affect the systems around her?

In the context of the rapid change in our society and globalization, the issues of gender and culture seem particularly salient in adolescent development. I further questioned how an appreciation of these issues might affect the self-esteem of adolescents. I was curious about the messages young people were receiving from the most powerful influences in their lives: their parents, the school system, and broader society.

The political and socioeconomic changes in society (e.g., structural unemployment, poverty) are numerous and these changes are beginning to manifest themselves as adolescent concerns surfacing within the school system. As a result, adolescents are exhibiting a variety of social and academic symptoms. In this practicum I was interested in exploring ways in which the school system can provide information to

the "at risk" adolescent in the areas of gender and culture using the vehicle of a school curriculum. I was also interested in looking at how the social worker using an ecological approach might act as a facilitator between the various systems of adolescent, family and school.

Professional Learning Goals of the Practicum

The high school setting was an obvious choice to work with adolescents "at risk" of school dropout. It provided the opportunity to connect with parents, a major influence on adolescent self-esteem and academic achievement. I was also interested in working with other professionals who might offer their perspectives on the "at risk" adolescent. Further, I saw this setting as an opportunity to work in a school social work role using the ecological approach to develop experience working with adolescents. My previous social work experience had been with adults; this practicum allowed me to move in a new direction.

The broad professional learning goals for this practicum were as follows:

1. To further develop my knowledge and skills as a social worker by experiencing social work within a school setting.
2. To increase my understanding of and have the opportunity to work with

"at risk" adolescents, their parents and the school using an ecological approach.

In order to achieve the above goals I established the following learning objectives:

1. To examine culture and gender issues through the use of curriculum material.
2. To examine if the self-esteem of these "at risk" adolescents appeared to be enhanced by drawing out culture and gender issues in curriculum material.
3. To interact with and observe the parent system in relation to the adolescent and the school.
4. To work with school professionals in order to determine the role of social work in the school setting.

Organization of the Practicum Report

The practicum report is comprised of six chapters. Chapter One focuses on my rationale for the practicum and my learning goals. Chapter Two reviews the ecological approach and the literature on adolescence including developmental theory, adolescent

identity, gender and cultural differences, involvement of family in adolescence, and potential school and social work involvement with the interacting systems. Chapter Three describes the practicum setting, the evaluation measures and supervision during the course of the practicum. Chapter Four describes and analyses the practicum process, and includes the interventions used in the process. What follows is a discussion of the emerging themes in the practicum and their implications for social work. Chapter Five is the evaluation of outcome with the analysis of the compiled data. Chapter Six provides a critique of the practicum, an evaluation of professional learning goals, and the conclusion.

The reader should note that the use of the pronoun "she" is used to represent both genders throughout the practicum report.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

An Ecological Approach to Working with Adolescents

Overview of the Ecological Approach

The ecological perspective evolved from the systems thinking of such theorists as Bertalanffy (1969) and Anderson and Carter (1990). The systems model moved the practice of social work from a linear model used in the 1960's to a multifaceted, interactive approach that considers the entire system and the interchanges within and between the systems (Petr, 1988). Hearn (1969) was instrumental in adapting the systems approach to the needs of the social work profession. His work provided the opportunity for movement from the abstract systems model to an operational approach needed for problem solving (Greene & Ephross, 1991).

Systems theory evolved and with it a new concept. The term ecological was first used in relation to the natural environment and the science of ecology, and is characterized by continuous reciprocal transactions (Germain, 1991). The eco-perspective evolved from the increasing concern that the client's broad needs were not being met. Unlike the linear, one directional concept of one entity affecting change in another, the ecological approach holds that both entities are changed - the individual and its environment. Germain (1991) describes the concept as a circular loop.

The ecosystemic perspective is not a practice model but rather a useful tool to understand the dynamics of the situation at hand (Meyer, 1988). In order to work within this perspective the social worker deals with the biological, physiological, emotional, environmental, and cultural systems and the interplay between them. This new model provides the practitioner with the framework for assessing the entire social network. Ecosystemic thinking reinforces social work's longstanding interest in assisting clients in dealing with not only individual concerns but also with how those concerns affect and are affected by their environment (Germain, 1991; Norton, 1993).

Ecological Concepts

The concepts of adaptation, life stressors, and coping are instrumental in the ecological approach. These concepts are all transactional in nature, allowing the social worker to focus on the relationship between the person and the environment (Germain, 1991). Systems are in constant motion, working to balance changes in their situation. The concept of adaptation is central to ecological thinking as people struggle to find the best person-environment fit. Adaptation could mean actively seeking change in the self or the environment of the self. As a means of survival, individuals could make the decision to remain passive. Individual choice is related to the individual personality, resources, life experiences, the environment, and the culture.

The concept of adaptation suggests a positive readjustment to a person-environment situation. This readjustment is the result of positive or negative life

stressors. Stressful situations are both perceptual and transactional. As with adaptation, how an individual perceives the stress and what resources and life experiences people bring to meet these challenges work to either enhance or lower their self-esteem. Stress perception varies across age, gender, culture, physical and emotional states as well as past experience (Coyne & Lazarus, 1980). Based on these criteria, whether a particular event is perceived as a challenge or as a devastation may vary by person.

Individuals possess a variety of coping skills which have been learned through dealing with previous stressors. However, methods of coping are not always functional. If the coping mechanism is successful, self-esteem is generally enhanced and the situation improves. Dysfunctional coping, such as the use of drugs or alcohol to ameliorate the stress, may result in negative consequences either physically, emotionally or socially (Germain, 1991).

According to Germain (1991), social workers may suggest two major coping strategies to help to ameliorate stress: problem solving techniques and working towards regulating negative feelings resulting from the stressful event. These two functions are interdependent; as people begin to problem solve, self-esteem may begin to improve, resulting in reduced negative feelings. It must be noted that not all life stressors can be resolved by the individual, and there may be a need to mobilize social support. Interventions to modify a community system often require small group participation to effect change. At a societal level, small groups joining together to lobby for change may be desirable.

Gilgun (1989) discusses the above levels in the context of the ecosystemic

approach. Within this approach, the client's perception of her situation is the starting point for assessment and intervention. There are four layers in this approach which involves working interactively with social and physical components of the environment. The most immediate environment affecting the person is the micro-level. This layer is composed of interpersonal interactions (e.g., family members, friends, school relationships). A further dimension of the ecosystemic approach is the interaction of the developmental life cycle and the interpersonal layer. An example is the disparity of sibling interactions at different life stages (childhood vs. adolescence).

In addition to the social environment, the individual's physical environment must be considered in assessment and intervention. The physical milieu includes such areas as schools, recreational facilities, and businesses. The meso-level, or the interaction between the micro-levels, impacts on an individual's life opportunities (e.g., home-school, work-home). Those persons who have sporadic meso-level relationships may become socially isolated (Gilgun, 1989).

There are two further layers which have a substantial effect on individuals but are not in direct contact with the individual. The two layers are the exo-level and the macro-level. The exo-level encompasses environments such as workplace and government. Changes in these areas may have a profound effect on individuals. Even more far-reaching are the effects of the macro-level. This facet of the environment is ambiguous in that it deals with such concepts as culture, societal attitudes and values. The macro-level has a powerful impact on the micro-level by dictating socialization practices, belief systems, and gender-related opportunities for education and work (Gilgun, 1989).

Culture and gender directly influence the person-environment fit. The values and norms of the culture in which a person has grown up shape perceptions and interactions. The underlying values serve to justify gender roles "as if" they were natural (Germain, 1991, p. 28). Social workers must strive to be aware of their own values and norms which in turn allows for more sensitivity across cultures.

Contrasting Approaches

Rodway and Trute (1993) state that "each of the major approaches in the study of human behaviour has adhered to a linear model of causal effect...the target for change for the most part, is the person identified as the client or patient" (p. 8). Two traditional approaches, Freud's psychoanalytical approach and Rogers' client centred approach exemplify a linear model. Freud (1953) maintained that psychological problems arose from unhealthy interactions from others and problems could best be dealt with in private relationships between the "patient" and therapist. The family and patient were separated to avoid the family's contaminating influence. Rogers felt that psychological problems evolved from early destructive interactions with others. He assumed individuals would discover their own path through client/therapist interaction (Nichols & Schwartz, 1991).

Germain and Gitterman (1980) maintain that "social work ecology appears to be a more useful metaphor than the older, medical-disease metaphor that arose out of the linear world view, because social work has always been committed both to helping people and to promoting more humane environments" (p. 5). Meyers (1988) feels that if

the ecosystemic framework was applied to behavioural, humanistic or psychoanalytic approaches, a more holistic approach might result. Meyer (1988) does caution, however, that the ecological approach may dissuade those practitioners who may become frustrated by the possible complexity of their client situation.

Adolescence

The Concept of Adolescence

In Western society, the adolescent life stage continues to be recognized as a pivotal transition between childhood and adulthood (Kher, 1996). The concept of the adolescent life is a relatively recent phenomena initiated with the onset of the Industrial Revolution (Preto & Travis, 1985). In the early nineteenth century, educators and entrepreneurs became aware of the need to increase education due to the technological advancements of the time. As a result, young people were excused from the labour force to advance their knowledge. This need for further education has left the adolescent dependent on parental support for increasing periods of time. In the 1990's, the average duration of the adolescent life stage has increased to approximately 25 years of age (Adams, Gullotta & Markstrom-Adams, 1994).

Kroger (1989) cites a number of possibilities for viewing adolescence as a life stage. According to Kroger (1989) adolescence is an artificial construct of the mass media. Kroger (1989) agrees that affluent society is responsible for the extension of

public school, the delaying of employment and ultimately the struggle that adolescents have in finding their place in society. The legal system has also been cited as imposing legal restrictions on teenagers. According to Kroger (1989), viewed in this way, adolescence is the result of state-imposed status deprivation, and is hence not necessarily a natural category of human development.

Adolescence is also culturally defined. Segal (1991) and Sue (1981) distinguish between Western and Eastern societies by using the Asian Indian culture as an example. This culture defines adolescence with the onset of puberty and generally does not define adolescent tasks in the same way as does Western culture. For example, the young person remains attached and submissive to the larger family unit even after marriage.

Theories of Adolescent Development

Several theorists have proposed theories to explain adolescent development. Hall (1904) adhered to the biosocial perspective focusing on biological changes in the young person which in turn influence the maturation and social development of the individual. Hall perceived that childhood was dominated by instinct and adolescence was influenced by the social environment. He further believed in the concept of "storm and stress" during the adolescent period; he perceived adolescence as a time of struggle, upheaval and social change.

According to Adams et al. (1994), the sociocultural perspective in understanding adolescent behaviour has been supported by numerous writers including Kingsley Davis

(1940), Ruth Benedict (1938), and Margaret Mead (1928). These theorists reason that cultural factors influence the young person's social behaviour. Both Benedict (1938) and Davis (1940) consider the conflictual struggle in adolescence to be biologically necessary. Davis (1940) believes the conflict may result from the competition between the parent and the adolescent. This may occur because as the young person gains physical competency, the adult's physical strength begins to diminish. The struggle for Davis (1940) involves adult pragmatism versus adolescent ideals. Benedict (1938) feels a conflict may result from the inadequate preparation for the social roles that the adolescent will be required to assume as an adult. According to Sebald (1984), Mead argues that young people do not experience conflict in all societies. She views this phenomena as a cultural invention and that "storm and stress" might be avoided if society provided role continuity such as gradually granting status, privilege and responsibility to the adolescent along with the celebration of rites of passage.

Erikson (1950) addresses the adolescent life stage from a psychosocial perspective. According to Adams et al. (1994), Erikson views adolescence as " a life stage that functions as a transition between important life issues in the life course" (p. 41). His perspective includes not only the parent/child relationship but also other relationships within the same social and cultural setting. Erikson's emphasis is on the developmental challenges of life and to a lesser degree the influences of the instincts. According to Erikson (1950), attaining a healthy personality requires the mastery of each new life crisis to gain continuing accomplishment and personal achievement.

Erikson (1950) proposed eight crisis points equating to a particular life stage, each

requiring mastery and integration before moving to the next. While all stages build one on the other, the dilemmas of "Early Adolescence" and "Adolescence" are particularly relevant to this practicum. Early Adolescence deals with the development of a sense of "industry" or "inferiority". Here the person at the early adolescent stage is striving to recognize the importance of work in order to become a productive individual. For Erikson, the role of the adult, which may be either positive or negative, will be instrumental in the young person achieving the goal of industry rather than a sense of inadequacy.

After mastery of early adolescence is complete, the teenager moves to what is considered the stage of adolescence proper with the task of achieving "identity" versus "role confusion". Here the adolescent begins to make sense of her developing identity. The role of family, while still important, begins to diminish and is replaced by that of the peer group. Feedback from social experimentation assists in the development of attitudes and roles. Erikson (1950) envisioned the adolescent period as a state of "moratorium" where the young person's task is to prepare for the future and to determine who they are in relation to society. Erikson (1950) believes that if this task is not successful, the adolescent will lack direction and risk subjection to an unfulfilling work life.

The biosocial perspective, the sociocultural perspective and the psychosocial perspective are criticized for isolating adolescents from their interacting systems and focusing on white, middle class males, reared in Western society (Adams et al., 1994). Gilligan (1982) criticizes Erikson by suggesting that he views childhood and adolescent development as male dominated. Erikson (1950) suggests that the individual must

complete each of her life stages prior to moving forward to another. In the "identity versus confusion" stage and the "intimacy versus isolation" stage he suggests that the female adolescent identity is attached to her intimate relationship with a male. Erikson sees women "holding her identity in abeyance as she prepares to attract the man by whose name she will be known, by whose status she will be defined, the man who will rescue her from emptiness and loneliness by filling the inner space" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 12). It follows for Gilligan (1982) that Erikson's thinking may be contradictory if he proposes that a woman's identity is not formed until after marriage and contemporary women frequently delay marriage in favour of a career. The stages of identity and intimacy should be reversed.

Richard Jessor's (1993) recent contribution to adolescent development theory addresses the need to consider the adolescent within the broader context of a bio/psycho/socio/historical framework. Jessor (1993) has labelled this emerging paradigm "Developmental Behaviour Science." This model places adolescent development, from preadolescence through adolescence and young adulthood, within the context of a social, economic, political, and cultural environment. Jessor (1993) argues that adolescent development and behaviour must be examined within the interacting systems of family, school and peers, and within the context of the larger social structure in order to be properly understood. In order to consider adolescents within their entire social context, Van Vliet (1983) discusses an additional context within adolescent development, which he refers to as the "fourth environment." These are the environmental settings such as "youth clubs, shopping malls, sports centres, and gambling

arcades" (p. 5). This person-environment paradigm is consistent with the ecological approach.

Jessor (1993) points to gaps in previous psychological research on the adolescent stage. He states that, when dealing with only the individual, much is lost by failing to consider the "role of context in behaviour and development" (p. 119). Cronbach (1982) shares this view regarding school as a developmental context:

Understanding an adolescent's experience ...seems to require a community-wide ecological perspective. Even though an educational study, for example, may have to concentrate on classrooms, classroom events are influenced by the community, the school structure, and events in the home, and the investigator will enrich his interpretation by acquainting himself with the context in which his limited unit is embedded. (p. 74)

Jessor (1993) understands that developmental psychology has evolved and become increasingly complex within this type of framework. This is consistent with Meyers' (1988) discussion of the ecosystemic perspective in which she addresses the complexity of the model.

Adolescence - A Period of Conflict or Active Coping?

There is much debate as to whether or not the adolescent stage of life is a period of turmoil and crisis or a time of active coping as a result of the conflicting demands of physical, social, economic, and societal maturation. Numerous authors consider the

adolescent stage to be a period of "disturbance". From as early as 4000 years ago to the present day, researchers have continued to believe the adolescent life stage is a period of crisis, and for some, a necessity by which the adolescent struggles to adulthood (Blos, 1962; Cole & Hall, 1970; Erikson, 1950; Hall, 1904; Lewin, 1948).

Turmoil Theory of Adolescence

Offer, Ostrov and Howard (1981) describe the adolescent stage as a period of turmoil. Turmoil theory proposes that the adolescent struggles through significant disruption, leading to "fluctuations in functioning and unpredictable behaviour" (p. 84). In order to progress to adulthood successfully, the adolescent must move through this crisis stage, detach from parental influence, and achieve a separate identity. According to Offer et al. (1981), turmoil at the adolescent life stage is reinforced throughout romantic literature. This literature suggests a universal acceptance of crisis at this life stage. In his study of normality in adolescence, Offer (1981) found one in three patterns of growth in adolescence fit the stress and storm theory. Within this pattern, only approximately 21% of adolescents experienced some sort of turmoil. Garbarino (1986) refers to studies which reported findings similar to Offer et al. (1981). Studying adolescents in Great Britain revealed a low occurrence of parent/teen conflict (approximately 22%). According to Garbarino (1986), only 22% of college students reported that they acted out in adolescence.

The adolescent perspective suggested by Offer et al. (1981) refutes the notion of

the turmoil theory. Self-reports indicate that adolescents do not feel intense conflict. In fact, "they and their parents respect one another, share good feelings about one another, and have mutual confidence in the continuation of good relationships" (p. 87). Findings by Offer et al. (1981) indicate that "turmoil theory is simply wrong in that it is not applicable to the vast majority of adolescents" (p. 88).

Mitchell (1992) also supports the non-crisis position by stating that "the lived experience of adolescence - its sensation, electricity, vitality - is given much of its texture, flavour and energy from narcissism" (p. 11). For Mitchell (1992), narcissism is a normal part of the adolescent personality. It is only when the adolescent becomes self-absorbed and narcissism takes over that a struggle occurs between society and the adolescent. Further research refutes crisis and conflict theories; studies have found that adolescents are not usually rebellious and do not go through turmoil and conflict (Garbarino, 1986). According to Garbarino (1986), professionals working with adolescents may have a distorted view of this life stage since they see only those young people who have come to their attention due to some distress.

Although refuting the turmoil hypothesis, many authors agree on the importance of adolescence as a life stage in human development. What they dispute is the notion of this stage as a time of crisis. They present a view of transitional stress as the individual moves from one life stage to another.

Coping in Adolescence

Olbrich (1990) suggests that adolescence may be a period of active coping rather than a period of disturbance. He sees the adolescent stage as a phase of increased demands and the need to develop the necessary coping mechanisms to adapt to the transitional change. A number of studies have sought out information on potentially stressful life events on adolescents (Cohen, Burt & Bjorck, 1987; Towbes, Cohen & Glyshaw, 1989; Swearingen & Cohen, 1985).

Olbrich (1990) sees this period as a time of increased demands, some stressful, but not necessarily disruptive to development. The completion of developmental tasks is viewed as normative and allows for adaptation to the adolescent's changing environment (Havighurst, 1972). Coping theory describes a process whereby the young person deals with the many changes of adolescence (Olbrich, 1990). Seiffge-Krenke (1990) asserts that most adolescents successfully cope and adapt to the somatic, social, cognitive and emotional demands of this stage of life. Seldom does the adolescent seek and receive social support from adults. Her work concluded that approximately 80% of all adolescents appear competent.

Developmental theories on coping have been criticized as being based solely on research involving normal adolescents (Olbrich, 1990). In her study, Seiffge-Krenke (1990) compared 43 "troubled" adolescents to 42 "normal" adolescents. Results indicated that the troubled youth showed more signs of negative self-concepts, higher anxiety, increased depression, reduced problem solving ability, awkwardness in social situations,

and sought less social support than the normal adolescent group. More research appears to be needed which deals directly with adolescents showing signs of dysfunction and inadequate coping.

Olbrich (1990) prefers to consider these young people as "individuals whose potential coping capacities are not yet fully developed" (p. 45). Within this frame of reference, there is still the possibility that coping skills can be enhanced and defence mechanisms can be changed to coping abilities.

When working with the adolescent and her environment it is important for the worker to be cognizant of usual life transitions or "normal" adolescence. However, if the adolescent appears not to be progressing through this stage, it may indicate that the teenager is dealing with more than transitional stress. Dysfunctional coping by teenagers may take the form of substance abuse, school leaving, eating disorders, and/or severe parent-child conflict (Germain, 1991).

Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

Numerous authors have provided definitions of self-concept and self-esteem. While recognizing the importance of these two concepts, researchers have found them difficult to define and as a result, authors have frequently used the terms interchangeably. The constructs are closely related, but each refers to a different aspect of the self (Battle, 1987; Coopersmith, 1967; Rosenberg, 1985).

According to McCandless and Coop (1979), the concept of self is more than the

sum of its parts. It is a configuration of characteristics of its own. Identity is made up of many components; one is self-concept, and is based on an individual's perception of what others think of her. Individuals look to understand the reactions of other people; according to Mead (1934), a child's self-concept develops through interaction with significant others. Like other mental processes, self-concept is learned. Self-concept may be viewed as descriptive, addressing questions such as "who am I", and "what am I like". Coopersmith (1967) sees self-concept as: "...an abstraction that an individual develops about the attributes, capacities, objects, and activities which he possesses and pursues" (p. 20). Similarly, Rogers (1951) defines self-concept as follows:

The self-concept or self-structure may be thought of as an organized configuration of perceptions of the self which are admissible to awareness. It is composed of such elements as the perceptions of one's characteristics and abilities; the percepts and concepts of self in relation to others and to the environment; the value qualities which are perceived as associated with experiences and objects; and goals and ideals which are perceived as having positive or negative value. (p. 136)

According to McCandless and Coop (1979), there are three major components of self-concept: structure, function and quality. Structure addresses whether or not the self-concept is rigid or flexible. It asks if it is consistent or congruent. It also questions if we are in line with the judgements and evaluations made about us by others. Function

includes such things as self-evaluation, and refers to whether we are functioning in terms of our concept of ourselves. Function also considers locus of control, and whether the individual is influenced internally or externally. Quality of self-concept includes the construct of self-esteem. Self-esteem considers self-evaluation, or asking the question, "how satisfied am I with myself". It speaks to whether people have a low or high regard for themselves, and to what degree individuals live with themselves comfortably, even though they may view themselves as less than perfect.

Self-esteem is the way individuals judge themselves as a whole. It is the measurement an individual takes of her worth and value as a human being. Coopersmith (1967) defines self-esteem as: "The evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself. It expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy" (p. 4). Further, Branden (1969) refers to self-esteem as:

...an individual view of himself. Self-esteem has two interrelated aspects. It entails a sense of personal efficacy and a sense of personal worth. It is the integrated sum of self-confidence and self-respect. It is the conviction that one is competent to live and (is) worthy of living. (p. 110)

Self-esteem is an important component of self-concept. Rosenberg (1985) concludes that the importance of self-esteem is supported by an immense body of

literature and research in this area. He also views self-esteem as an important motivating force in people's lives. Branden (1971) feels that "there is no value-judgement more important to man - no factor more decisive in his psychological development and motivation - than the estimate he passes on himself ... his self-evaluation is an omnipresent factor in man's psychology" (p. 109).

While researchers disagree on a universal definition of self-esteem, they generally are in agreement about the following characteristics:

(a) Subjective Evaluation:

With regard to subjective evaluation, individuals create their own personal sense of worth, which in turn is conveyed outward through "verbal reports and other overt expressive behaviour" (Coopersmith, 1967).

(b) Multifaceted:

According to Battle (1987, 1990), researchers agree that self-esteem is multidimensional. Several measures have attempted to consider the many aspects of the self, such as competence. Examples of areas of competency include intellectual skills, achievement traits, physical skills, and social skills - both within and outside the family.

(c) Gradual in Development:

Self-esteem builds gradually as children begin to interact with the significant

others in their lives. It appears to stabilize around age 10, with gradual increases in stability with age. The two most important influences on individual self-esteem are parents and teachers (Battle, 1987; Coopersmith, 1967).

(d) Stability:

According to Russell (1989), certain self-perceptions are resistant to change after they have been established. She feels that particular components of self-concept, such as self-esteem, are viewed as flexible and adaptable to change. Russell (1989) believes that there are two views which suggest that change in self-esteem is limited. First is the Freudian view, emphasizing the impact of early childhood experiences. This perspective suggests that childhood views are so embedded in the psyche that they tend to immobilize people in regard to change. The second view is the genetic predisposition toward change. Russell (1989) argues that genetics and heredity have been overemphasized. This view suggests that people are predisposed due to their genetic make-up and may believe they are unable to effect change in their lives. Statements such as, "I am just like my mother, she was very shy too" may be internalized and difficult to change. She asserts that "new behaviours can be learned and self-perceptions changed" (p. 20). According to Russell (1989), simply providing new information does not encourage change. Factors such as personal relevance and experience, as well as the individual's perception of the person providing the information or feedback may assist to improve self-esteem.

Coopersmith (1967) suggests that change in self-esteem is possible through "momentary, situational, transitory shifts in self-evaluation" (p. 5). He feels that particular attributes of the individual's self-esteem vary in the areas of self-appraisal. The way people feel about themselves can be directly affected by their situations and environment. Individuals are complex; they consist of a set of constructs that appear to remain constant across changes in situational variables. For example, an individual may have little artistic ability but may excel academically; she may be athletically talented, but lack social skills. Over a period of time there is a generalizing effect.

Savin-Williams and Demo (1983) suggest that we have a "presented self", the part of ourselves we are willing to reveal to others; an "experienced self", the part of self evaluated by the person; and "self-feelings", the positive or negative emotions which could be experienced at any time. These researchers conclude that the "presented self" is relatively stable in middle adolescence (e.g., ninth-tenth grades); that the "experienced self" is less stable; and the "self-feelings" are the least stable segments of self-esteem. Regardless of the differences in the segments, they agree that global self-esteem is highly stable.

Current literature offers evidence of an ongoing controversy regarding the stability and change of self-esteem. This includes a discussion of the long-term stability of self-esteem, suggesting that change is possible under certain conditions. It is under these particular conditions that practitioners are able to intervene to effect change in self-

esteem. Satir (1972) argues that the feeling of worth has been learned and therefore it can be unlearned, so that something new can be learned in its place. She feels that at any point in life, a person can begin to feel better about herself.

Adolescent Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

According to McCandless and Coop (1979), adolescence is a period when self-concept is central to development. The general theories on self-concept in adolescent development suggest that the greater the sense of self, the more positive the psychological well-being (Adams et al., 1994). Changes in social attitudes and expectations may precipitate the need for major changes in the sense of self set in motion with the emergence of pubescence. Identity development is crucial to adolescence, and self-concept is one of the many components of identity.

An important component of both identity and self-concept is self-esteem, or the way a person judges herself as a whole. It is the measurement an individual takes of her own worth as a human being (McCandless & Coop, 1979). Evidence suggests that self-esteem changes from a specific, concrete concept to an abstract, psychological and interpersonal idea as the person develops from childhood to adolescence (McCandless & Coop, 1979). A detailed discussion of the adolescent self is found under "Theories of Adolescent Development" in this paper.

Similar to self-esteem during other life stages, adolescent self-esteem is a multifaceted phenomenon (Savin-Williams & Demo, 1983). Individuals have both a

global self-esteem (i.e., the over-all evaluation of oneself) and a temporary self-esteem (i.e., the feelings experienced in a particular situation). Fuhrmann (1990) feels that self-esteem reaches its lowest point in early adolescence, gradually increasing and stabilizing during the middle teen years. There are many influences on adolescent self-esteem which include school, parents and community. The transition from elementary school to junior high school may reduce self-esteem in adolescents (Wigfeld, Eccles, Mac Iver, Reuman & Midgley, 1991). However, academic achievement can affect self-esteem and can be a positive predictor of success in adulthood (Adams et al., 1994). According to Rosenberg (1963), parental interest in the adolescent appears to be an indicator of self-esteem. Parents who lack interest in their children's friends, school grades, and parent-child conversations may contribute to low adolescent self-esteem. Further, low self-esteem in adolescents may be related to parents who apply excessive academic pressure (Rosenberg, 1963).

Developmental Tasks of Adolescence

Adolescence brings with it a number of developmental tasks. These tasks include the development of sexuality, identity, autonomy, attachment, loss and separation. Each task offers a significant role in the adolescent development; however, in the formation of self the task of identity appears to be crucial (Erikson, 1950; Marcia, 1966; Mitchell, 1992; Preto, 1989; Saunders, 1982).

According to Marcia (1980), "identity refers to a person's private view of those

traits and characteristics that best describe him/her" (p. 260). Identity or self conception answers the question "Who am I?" and goes through the largest change during adolescence. Given the proper nurturance, identity has the potential to grow through the entire adolescent period. Adolescence is the first developmental life stage directly focusing on identity formation. Identity, while not finalized in this life stage, can result in a solid beginning of a mature identity (Kroger, 1989; Marcia, 1987).

Erikson's Identity Theory: A Basis for Work In Adolescence

Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory of identity development consists of eight gradual, polarized stages from infancy to old age. Identity for Erikson does not begin and end at adolescence, but rather "identity formation involves a synthesis of these earlier identifications into a new configuration..." (Kroger, 1989, p. 15). Consistent with developmental theory, Erikson (1968) conceives that in early childhood, children begin to see themselves as distinct from their parents (Erikson, 1968).

Much attention has been given to Erikson's fifth stage, "ego identity vs. identity diffusion". During this stage, the task is to integrate and cope with a myriad of physical and emotional changes which occur in conjunction with increasing social pressure for adult behaviour. It is here that Erikson sees "fidelity" (Kroger, 1989, p. 27), the core of identity, emerging. In adolescence, individuals must devote themselves to a greater cause which demonstrates commitment to future work and values. If the adolescent is able to integrate the necessary changes, "ego identity" will result. However, if the adolescent is

unable to cope and adapt to this life stage, identity diffusion will be the negative outcome (Whitbourne, 1979). For Erikson, "identity diffusion" may result in the troubled adolescent assuming a negative identity (Kroger, 1989). According to Whitbourne (1979), Erikson's theory on identity suggests that women acquire their identity only after an intimate involvement with a male partner. This concept precludes women from successfully achieving identity versus role confusion and moving to intimacy versus isolation.

Working from Erikson's (1968) construct of identity theory, Marcia (1966, 1980) expanded and operationalized the fifth stage of "ego identity versus identity confusion." Marcia (1966) focused on two key concepts: commitment and crisis. Four categories were developed - Identity Achievement, Foreclosure, Moratorium, and Identity Diffusion.

Adolescents who are in Identity Achievement and Foreclosure have both made social role commitments. After a crisis or decision-making period, teenagers with Identity Achievement have made a commitment to an occupational path and ideological belief (Adams et al., 1994). In his studies of ego identity status, Marcia (1966) found this group to perform well under cognitive stress, to have a sense of humour, to be open to accepting new ideas, to be less authoritarian and to have higher self-esteem. The Foreclosure individual has by-passed identity formation and adopted the roles and values of childhood identification figures (e.g., parents).

Adolescents who have not made a commitment to a particular vocation, political view, or religious belief, and who do not feel they need to make such a commitment, are perceived to be "diffused" - hence the term Identity Diffusion. Adolescents in the

Moratorium category also lack commitment, but they differ from adolescents in the Identity Diffusion category in that they are searching for social roles (Adams et al., 1994).

As discussed earlier, Erikson (1950, 1968) has been criticized in several areas, including his failure to acknowledge gender differences and cultural bias. Kroger (1989) questions the scientific validity of Erikson's observations on womanhood, indicating that researchers have been unable to replicate results from Erikson's experiments with regard to identity formation in females. According to Whitbourne (1979), the literature in the areas of vocational choices, religious beliefs, political ideology and social roles conclude that males and females are comparable in their methods of seeking identity development, and any differences could be considered minor.

Marcia (1966, 1980) attempted to compensate for Erikson's exclusion of female identity development by including a fourth identity issue in the "Identity Status Interview for Women". However, a gender bias remained as the male gender was emphasized and female gender development was disregarded (Gilligan, 1982; Whitbourne, 1979).

According to Kroger (1989), Erikson also neglected to consider that cultures vary in the provision of opportunity for choices in social, ideological and vocational roles. As well, Seiffge-Krenke (1990) feels that developmental tasks are universal, but that the meaning ascribed to the tasks may vary from culture to culture.

Vocational Identity Development in Adolescence

Elaborating on Erikson's identity theory (1968), and Marcia's (1966, 1980)

modification of Erikson's theory, Vondracek (1994) discusses the importance of vocation development in adolescent development. Vondracek (1994) feels that career development is a process beginning in early childhood, which moves through adolescence. Hendry, Glendinning, Love, Scott and Shucksmith (1994) see adolescent development occurring within a social/cultural context. Vondracek, Lerner, and Schulenberg (1986) suggest that individuals actively participate in their own vocational development through bidirectional links with their social context from childhood to adulthood.

A common theme throughout the vocational developmental literature (Erikson, 1968; Havighurst, 1964; Marcia, 1966; Super, 1957) is that children, having reached physical and cognitive maturity, must obtain some knowledge of work as it pertains to occupation and establish a vocational identity. Vondracek (1994) recognizes that a vocational identity may vary across cultures.

Studies have provided conflicting results regarding young people and work. Many theorists point to a preadolescent (Erikson's "industry" stage) interest in performing part time work, an idea which is supported by empirical evidence. Vaillant and Vaillant (1981) discovered in a 35 year longitudinal study that adult men who showed a sense of industry in the preadolescent/young adolescent stage exhibited high levels of productivity, generally had warm relations with other people, were better paid for their adult work, and were much less likely to become unemployed.

More recent studies on adolescent students engaged in early work refute the positive findings of Vaillant and Vaillant (1981). These studies suggest that early work

appears to have negative effects on students in the areas of behaviour, substance abuse, and poor school performance (Vondracek 1994). According to Vondracek (1994), studies found that as the number of employment hours for students increased, so did the reduction in school performance. However, students who did a moderate level of work were found to have a slight increase in their grade point average (Vondracek, 1994). Both male and female young adolescents who worked fewer than 15 hours per week were less inclined toward deviant behaviour (Vondracek, 1994). Using Marcia's (1966) framework, Vondracek (1994) divided 600 students into the four categories of Diffusion, Foreclosure, Moratorium and Achievement and questioned the students on issues dealing with grades, feelings about school, teachers, academic subjects, educational aspirations and participation in academic activities. Subjects were then categorized as "workers" or "worker avoiders" based on their responses. Findings showed 65% of the work avoiders were in the Diffusion category and 96% of the workers were in the Achievement category.

The Role of the School in Vocational Identity Formation

Is society providing youth with the tools necessary to develop their vocational potential to meet the demands of the 21st century? Due to ongoing sociological, demographic and technological changes, it is important for the educators of our society to develop an understanding of how adolescents develop within all contexts of their lives (Vondracek, 1994). In order to facilitate a smooth transition from school to work,

appropriate educational intervention is necessary. Waterman (1989) and Hamilton (1990) propose that schools provide the needed "identity promotion" (p. 301). Waterman (1989) suggests that schools encourage adolescents to consider alternative goals in the areas of identity domains. In his opinion, schools should facilitate the gathering of relevant information for vocational development and foster the willingness of adolescents to make commitments to the goals, values, and beliefs that best express their chosen direction. Hamilton (1990) sees a collaborative effort between schools, employers, unions, and social agencies as important in assisting adolescents in vocational development.

Conclusion

Vondracek (1994) agrees with Erikson that adolescents must develop a sense of industry during adolescence in order to move on to developing a self-chosen identity. Family support and environment appear to be relevant when considering the successful achievement of a vocational identity. Those adolescents who have a firm sense of industry and a developed vocational identity tend to have higher self-esteem. With the development of industry and a secure family environment, increased esteem may contribute to a successful career development in early adulthood. Unanswered questions remain as to whether our society adequately prepares and supports our youth in developing an appropriate vocational identity, and whether our society adequately considers future employment opportunities for our youth.

Gender Differences in Identity

Traditional developmental theory suggests that women and men are similar in the development of self (Erikson, 1950; Marcia, 1966). Feminist thinkers have taken issue with this assumption and have argued that females follow a different path of development from birth (Chodorow, 1974; Gilligan, 1982). Speaking about the traditional models of development, Goldner (1988) questions: "Does it make room for both male and female experiences or does it make the man the measure of women" (p. 17). Gilligan (1982) also states: "They have tried to fashion women out of a masculine cloth" (p. 6). Gilligan (1982) suggests that Freud made an unsuccessful attempt to masculinize the female by trying to fit women into the masculine conception. Gilligan (1982) further suggests that the gender differences in identity development lie in the manner in which male and female children experience their earliest relationships with their caregiver. Gilligan (1982) argues that gender formation is not based solely on anatomy. She explains that because women are most often responsible for early child care, mothers and daughters view themselves as similar. This similarity of being female breeds attachment and connectedness. In contrast, the son and mother relationship is perceived as requiring separation and individuation.

Chodorow (1978) sees strength in the female experience. Empathy for another's situation results from the need for attachment. According to Chodorow (1978), girls emerge with a stronger basis for experiencing another's needs or feelings as one's own (p. 167). Gilligan (1982) argues that for males, individuation is connected to gender identity

and that separation from mother is a necessary component for the development of masculinity. The reverse is true for girls whose identity is dependent on connectedness. As a result, females and males are alternately threatened by what the other gender perceives as strength.

Spelman (1988), in her analysis of Chodorow's work, "Reproduction of Mothering," also discusses gender development of the female and the male in relation to mothering. She submits that gender differences in identity development cannot be explained without starting with the fact that men do not mother; in fact, males learn to devalue mothering through role models in the larger culture. The devaluation of motherhood sets the stage for the sexual division of labour and male dominance, resulting in female financial dependence and structured inequality between the sexes (Spelman, 1988). Chodorow (1978) asserts that the family is in part responsible for maintaining traditional sex roles in order to assure its reproduction. Further, she feels that regardless of cultural differences, mothering has been assigned to and is always done by women. However, it evolves with the changing needs of the larger social structure of the time.

Traditional Sex Roles

Feldman (1982) sees gender roles and family dynamics as socially structured, culturally defined, and reinforced through values and norms for males and females. Women have traditionally been viewed as nurturing, warm, passive and dependent. Men have been assigned the role of provider and are seen as ambitious, competitive and

independent. Male traits are those deemed as desirable in the development of a strong adult identity in Western society. The characteristics desirable to females (such as childlikeness and weakness) are inconsistent with a healthy adult identity (Askew & Ross, 1988). These stereotypical roles for males and females have been knit into the division of labour: women have traditionally been charged with housework and child care, while men have been assigned the task of being good providers for the family.

Sex role rigidity is reinforced through messages received both from the external society and through internal sanctions. The pressures exerted by society may have an impact on and threaten self-esteem. Traditional gender roles assume the male identity is tied to his role as a "successful" family provider. This role frames his sense of self-esteem (Walsh, 1982). The female role can leave women feeling isolated, vulnerable, and dependent, resulting in a loss of self-esteem.

Adolescents are exposed to a number of influences including family, peers, religion, ethnic background, and media. Spelman (1988) argues that it is through cultural images of what is perceived as masculinity that men learn to be men. While Chodorow (1978) and Gilligan (1982) maintain that women glean their gender identity from their mothers, other researchers believe that female identity is significantly affected by the powerful messages of the media and through the broader social context (Pipher, 1994). Harrison and Pennell (1989) feel that the interaction between genetic, physiological and sociocultural determinants is how gender formation is developed.

Female Gender Issues Impacting on Identity

Pipher (1994) introduces her concerns regarding young adolescent females within our society by suggesting that young women are caught in a "girl poisoning culture" (p. 12). As a result of her research, Pipher (1994) has become increasingly concerned about the symptoms and dysfunctional coping of young adolescent women; she argues that adolescent women may relinquish their true selves in favour of their false selves in order to please parents and males of society. Pipher (1994) suggests that during this time of change, as the female identity is forming, the adolescent is most vulnerable and impressionable. She is dealing with the physiological changes of her body, as well as issues of sexism, violence, and body image. In the struggle to gain autonomy from family, she may be turning to a less than stable peer group for support.

Pipher (1994) feels that young adolescent women are struggling under our cultural expectations more in the 1990's than at any other time in history, due to the media influence. Violence against women is reinforced through advertising, television, and magazines. The media messages of body image have manifested themselves in adolescent girls through eating disorders, learned helplessness, and consequently reduced self-esteem.

Media Involvement in Adolescent Identity

As adolescent girls seek their identity, there appear to be recurring themes

influencing their development. Concerns include weight, fear of rejection, and a need for perfection. Society, through the media, sends mixed messages to young women which are often reinforced by their support network of family, school and peers (Harrison & Pennell, 1989; Pipher, 1994). Messages include, "Be beautiful, but beauty is only skin deep. Be sexy, but not sexual. Be honest, but don't hurt anyone's feelings. Be independent, but be nice. Be smart, but not so smart that you threaten boys" (Pipher, 1994, p. 35).

Studies have suggested that there is a connection between media influence and destructive identity development in both young females and males (Harrison & Pennell, 1989). Teenagers spend a significant amount of time watching television, and studies indicate that heavy television viewers are more likely to consider the information they receive as reality (Strouse & Fabes, 1985). Research suggests that media messages transferred to susceptible adolescents appear to manifest themselves in identity and self-esteem problems (Harrison & Pennell, 1989). Extracting from the work of numerous researchers, Harrison and Pennell (1989) found that increased television viewing in adolescents was positively associated with traditionally stereotyped gender roles. Teenagers cited television and popular music as being the greatest source of pressure to become sexually active.

Research in the area of eating disorders is particularly concerned with the media messages provided to young women regarding body image and dieting. The peak age for eating disorders is during adolescence; it is also the critical time for gender identity development and susceptibility to media messages (Waller & Shaw, 1994). Empirical

evidence supports these concerns: according to Waller and Shaw (1994), a review of magazines, television images, and fashion models found that the images of women emphasized thinness. Further, they found that there were more magazine articles focusing on dieting directed toward females. They concluded that viewing pictures of thin fashion models led to reduced general self-esteem in women. In reviewing the literature on gender identity development, it is clear that societal messages confronting female and male adolescents may be similar, but the gender outcome regarding self-esteem may be different. Men may learn violence, women may learn to become the recipients. Men may learn to objectify women, women may learn to become the objects. Men may learn strength and independence, women may learn weakness and dependence. As a result, men learn to feel good about themselves, and women learn not to feel good about themselves.

Adolescence In The Family Life Cycle

The major influence on the adolescent is family. The family is a crucial factor in the development and maintenance of adolescent self esteem and identity (Gecas, 1972; Hoelter & Harper, 1987). The influence of the family unit, good or bad, is virtually inescapable.

Researchers agree that there is a positive relationship between parental support and positive child outcome (Ziegler, 1987). The research on familial influence on male and female adolescents found that older male adolescents are more influenced by family,

while female adolescents are more influenced by peers (Hoetler, 1984). Coopersmith (1967) found maternal acceptance to be associated with pre-adolescent males' self-esteem. In a national sample of high school boys, Bachman (1970) found increased self-esteem where family relations were affectionate. Gecas (1971) found parental support was related to self-esteem in high school students. According to Ziegler (1987), parental support is positively related to increased self-esteem for both girls and boys.

The developmental life cycle of the family is seen as constantly changing. The developmental concerns and problems of family members can be viewed on a linear continuum of change as we move through life stages; however, the family dynamics are multidimensional. With increasing longevity, the intergenerational mix is frequently three and sometimes four generations each attempting to accommodate life cycle transitions simultaneously. During life cycle transitions, the stress is the greatest on the individual and family (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Walsh, 1982).

The individual tasks of adolescence often coincide with the transformation of the entire family's entry into new life stages. The demands of the adolescent are so strong that they precipitate concerns between the adolescent and the parent, between the parents, and between the parents and the grandparents. Unresolved issues of these groupings tend to surface, and triangular patterns of conflict may emerge (Preto, 1989).

Carter and McGoldrick (1989) discuss the concept of stressors as both horizontal and vertical, along with the importance of when and where these stressors intersect and the possible impact of stressors on family functioning. They assert that the vertical flow in a system includes patterns of relating and functioning that are transmitted down the

generations of a family primarily through the mechanisms of emotional triangling (Bowen, 1978). The vertical flow includes all the family attitudes, taboos, expectations, labels and loaded issues with which we grow up. These are the parts of our lives that are given to us; what we do with them is our choosing (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). The horizontal flow includes the anxiety produced as the family moves through time. It includes the developmental life cycle changes and the unpredictable events such as an unexpected death of a family member, illness, or the birth of a handicapped child. Significant stress on the horizontal axis can produce family dysfunction. However, when even a minimal amount of horizontal stress is met with great vertical stress, an inordinate amount of interference with the family system can result.

An important clue as to how a family might deal with transition situations is how well it copes where the horizontal and vertical axes intersect. Consider the possibility of intergenerational life transitions of adolescence, midlife, and old age all happening simultaneously, and the fact that this situation may be vertically intersecting with the flow of culture and gender differences.

It is important to consider the exosystem and macrosystems and how they may impact on the family and individual. Like the family systems, there are social, economic and political forces influencing the functioning of the individual. Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield, Buchanan, Reuman, Flanagan, and Mac Iver (1993) focus on what they perceive as a mismatch between adolescents and their social environment. Extracting from the work of numerous researchers they conclude that those teenagers who experience stress during early and middle adolescence are centred on the renegotiation of

control and autonomy. As adolescents move into junior high school they are exposed to a larger, more diverse input of ideas which in turn precipitates the questioning and legitimacy of the family rules. This querying may lead the young person to demand a more symmetrical relationship with her parents. Out of general concern or the inability to relinquish control, parents may in turn become more restrictive. This process may be exacerbated by the impact of gender and cultural influences.

Smetana (1989) found that most adolescent-parent conflicts result from routine issues such as room cleaning, which the teenager may come to view as a personal concern. The greatest period of adolescent-parent conflict occurs during early adolescence (Smetana, 1989). Further, Eccles et al. (1993) researched family decision making and found an increase over time in the adolescent's desire for involvement in decision making. Positive associations between family decision making, school motivation and positive self-esteem were also found. It appears that involvement in family decision making assists the development of positive adolescent self-esteem, and is reflected in a smoother adjustment to junior high school. Eccles et al. (1993) assert that when a good life stage-environment fit occurs between adolescents and their social environment the ground work is set for optimal development.

The family life cycle has been subject to many changes during the past generation. Changes such as lower birth rate, longer life expectancy, the changing role of women along with the increasing divorce and remarriage rate have been instrumental in redefining the concept of family (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). It is family, particularly parents, who pass on values and beliefs to their children. The concept of family has

evolved to include the traditional, eroding nuclear family, single parent family, blended family and the gay/lesbian family.

Parental influence remains important but is no longer the only source of socialization. Adolescents of the 1990's are receiving mixed messages with regard to the concept of family and gender roles. While the mother may be employed outside of the home, she is most frequently the caregiver and the person responsible for household tasks. The father retains the traditionally male tasks of car repair and yard work. If children are to adjust to the changing family, parents may need to give up the mythological version of the 1950's traditional family. If this traditional view of the family is upheld as the proper model, many children and parents may perceive their family as abnormal or dysfunctional.

Culture And The Family Life Cycle

Ethnicity/culture refers to a group's peoplehood based on race, religion and cultural history. It is a fulfilment of the need for a complete psychological identity (McGoldrick, 1989), and interacts at each developmental life stage. Culture dictates how the family is defined: its rituals, transitions, and the ceremonies which accompany life stage change (McGoldrick, 1989). Cultural conflicts can exacerbate the stress of life stage transitions. Culture filters the perception we hold of the world. At an unconscious level, we may judge other people through a personal frame of reference which includes our own culture's rituals, foods, work ethic, feelings about life and death, and illness.

There are variations within and between groups of different cultures; there is also a tendency to develop new cultural norms as people physically move away from their ethnic community. However, even with such shifts, there is much evidence to suggest that ethnic values are retained for up to four generations (McGoldrick, 1989).

Culture and the Adolescent

Cultural differences during the adolescent life stage have produced debate within the literature on developmental theory. Some findings suggest that as minority adolescents seek their autonomy and identity within Western culture, the adolescent life stage may influence not only the young person, but the entire family system (Preto & Travis, 1985). The phenomenon of adolescence is generally not recognized as a transitional period by Eastern cultures. Adolescents from minority cultures who integrate into the dominant Western culture may need to balance the needs and traditions of their culture with those of the dominant culture (Preto & Travis, 1985). It is not uncommon during the adolescent years for young people to reject their culture in order to seek independence and identity.

Migrating families are faced with resolving culturally determined intergenerational concerns. As the young person reaches adolescence, there may be a number of life stage transitions occurring simultaneously within the family system. However, unlike the dominant culture, the migrating family may be leaving the grandparent generation behind. The adolescent's parents may be dealing not only with

their own midlife issues and their child's adolescent stage, but also with the guilt of not being available to assist their aging parents (McGoldrick, 1989).

According to Sue (1973), the process of integration is similar for most migrating families. There is a period of adjustment and orientation; there also seems to be a struggle with personal identity and often an alienation from both the dominant and minority cultures (Sue, 1977). The resulting stress can be resolved in three ways: by remaining attached to the culture or origin; by aligning with the dominant culture and rejecting traditional values; or by integrating what is seen as the most positive identity and self-esteem building aspects of each culture (Sue, 1973).

The family of a minority culture may object to the adolescent bringing outsiders and/or their views into the family. This may be particularly true of female adolescents who may be seeking autonomy. Family conflict and struggle may result as young women attempt to break from traditional views and support the changing role of women (McGoldrick, 1989).

Adolescents in low income families are often seen as potential wage earners, sometimes at the cost of the teenager's education. A role reversal may result, in which the parents become dependent out of economic necessity. If the adolescent is placed in this adult role, the young person may be left without the strong parental support which researchers have identified as necessary for successful adolescent identity and self-esteem development (Preto & Travis, 1985).

The Asian Indian culture is an excellent example of a traditional culture immersing itself in the dominant Western culture. Segal (1991) focused on Asian Indian

born families of the 1960's and their American-born adolescents. She found that there are conflict-producing, fundamental differences between the Eastern cultures and the idiocentric Western society. The Indian culture demands that children remain submissive to the parent even into adulthood and marriage. There is no adolescent life stage specifically defined as in Western society. For the Asian-Indian community, the welfare of the family unit transcends the need for individual self-identity (Sinha, 1984; Sue, 1981). The literature also suggests that when there is a cultural conflict, the adolescent tends to conform to the peer culture rather than the parental norms (Blos, 1979; Erikson, 1968; Newman & Newman, 1976; Seltzer, 1982). Sluzki (1979) suggests, however, that with increasing age, individuals will often return to the comfort of their earlier values and traditions. According to de Anda and Riddel (1991), an emerging culture, which educators and those in the helping profession are encountering, is the multiethnic population. This culture is a result of an increase in marriages between people from different ethnic groups. Adolescence is a time when the individual is integrating a sense of uniqueness, self-esteem and independence along with attempting to develop a relationship to peers, family and society (Blos, 1962; Ellis & Davis, 1982). The task becomes more complex as the adolescent from a multiethnic background struggles to blend or choose between the two cultures. Gibbs' (1987) experience indicates that ethnic identity is the main conflict for multiethnic adolescents. The individual may feel that there is a choice to make between the two cultures. Strong peer and family relationships as a result of multiethnic role models and non-stereotype views toward ethnic groups are seen as important in successful identity development (Gibbs, 1987; McRoy & Freeman,

1986).

Studies support that being a member of a multiethnic family can be a positive experience for children (Hall, 1980; Kannan, 1972; Njeri, 1988; Poussaint, 1984; Wilson, 1987). de Anda and Riddel (1991) studied ethnic identification and self-esteem, and peer and family relationships in a sample of 70 multiethnic adolescents. Results pertaining to ethnic identification showed that respondents demonstrated good relations with both the minority and majority communities; they identified both publicly and privately as multiethnic. The multiethnic adolescents expressed a comfortable interaction in both groups but had a preference for multiethnic groups. When provided with a choice of identification, the adolescent favoured neither the minority or majority but rather a separate identification, that of multiethnic.

With both the migrating adolescents and multiethnic adolescents, it appears that there may be a conflict of values and principles. Adolescents in Western society have been directed toward an individualistic, independent lifestyle; seeking self-identity is generally viewed as positive. Eastern cultures encourage the adolescent to remain interdependent with the family unit and view attachment as positive. Therefore, when attempting to integrate with the dominant culture, the adolescent will frequently be found in a conflict situation within the family unit.

School Social Work And The Adolescent

Background

School social work began in approximately 1906 with the purpose of saving the "underprivileged" of society. The role of the social worker or "visiting teacher" was to act as a link between the school and the community (Allen-Meares, Washington & Welsh, 1986, p. 16). Early school social workers assumed the role of interfacing with the school administration and the child's support system. According to Allen-Meares et. al., an early ecological perspective began to emerge with Culbert's (1916) definition of the role of the school social worker:

Interpreting to the school the child's out-of-school life; supplementing the teacher's knowledge of the child...so that she may be able to teach the whole child...assisting the school to know the life of a neighbourhood, in order that it may train the children for the life to which they look forward. Secondly, the visiting teacher interprets to the parents the demands of the school and explains the particular difficulties and needs of the child. (p. 18)

Allen-Meares et al. (1986) cite a study by Oppenheimer which argued the need for more individual work with the child. The literature of that period shows a movement toward a more therapeutic approach referred to as mental hygiene. The school was

viewed as the vehicle to provide a stabilizing environment for children.

In the 1930's, with the onset of the depression, the social work role was refocused to provide direct emotional support for troubled children. The image of the link between school and community was viewed as unprofessional (Allen-Meares et al., 1986).

Between 1940 and 1960, school social work began to see social casework as the interventive method of choice, with the individual as the primary focus. During the 1960's the school system in the United States, in particular, was under criticism for the inequality in provision of education. The school system was challenged for reinforcing low performance in minority students. During this period, professionals debated whether the student was best served by individual casework or a more systemic approach (Allen-Meares et al., 1986).

During the late 1960's the notion of group work began to emerge. Group work was viewed as an "ideal" method for working in the area of school dropout, underachievement, and academic failure. Group work of the 1960's emphasized the social worker working with students within the school environment rather than including the larger system of community (Allen-Meares et al., 1986). Role confusion began to surface among school specialists. The roles of attendance coordinator, social worker and psychologist began to overlap; each saw themselves as most involved with the students (Allen-Meares et al., 1986).

The decade of the 1970's contributed to the expansion of the school social worker role. The focus emphasized the family, the school and physically challenged students along with increasing concerns about drugs, child abuse and neglect, and delinquency

(Allen-Meares et al.,1986).

According to Allen-Meares et al. (1986), different practice models emerged throughout the evolution of school social work. The four predominant models were the Traditional Clinical Model, School Change Model, Community School Model, and School Interaction Model. Presently, in the 1990's, the focus of school social work has evolved into the ecological perspective, while individual casework is viewed as inadequate (Allen-Meares et al.,1986).

Ecological Perspective in School Social Work

The professional activity of a social worker or psychologist within the school-based ecological framework focuses primarily on the microsystems and mesosystems. These two systems are the easiest to access and most accommodating to change. According to Allen-Meares et. al. (1986), the microsystems include the person and her immediate environment of home, work and school. The mesosystem is interaction between the microsystems (i.e., school-home, work-home). The more stable change exists in the exosystems or macrosystems (Anderson, 1983). It is within these global systems that policy is developed. The exosystem contains both formal and informal local structures which indirectly affect the individual, while the macrosystem encompasses the areas of economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems (Allen-Meares, et al., 1981). The exosystem and macrosystem provide the necessary policy and procedures for social workers to effect change in the micro and mesosystems.

Fine (1985) argues for the use of the ecological perspective when working with the "disruptive" child in the school system. Fine (1985) considers both the systems interaction as well as the transaction between the systems and the environment. Numerous researchers support Fine's argument that "by viewing the disruptive child in a systems-ecological context, some potentially successful interventions can occur "(p. 262) (see Apter, 1982; Fine & Holt, 1983; Pfeiffer & Tittler, 1983).

Fine (1985) shows the importance of maintaining a systems-ecological perspective when assessing and intervening with the individual in the school system. He has employed ideas borrowed from family systems therapy to this end (see Apter, 1982; Cook & Plas, 1984; Cullinan, Epstein & Lloyd, 1983; Haley, 1976; Hobbs, 1975; Madanes, 1981; Minuchin & Fishman, 1981; Rhodes & Paul, 1978).

Fine (1985) advises that current literature and practice appear to favour the idea of moving the student to a "specialized" classroom rather than modifying the learning environment. This thinking suggests that the problem lies with the child and not within the "teacher-managed environment" (Fine, 1985, p. 265). To Fine, this suggests blaming the child, when what is needed is for the systems involved to assume some of the responsibility for the child's learning difficulties. The learning environment of the individual is significant when the learning style and the developmental readiness of the student are considered. Rather than moving the individual, modifications to the classroom and the curriculum might be introduced and varied.

The School Social Worker Using the Ecological Approach

Assessment and Intervention

The goals of school social work enhance the educational goals of the school. It is the social worker who is in a position to interface with the transactions between students, groups of students, teachers, parents and the administration (Winters & Easton, 1983). The ecological perspective assists the worker in identifying those systems contributing to a student's concern. If a student has low attendance, rather than focusing exclusively on the student, the additional systems of school, parents, neighbourhood, peers, and/or media might be targeted as part of the influence and resulting intervention. This provides a comprehensive picture of the situation rather than placing total responsibility on the student (Allen-Meares et al., 1986).

Allen-Meares et al. (1986) view a school social work function as matching the needs of the student with environmental resources, in order to facilitate healthy coping behaviours. Coping behaviours are defined as "behaviours that are directed toward the environment, including the efforts of the individual to exert some control over his or her own behaviour - to use the 'self' purposefully" (Allen-Meares et al., 1986, p. 71).

Further, the ecological perspective encourages awareness of how other social systems impact the student. The perception of the child in the home may be inconsistent with the view of the school. If the student is observed to be "bad" in the home and the school challenges that observation, parents may begin to see the child differently, and

ultimately modify their views. The result might effect change in the self-concept of the young person and thereby increase self-esteem.

The ecosystemic social worker is in a position of being familiar with and having the ability to work with a number of possible interactions. In the role of consultant, the social worker can initiate conferences and bring together microsystems connected with the student (Aponte, 1976; Fine & Pitts, 1980). The social worker in these situations may act as a facilitator.

In the role of a facilitator, and using Minuchin's concept of "joining" in family therapy, the social worker is able to become part of the system. In this role the social worker becomes more influential on the entire system. Systems will tolerate change more readily from forces within rather than by forces from outside the system. In these situations Minuchin suggests the therapist, in the context of family therapy, become a "sorcerer:" the person with the ability to initiate change (Minuchin & Fishman, 1981).

A social worker working within the school can strengthen the related systems of the adolescent, the parents, and the school through personal interaction and by facilitating transactions between these systems. The social worker is in the unique position of being an observer to the education system, but at the same time being able to share innovative techniques and suggestions for change. Concurrently, through "joining," the social worker can be considered part of the team.

"At Risk" Adolescents In the School System

In the context of the educational system, students who are deemed "at risk" are considered to be in danger of dropping out of school, failing academically, underachieving, grade level(s) behind, having poor attendance, manifesting behavioural problems or being referred for an evaluation for special education (Kruger, 1989; Outland-Mitchell & Anderson, 1992). Those considered at risk within the school system may be further at risk for suicide, pregnancy, and substance abuse (Kruger, 1989).

The term "at risk" speaks to the fact that these students, unlike "dropouts", are still connected to the school system. According to Franklin, McNeil and Wright (1990), a high school dropout is neither enrolled in school nor a high school graduate. Therefore, in working with the "at risk" student there is more opportunity for prevention and intervention. According to Roderick (1993), dropping out of high school is one of the most studied areas of educational concerns.

Human Resources Development Canada (1994) views early school leaving as having far reaching effects:

The matter of school completion is fundamental to individual and societal well-being. A solid education liberates and empowers. It influences the nature of the jobs that we do and the earning power that is associated with them. It dictates the quality of our lives and determines our competitiveness in the global economy.

(p.iii)

The Canadian Government perceives the dropout problem as an "unacceptable

loss of human potential" (Human Resources Development Canada, 1994, p. iii). There has been much debate regarding dropout in Canada, with statistics of high school dropout ranging between 19-34%. As a result, a Stay in School Initiative was established (Human Resources Development Canada, 1994).

There appears to be a wide range of factors contributing to student dropout:

1. Personal Factors

The student typically "at risk" of dropout is more likely to come from a single parent or no parent home, have a lower socioeconomic background, to lack educational reinforcement, to experience deficiency in family support, and to have negative feelings regarding school (Human Resources Development Canada, 1994). The Stay in School Initiative further cites factors such as belonging to a minority group, low self-esteem, family concerns, or being older than the grade level as characteristic of dropout. Frequent residential moves, abuse (child and substance), health problems, and working more than 15 hours per week are also identified risk factors (Human Resources Development Canada, 1994).

Dupper (1993) cites a number of individual factors which he considers predictors of dropout. He feels that income is a major factor and ethnicity is important to consider. There are gender differences in the dropout population; more males are early school leavers than females, and it appears that female and male adolescents drop out for different reasons (Dupper, 1993).

One of the most significant "at risk" characteristics for adolescent women is pregnancy and early marriage. Roderick (1993) cites that 30% of white and Hispanic adolescent females and 45% of black females gave pregnancy as their reason for high school dropout. Being pregnant, having a child, and marrying during adolescence decrease the chances of adolescent women graduating from high school (Roderick, 1993).

Males were found to be twice as likely to leave school because they were unable to get along with teachers, and three times as likely to get suspended or expelled (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986). Mann (1986) found that males would dropout more often for family responsibilities.

Ekstrom et al. (1986) considered many factors in relation to early school leaving. Their findings concluded that poor self-concept and external locus of control are significant predictors. Students who left school felt that they were perceived as not as popular, not as good academically, not as athletic, or not as important as their peers. Individuals who are over-age for their grade, often students who were held back in earlier grades, are three times as likely to be early school leavers. Adolescents' self-esteem may be negatively impacted by being held back, resulting in social isolation from their peers (Roderick, 1993). Frank (1990) argues that the emphasis in dropout has been placed directly on the student within the school system and has ignored the familial influence. However, most literature maintains that low socioeconomic status is a primary indicator of adolescent dropout along with parental education, single parent families, and belonging to a minority group (Frank, 1990; Human Resources Development Canada, 1994; Roderick, 1993).

Frank (1990) investigated family problems and stressors as they related to school dropout. Findings revealed that there was not a significant relationship between family income and dropout. Rather, the research indicated two important variables impacting on school dropout: whether parents graduated from high school, and the total number of stressors in the familial home. Both of these variables related significantly to school dropout (Frank, 1990). Based on Frank's findings, it appears to be imperative to consider the family home and assess for both parental education and the stressful factors which may be impacting on the family.

2. School Related Factors

The Canadian Stay in School Initiative (1994) findings suggest that most of the focus on dropout has been on the family and not toward policy restructuring for changes in education. According to Wehlage (1986), dropout research is needed beyond the personal aspects of the student, maintaining that all children are capable of learning. According to Wehlage (1986) the major responsibility lies with the education system. To date, the definition of success in the education system is academic. Findings confirm the need for a more encompassing definition to include "social skills, confidence and self worth" (Human Resources Development Canada, 1994 p. 16).

Through interviews with "at risk" students, the Canadian Stay in School Initiative (1994) produced new ideas. Responses showed that students' attitudes and behaviours outside of the traditional school setting and in the work setting were more positive when

reinforced by these external influences. Findings also included student need for more involvement in school life and decision making. According the Stay in School Initiative, programs need more focus on self-esteem and individual success, and the interventions with "at risk" adolescents require relevant fit with future work.

Eccles et al. (1993) argue that the struggle for some early adolescents is a result of a mismatch between the developmental stage and the adolescent's social environment. The "stage-environment fit" can be understood in the context of the adolescent transition to junior high school. Along with this transition, the adolescent may be attempting to balance numerous developmental tasks with her changing environment. As students make the transition from junior high to high school, there appears to be a reduction of school performance and a disengagement from the school; this is exhibited in reduced attendance.

Eccles et al. (1993) feel that if individuals perceive they do not fit well with their environment, the result may be a reduction in motivation and possible dropout. According to developmental literature, the structure of the typical elementary school and junior high school are different. Eccles et al. (1993) suggest shifting the focus to include the school environment by considering the systemic differences between elementary and junior high schools. Eccles et al. (1993) cite some examples of the differences between the elementary and junior high experience which may manifest in dropout:

1. In junior high school there appears to be more control and less teaching of students. This includes less involvement in decision making, and a

generally lower perception of autonomy.

2. Students suggest that there is a less positive, less supportive teacher-student interaction/relationship at the junior high level.
3. Movement to whole class instruction and social comparisons within the group setting occur in junior high, which may lead to negative self perceptions and less motivation (Eccles, Midgley, & Adler, 1984).
4. Junior high teachers show a reduction in teaching efficacy (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989).
5. High standards are applied by junior high school evaluation of student competence. According to Eccles et al. (1993), "there is no stronger predictor of a student's self-confidence and sense of self-efficacy than the grades they receive" (p. 94). Studies indicate that 54% of students had a decline in grades after moving to junior high school. This was not consistent with the results on the standardized achievement tests, and reflects the need to review the grading practices which could be negatively impacting on the self-esteem of students (Simmons & Blyth, 1987).

Adolescent development is characterized by many changes; as a result, adolescents require a safe yet challenging environment in which to cope and adapt (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). The previous transitional changes along with normal adolescent development may result in a person-environment mismatch. The outcome is a

negative impact on adolescent motivation, which is particularly relevant for those already experiencing academic difficulty (Eccles et al., 1993).

Intervention With "At Risk" Students

According to Allen-Meares et al. (1986), school social workers are situated in a perfect position to provide early detection and prevention of problems. The Canadian Stay in School Initiative (1994) reported two major recommendations for primary prevention and intervention: that programs be established in the early grades to offset the development of a crisis, and the need for students to be provided with relevant information regarding school to work transitions. Allen-Meares et al. (1986) propose interventive strategies which target all system levels including intervention with individuals, groups, families, schools, and communities.

Four intervention techniques will be noted for the prevention of dropout of the "at risk" adolescent within the school system: the alternative school concept, curriculum intervention, parental involvement in education and dropout, and group work as a form of dropout prevention.

Alternative Schools

Over the past 20 years the number of programs for "at risk" students have been increasing, and most alternative schools fall into the category of a compensatory school.

These schools service students who have not functioned well in traditional settings and may be at risk of dropout (Franklin, 1992). The original purpose of many alternative schools was to keep students connected to the school system (Collins, 1987). According to Franklin et al. (1990), there is much literature to support the successes of the alternative school with major reductions in school dropout; however, there is currently little empirical evidence to support these claims. Franklin and Streeter (1991) provide findings that support the effectiveness of social work intervention for youth at risk of dropout. In their study, the alternative school design provided an ecological approach using group intervention. Measures were taken in the areas of academic achievement, psychological adjustment, behavioural problems, and family functioning. Improvement was reported in each area with the exception of behavioural problems. The measure of success included an observation that the majority of the students enrolled obtained high school credits or completion. Further, significant improvements were found in self-esteem and anxiety reduction.

According to Streeter and Franklin (1991), the following characteristics have been identified as effective in working with "at risk" students: small sized schools, a supportive environment, individual programming, autonomy and democracy, well defined standards and rules, broad family and community participation, targeted services, and accountability and evaluation. They further note that traditional settings have been implementing many of the above components into their structures. The contemporary alternative school movement encourages creative approaches to curriculum with its roots in the social and political unrest of the 1960's (Deal & Nolan, 1978; Hamilton, 1990). This contemporary

approach supports the values of equality, choice, and dignity along with the roles of advocacy which are all consistent with the social work profession.

In contrast, mainstream schools and education systems were developed based on the traditional assumptions of the middle-class, nuclear family. Franklin (1992) states, "...the institutional school system in many ways represents an extension of the values and culture of the traditional family structure" (p. 243). The schools still assume that mothers are not employed outside the home and therefore available to work as volunteers in the school. The school system is only now beginning to modify its thinking to adapt to the needs of a changing society. Since a gap still exists between traditional assumptions about family and the reality of family life in the '90's, it has become apparent to educators that attempting to educate "at risk" adolescents within the current setting is not the answer and many are turning to alternative school programs (Franklin, 1992).

Curriculum As An Intervention

Curriculum as a vehicle for change can be far reaching and sustaining (Askew & Ross, 1988). Askew and Ross (1988) noted that most information regarding sexism in education, both in the curriculum and the administration, has been focused on girls. To gain insight into the male perspective, they researched the issue of sexism and education in the British education system over a five year period. Their work involved a curriculum based intervention with boys cross-culturally and from different social classes, in an attempt to reduce sexism in the educational system. The intent was not to target the boys

as the concern but rather to consider the process of male socialization in a time of changing gender roles. The researchers agree that the method of socialization remains based on the male standard; they recommend that curriculum material be revised to reflect changing societal roles (Askew & Ross, 1988).

Edwards (1992) agrees that schools were initially developed to educate young males. As a result, the curricula provided and the learning patterns that emerged were based on white, middle class males. The curricula appears to be changing; however, due to the lack of female contributions to the curricula, women continue to be educated based on male role models and standards.

Edwards (1992) points out that a characteristic of the female school dropout includes low academic achievement and low self-esteem. Males score higher in the area of self-confidence in both academic and physical activity. She concluded that in their early years, girls need to be encouraged to use motor skills; when physical activity is restricted it may impact on intellectual self-esteem. Physical freedom allows for the development of spacial-visual skills important in maths and problem-solving (Edwards, 1992).

Edwards (1992) argues that both the parent and school systems must confront the need for gender equity in the education structure and curriculum. She supports a curriculum model which suggests males and females be equally valued, but be given appropriate opportunities, due to physical differences, through a justice model for physical education. This would require that teachers develop an understanding of the importance of physical activity and the impact on mathematical ability.

Parental Involvement in Adolescent Education

The interaction between the school and the family is considered essential to enhance the adolescent's social and academic success (Ziegler, 1987). Conversely, parental involvement may also contribute to school related concerns (Allen-Meares et al., 1986). In reviewing the literature on adolescent self-concept and academic achievement, Guest (1987) found that a positive evaluation of academic ability by significant others such as parents, friends, or teachers resulted in improved educational achievement. The literature on adolescent development strongly supports the argument for parental involvement and encouragement in student education. Research indicates that the benefits of parental involvement at the elementary level remain into secondary levels of education and result in improved attitudes, conduct, attendance and performance (Constable, 1992; Epstein, 1986; Kurtz & Barth, 1989; Ziegler, 1987).

Parental involvement is frequently viewed as the direct participation in or around school related activities such as voluntarism. Kurtz and Barth (1989) perceive the family influence in the home as significant to the young person's self-confidence and motivation to learn. In conjunction with macrosystem issues such as poverty or unemployment, adolescents who are exposed to family developmental changes such as death, birth, and mother returning to work or school may not have the adequate coping resources to deal with their situation. Education professionals support the concept that the family role is critical to a student's success; however, the teaching professional is not in a position to deal with family social concerns (Kurtz & Barth, 1989). The number one barrier

identified in a national research project on Excellence in Education was the lack of positive cooperation among students, staff, parents and administrators (Chavkin, 1991). Findings from a study conducted by Epstein and Becker (1982) questioned the effectiveness of parent-teacher interviews and noted that teachers seldom made visits to the homes of students' families. The literature suggests an increasing need for parent-school contact. There is a growing number of immigrating families, special education students, single parent families, and multicultural homes which may especially benefit from a home visit intervention.

Parents generally demonstrate strong support for their child's education; however, studies have shown it is usually the better educated and socioeconomically advanced parents who initiate contact with the school (Ziegler, 1987). The changing reality of working mothers has resulted in more limited parental participation in the schools. According to Swap (1987), parental absence in the school system is often interpreted as lack of concern for the child. This misconception is the result of an education system which continues to function as it did four decades previously.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

Swap (1987) identified three barriers to parental involvement in the school. Parents and teachers each have limited time to communicate. Often parent(s) are working and have other commitments. When time has been set aside it is questionable whether it is effective parent-teacher contact. Finally, when parents and teachers do communicate it may be during a crisis involving the child. When dealing with an "at risk" adolescent, the

ability to communicate during a critical period is important. Past relationship building may not be present and blaming behaviours may occur between the school and the parent. Both parents and teachers may feel a sense of responsibility and failure or be in denial as a result of the student's "at risk" situation (Swap, 1987).

Ethnic minorities are particularly vulnerable when attempting to access the education system (Chavkin & Garza-Lubeck, 1990). Demographic trends indicate an increasing growth of our multicultural society. Parental involvement by ethnic minorities with the school has been lacking (Constable, 1992). In their research, Chavkin and Garza-Lubeck (1990) report that the multicultural perspective has been ignored by schools. They assert that parents of minority groups want to be involved with the education of their children; however, they may require assistance to become involved.

Breaking the Barriers to Parental Involvement

The literature indicates that both parents and teachers support the concept of increased parental involvement in the school system (Constable, 1992; Chavkin, 1991; Chavkin & Williams, 1985; Ziegler, 1987). In order to accomplish this goal, both parents and teachers must establish new criteria for working together. Interventive possibilities might consist of:

- (1) The establishment of a concrete role for parents in the education of their children. Through a participatory process, parents may be encouraged to increase their communication with the school. Parents can develop skills to work interactively with school staff in areas of academics and adolescent behaviour (Swap, 1987).

(2) The school and parents might work together to establish some guidelines for increased parental participation (Swap, 1987).

The Role of Social Work in Parental Involvement

Gibelman (1993) discusses the overlap between the professions of school social worker, psychologist and counsellor. In a time of budget constraints, there is a need for professionals to respond cooperatively with a shared agenda.

The role of the school social worker has deep historical roots (Allen-Meares et al., 1986). Numerous authors agree that social workers possess the training and skills to work in a pivotal position between families and the school (Chavkin, 1991; Chavkin & Williams, 1985; Constable, 1992; Kurtz & Barth, 1989). Social workers are skilled in dealing with families, and can appreciate the need to ameliorate family problems to promote parent involvement in their child's academic success (Kurtz & Barth, 1989). Further, the education system supports the concept of parental involvement in the school system; however, education administrators agree it is unfair to expect the teacher, with an already expanding role, to work with families without the required training. Chavkin (1991) argues that social workers are in an opportune position to assist school administration and teachers by providing inservice training in family work, with a focus on parental involvement and systemic thinking.

There is a need to address the increasing multicultural environment; school social workers bring with them cultural awareness. It is imperative that time and consideration be given to outreach and training for school personnel, along with reducing the cultural

distance between home and school (Chavkin & Garza-Lubeck, 1990).

Group Work as a Preventative Intervention

Group work is a method of working with individuals that reinforces the individual's strengths and sends a message that the members have something to contribute to others (Kurland & Salmon, 1992). The group experience can be viewed as a "microsociety" with the potential for a "symbiotic" relationship (Shulman, 1984, p. 3). Similarly, using group interventions within the school system provides an opportunity for students who face similar concerns and who may profit from the shared experience during a period of change (Allen-Meares et al., 1986). Group work has been seen as more compatible with the needs of the students than individual work (Winters & Easton, 1983).

According to Shulman (1984), a mutual aid group is a worthwhile endeavour; however, it requires overcoming obstacles and preplanning. If carefully prepared, the group format allows the adolescent the chance to practice life situations in a safe environment. Communication skills can be enhanced within the group as the student is allowed to experiment with creative problem solving, resulting in increased self-esteem. A small, cohesive group offers support and reduction in stress when attempting to learn and change. Peer pressure helps to reduce denial, and for adolescents the group helps to maintain behaviours under pressure (Winters & Easton, 1983).

Tredinnick (1993), in her six week study, provided group intervention for the purpose of enhancing student self-concept during early adolescence. Emphasis was

placed on locus of control. The results revealed that students significantly increased their score in the six cluster areas and on the total score of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. The results of this study demonstrate the effectiveness of prevention and early intervention. In order to be effective, group work need not be a lengthy process. For example, group work provided in single sessions is not uncommon (Tredinnick, 1993). According to Shulman (1984), the challenge for the group leader is balance and timing, in order to provide an opportunity for all the phases of small group work to be incorporated.

Building on the alternative school program as a form of intervention for "at risk" adolescents, the literature on alternative schools supports the idea that effective programs are supportive, caring environments that promote mutual aid. According to Franklin et al. (1991), mutual aid is perceived to be an effective strategy with adolescents and with parents. In their study, Franklin et al. (1991) worked with groups of adolescents and groups of parents. Progress was noted on several measures and a 73% success rate on external criteria was documented. Franklin et al. (1991) found it useful to work with parents as a group. Parent group work, particularly when working with the "at risk" adolescent, is an opportunity to educate parents in the area of skill development and assist in reducing anxiety regarding their children (Allen-Meares et al., 1986).

Social Work Role in Group Work Intervention

The school social worker is in a position to assist in the success of the group work

intervention. According to Shulman (1984), "creating a mutual aid group is a difficult process with members having to overcome many of their stereotypes about people in general, groups and helping... they will need to get help from the group worker" (p. 164). The social worker can serve as group leader, therapist, coach, case manager and resource person. The social worker needs to consider the entire group, appreciating at the same time the individuality of the members (Kurland & Salmon, 1992). The worker needs to trust and empower the group with responsibilities. In turn, the group will learn to trust one another. A further task of the social worker is to enhance self-esteem building and interdependence within the group (Winters & Easton, 1983).

Application of the Ecosystemic Approach to Adolescents

As discussed by Hefferman, Shuttlesworth and Ambroseno (1988), the ecological model exemplifies the nature of the interaction between individuals and their environment. In this practicum, the focus was on adolescents and the interactions between each adolescent and the microsystems of school and family. The model also focused on the interaction between these microsystems (i.e., the mesosystem).

Adolescents are in a continuous state of change, attempting to balance the converging systems of family, peers and school. These young people are moving from one life stage to another and dealing with the resulting life stressors, including the attempt to re-evaluate their norms and values. Frequently, acting out behaviours such as drug/alcohol use, teen pregnancy and school leaving are viewed as the presenting problem

when relationship difficulties develop between the adolescent and the parent or the school. It is important that adolescents be assessed within their larger social context, and that consideration be given as to how other systems may be impacting on the adolescent. The ecological framework becomes a useful tool through which the social worker gains an understanding of adolescents and their transactions with their environment. Consequently, within the school setting and for school age children, the ecological perspective includes a child, her teachers and the school based environment (Anderson, 1983; Apter, 1982; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Life stage transitions are recognized to be stressful events (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). Adolescents will be required to make numerous life choices and deal with changes in themselves, their families and environment. How the choices are made in adapting to their changing environment depends on the adolescent's perception of the situation, and the coping mechanisms applied. According to Olbrich (1990), the new and increasing demands in adolescence may burden the adaptive capacities of the individual. It is here where a "crisis" may occur, resulting in a need for intervention. The social worker within the school setting is in a unique position of assisting adolescents, their families and the school to consider healthy coping techniques which may promote an adaptive fit.

The ecosystemic approach provides a framework when working with complex situations. Further, by dealing with all interacting systems and the environment, the approach is consistent with social work practice. It permits the social worker to work with adolescents within their particular environment and allows for many points of entry

when considering intervention.

The literature review has focused on a number of topics which include a discussion of the broad area of adolescent development, particularly the development of gender, cultural and vocational identity. Theorists revealed differing points of view as to the conflict theory of the adolescent life stage. The issue of self-esteem is relevant to the successful development of the adolescent in relation to her educational achievement.

The ecological approach provided the framework for considering adolescents in relation to the school and their parents. The concept of "at risk" adolescents and the factors that lead to early school leaving focused on both the school and parental impact. Finally, consideration was given to appropriate interventions in dealing with the situation of high school dropouts in the areas of alternative school, group work, curriculum enhancement and change, and the involvement of parents. Using a literature review as the basis for my practicum experience, I attempted to integrate this knowledge into my practical work with an "at risk" class of adolescents, their parents and the school.

CHAPTER THREE

Practicum Setting, Evaluation and Supervision

Description of the Practicum Site

The practicum took place in a Winnipeg, Manitoba high school from September 14, 1994 to January 31, 1995. Follow-up measures were collected in April, 1995. The school population was approximately 1200. The school is situated in a diverse socioeconomic area of the city. The population is also culturally diverse.

The school offered an alternative classroom setting to students who were considered to be "at risk" of dropout. This initiative was connected to the Student Services Department of the high school.

Structure of Student Services

Student Services of this high school includes: Community Liaison, Student Counselling, the Base Program, Career Counselling, an "At Risk" Alternative Classroom Program, and a Parent/Teen Program. The Community Liaison Program was new to the school. The purpose of the program is to make connections between the school, parents and community. During my practicum the Community Liaison Program was in its initial stages of project development. The Base Program addresses the academic and social

needs of students who have left school in junior high and who are under the age of 16. These students work within a single classroom with one teacher and two teaching assistants. The purpose of the program is to upgrade these students by working to eliminate social barriers. The Parent/Teen Program was also in a preliminary stage of development. The school administration had made arrangements with a nearby daycare facility for teenage parents to leave their children in order to attend and complete their high school education. With the potential exception of the Community Liaison Program, Student Services appeared to have a micro focus on the student. The school administration verbalized the importance of involvement of the systems beyond that of the student; however, little was in place other than the traditional parent orientation and parent-teacher conferences.

Alternative Classroom Setting

This high school provides an alternative setting for those students deemed "at risk" of dropout. A student is determined to be "at risk" when known risk factors are identified through information gathered from previous schools, teachers, parents, and the students themselves. The alternative setting integrates a number of characteristics considered to have a positive effect on the "at risk" students' success: a small size class, one consistent teacher, well defined standards and rules along with a supportive and caring environment (Collins, 1987). The teacher identified her primary goal as keeping adolescents connected to the school system. This is consistent with the focus of the

alternative school (Collins, 1987). Although the literature also argues strongly for the need for broader participation by community and parents, this piece was not evident in this setting.

The alternative class was Grade 10 at the 01 level. The 01 level is not a university entrance curriculum but a general curriculum. I was involved in the alternative classroom setting in the Language Arts class, two classes per week. Initially there were 25 students in this classroom, 15 males and 10 females. The age of the students ranged between 15 to 17 years. The class consisted primarily of lower socioeconomic adolescents. All students with the exception of six were living in single parent families, one living with a foster family and one student living in an independent living situation. The class was an ethnic mix of predominantly white with five aboriginal students and three students of black descent. There was one teacher and a teaching assistant. All students involved in the practicum were voluntary. Each parent/guardian was requested to sign a consent form (see Appendix A) which outlined the purpose of my work and requested voluntary involvement of their child.

Evaluation Measures

The following measures were used for the purposes of evaluation in this practicum:

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (see Appendix B) is a paper and pencil self-report measure designed to assess the self-concept of children and adolescents ages 8 - 18 (Cosden, 1987). The test is comprised of 80 test items, which when scored is divided into six cluster scores measuring behaviour, intellectual and school status, physical appearance and attributes, anxiety, popularity and happiness and satisfaction. The test can be administered individually or in small groups and is appropriate in both clinical and educational settings. The measure is "best used for screening possible 'at-risk' children ...in terms of their social and emotional functioning" (Cosden, 1987). The test is written at a third grade comprehension level; it is answered with "yes" or "no" responses and can be scored with a template answer key or a computerized answer sheet. The measure provides a global measure of personal satisfaction as well as specific evaluations for the above mentioned clusters (Cosden, 1987). The administration procedures for the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale indicate that the scale is measuring evaluative components and as such the terminology used when discussing outcome allows for the terms self-concept or self-esteem to be used interchangeably.

The test can be administered by professionals and paraprofessionals; however, interpretation of the results requires expertise in psychological testing. The scores produced are a cumulative score on global satisfaction and individual cluster scores. The lower the score, the lower the perceived self-concept of the individual. Studies on the reliability of the Piers-Harris scale reveal that the internal-consistency of the test is

relatively high. Alpha coefficients of .90 -.91 have been reported for both males and females. High internal-consistency measures have also been shown with specialized populations such as the disabled (Cosden, 1987). According to Cosden (1987), the validity of the scale has been difficult to determine. Several studies have been done attempting to discriminate between groups and clusters; however, inconclusive results are reported and further research has been recommended. The Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale was authorized and purchased through the Psychological Service Centre of the University of Manitoba. Interpretation of the measure was supervised by my practicum advisor.

Sex Role Questionnaire

The Sex Role Questionnaire (SRQ; see Appendix C) was developed by Emihovich and Gaier in 1983 (Beere, 1990). The SRQ was based on previous literature concerning sex role differences. A 24 item inventory was developed; after pretesting for readability and comprehension, 22 items remained in the questionnaire. According to Beere (1990), there is no known information on scale validity and reliability. The questionnaire is comprised of two sections: items focusing on how girls "should" act and how boys "should" act. Each section contains 11 statements, and responses are either "yes" or "no". Males and females answer both sections and a score is given for each. Stereotyped answers are scored "1"; nonstereotyped answers are scored "0". The questionnaire is easily administered. Permission to use the Sex Role Questionnaire was

granted by both Professors Eugene Gaier and Catherine Emihovich.

Cultural Attitude Scale

The Cultural Attitude Scale (see Appendix D) was developed by myself as I was unable to find another scale measuring cultural and ethnic attitudes. I also welcomed the experience and opportunity to work on the development of a scale. The scale was pretested on eight adolescents similar in age to the students in the class. The Cultural Attitude Scale is a Likert type scale comprised of 17 statements with 5 response choices ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Evaluation Form

An evaluation form (see Appendix E) was provided to the class in order to obtain feedback on the interventions and the students' experience. The information on the evaluation form provided an additional piece to my learning experience. The Evaluation form was a series of Likert style, closed-ended questions as well as open-ended questions in order to solicit opinion from the students.

Measurement Process

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, the Sex Role Questionnaire, and

the Cultural Attitude Scale were administered at the first class on September 14, 1994 (pre-test), again at the end of January, 1995 (post-test) and finally in April, 1995 (follow-up). During the term, three additional students joined the class and were given the measures along with the class. Seven students dropped out of school during the term and they were unable to complete post and follow-up measures. Also, due to absenteeism not all students were able to complete the measures.

Supervision Arrangements

The advisory committee for my practicum consisted of Diane Hiebert-Murphy, Ph.D. (Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba), Barbara Findlay, M.S.W. (Social Worker with The Child Guidance Clinic, Winnipeg, Manitoba) and Barry Trute, Ph.D. (Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba).

I met with Dr. Hiebert-Murphy for scheduled supervision once a week for one and half to two hours per session throughout the practicum process. Notes were provided to Dr. Hiebert-Murphy each week prior to the supervision meeting for both discussion purposes and a record of observations for the practicum report. The purpose of the supervision was to discuss the classroom exercises, group work as well as parent and school interaction. Supplementing the formal supervision, guidance and insight were offered by the school social worker, classroom teachers and other administrative personnel. Dr. Hiebert-Murphy attended the practicum site mid way through the practicum process to observe an exercise in the classroom.

Barbara Findlay provided direction and information regarding the social work role in the school system, as well as feedback on interventive techniques. She was helpful in providing clarification about the organizational structure of the school and how student services fit within this framework. Ms. Findlay also assisted in a classroom exercise.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Practicum Process: An Ecological Intervention

The practicum process involved working with a group of "at risk" adolescents within the school classroom setting. Consistent with the ecological approach, the intervention was tailored to include the interacting systems of adolescent, family and school. I was particularly interested in the "at risk" student. According to Fine (1985), the ecological perspective involving the transactions between "disruptive" adolescents and their environment may lead to successful interventions. Consistent with the ecological concepts of adaptation and coping, my purpose included an attempt to intervene with coping strategies and interventive methods by involving the systems of school and family to enhance or modify the impact of stressful situations on the adolescent.

In this practicum I considered: (a) the microsystems of individual, family and school; (b) the mesosystem interactions between school and home; (c) the recommendations for policy change at the exosystem level, and; (d) the importance of the more ambiguous macrosystem involving gender and cultural influences. The ecosystemic approach provided an opportunity for a thorough assessment of, and intervention with, the interacting systems and their environment.

The project plan called for social work involvement in an alternative classroom

setting. There were two main interventions. First, work was done in both large and small groups through the vehicle of the language arts curriculum. Issues related to gender and culture raised in the reading material that was part of the language arts curriculum were explored. Secondly, attempts were made to increase parental involvement. Of particular interest was the impact that these interventions might have on adolescent self-esteem, with a goal of reduced dropout and increased self-esteem. Pseudonyms were used in the practicum report for the purposes of confidentiality.

Administration of Measures

During the first class I administered the Sex Role Questionnaire, the Cultural Attitude Scale, and the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. The purpose of the measures were two-fold. Firstly, they provided an opportunity to evaluate change in students' attitudes with regard to gender roles, cultural perspectives and trends regarding self-concept. More importantly, for the purposes of this practicum, the measures provided further information for assessment and intervention purposes. The Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale allowed for an extensive gathering of information on the adolescents' self-esteem through the clusters of behaviour, intellectual and school status, physical appearance and attributes, anxiety, popularity, happiness and satisfaction. I also maintained a continuous log of each class or interaction to capture detail and further enhance the richness of the process.

The measures were explained in detail to the class. I reinforced the importance of

each student providing individual responses and that there were no right or wrong answers. With the exception of one student, all students returned their consent form agreeing to participate in the project. One mother advised that the decision to be involved would be up to her son; he declined.

Most of the students completed the measures with few comments. One student, Bruce, began by challenging the relevance of the measures and commenting that he was not going to complete the Piers-Harris question -" I am popular with boys." He chose to consider it a question related to sexual orientation. Even at the introduction stage Bruce seemed to be challenging and attempting to establish control. Bruce appeared to have leadership qualities and influence over a number of his classmates. Leo and Len's (twins) stepmother had provided consent over the phone and I gave both boys a consent form for her signature. Each made a paper aeroplane and threw it across the room.

My observation of the above activity was that some of the students understood this class was labelled as "at risk", housing numerous academic and social concerns. The three boys may have been demonstrating what was expected of them, acting out. McGoldrick (1989) discusses the adolescent's need to adapt to and gain control of their changing environment. I was being introduced into a vulnerable group, thereby creating a crisis and the resulting need for control.

The Classroom Intervention

The purpose of the classroom intervention was to use the curriculum as a vehicle

to create change. Risk factors for adolescent dropout include low self-esteem and numerous social concerns. Research argues that increasing academic achievement increases self-esteem. How an individual perceives herself or feels she is perceived by others as a result of gender or ethnic roots, impacts directly on self-esteem.

I attended the Grade 10 Language Arts class twice per week for the first term of the school year, September 14, 1994 to January 31, 1995. My role was that of a practicum student situated in a high school classroom setting. I was attempting to determine if, through various interventions related to the curriculum, students might enhance their understanding of issues related to gender and culture and as a result impact their self-esteem. I was also interested in exploring the role a social worker might have in a classroom setting.

The classroom tasks and interventions included the administration of pre, mid and post measures and the use of exercises pertaining to the Language Arts curriculum. The interventions took a variety of forms including large group exercises in the classroom, small group activities both inside and outside the classroom, individual assignments, and a parent-child exercise.

Large Group Intervention

The purpose of the large group work was to allow students to gain insight from one another as well as develop confidence in a larger group setting.

Media Exercise

This exercise allowed an opportunity for students to understand the impact the media may have on how adolescents develop their view of the world, particularly in the areas of gender and culture. The media exercise required students to produce a group collage as a result of a large group discussion pertaining to stereotyping in the media. According to Harrison and Pennell (1989), studies have suggested a connection between the media influence and the destructive identity development in both young females and males. The assignment also provided an opportunity to educate students about the powerful impact the media plays in distorting our view of gender roles.

The class did not interact well within this setting. The exercise was provided early in the term, and many of the students were just beginning to get acquainted. Consequently, they may have been uncomfortable sharing information in the larger group. Most of the students did not interact in the group discussion. Bruce led some of the other boys nearby in making jokes and talking amongst themselves; this acting out behaviour may have been a way of reducing the tension in the classroom.

It became apparent after the task was complete that the information on stereotyping was not clear; the groups focused solely on sexism in their posters. A few students did express an opinion on the types of television programs and movies they liked to watch. The class became divided when the boys indicated they preferred action movies. The girls commented on the violence in action-type shows.

In the next class, I provided further information on stereotyping to clarify and define the key terms. This might have been more helpful if the clarification had been

shorter; I may have lost some student interest by using a lecture format. The large group/classroom setting was not conducive to an interactive discussion for these students. The issue of stereotyping may have been introduced to the class too early in the term and as a result may have been perceived as threatening. Further, this group of "at risk" adolescents may not have been used to offering their opinion and having it respected. Many of the students who had behavioural and educational concerns may have had negative interactions with the authority figures in their lives and therefore required time to develop a sense of trust.

Short Story Exercises Within the Large Group

The exercises, both written and activity based, were developed from a series of short stories with gender and cultural themes. The exercises I prepared were discussed with the teacher since in many cases, the students' academic level was far below the Grade 10 curriculum. Written work and reading was difficult for a number of students. At the same time, students appeared reluctant to share with the entire classroom.

Some of the written work handed in to the teacher was in the form of phrases and, in some cases, individual words. The teacher frequently read the stories to the students. The written work was sparse; however, some of the students did express verbal opinion. Both boys and girls appeared surprised at the cultural differences with relation to gender depicted in the stories; particular attention was focused on the lack of independence offered women in middle eastern countries. One story highlighted a pregnant teenager and the mother and daughter dilemma of hiding the information from the girl's father.

Many class members felt the baby's father should have been part of the decision making and be provided with the opportunity to be responsible for his part in the situation.

The stories helped to enhance the gender and culture issues. When it became apparent that it would be difficult for some to participate through written work, more focus was placed on verbal response. This approach was also limited, due to the large group atmosphere.

Small Group Exercises

It became apparent that the students were not participating well in the large group setting. As a result, I decided to have small groups work on projects together. Different methods of group division were attempted (including self-selected, same gender, and preselected), with each group producing different results. The self-selected groups consisted of the social groups in the classroom. Bruce, from the first class, adopted a leadership role. He appeared to enjoy this arrangement and selected group members with whom he could exercise control. The self-selected groups appeared to connect with like members; the more outgoing personalities remained together as did the more passive personalities. Similar to the self-selected groups, the same gender groups resulted in socializing. In the preselected groups I was able to intermingle genders as well as personalities. This group was able to remain on task and was the most productive. According to Toseland and Rivas (1984), the worker should compose the group. This allows the group needs and requirements to be met. The group selection process was a

learning experience for myself with regard to group work. I purposely tried to put the two sets of twins in different groups, since it appeared particularly with Erika and Ellen that one would share the other's view. Occasionally I tried to separate Bruce from his buddies due to his strong influence in the group. This allowed for the remainder of the members to have a chance to express a personal opinion.

The smaller groups worked well. The differing group structure did not appear to impact on the dynamics, except when Bruce was put in a group with another strong personality. In this situation he was generally unobtrusive and more productive in his work. The small group work appeared beneficial to the development of group cohesiveness. This became particularly apparent when the small group allowed Bonnie to "save face" while attempting to centre herself with the group. Another instance of group cohesiveness occurred when Frank's best friend died in a car accident; the class responded with great caring and empathy. According to Allen-Meares et al. (1986), a small cohesive group offers support and stress reduction when trying to learn and change.

Poster Work

This exercise was based on information and discussion of racism, discrimination and stereotypical views. Students formed small groups to deal with the issues and designed a poster depicting the group perspective. The intent of this exercise was served at a superficial level. Generally the groups produced a poster which adequately addressed the issues. I believe the impact would have been more powerful if I had engaged someone to provide a message to the class who had experienced racism or discrimination.

This exercise was a good example of how self-selected groups function. Also, the poster assignment provided an opportunity for the class to be together in small groups. The result was more socializing than focusing on the task. The level of activity appeared to deteriorate to almost an elementary school level, with pieces of material being thrown and glue being eaten.

Novel and Newspaper Article Discussion

This exercise involved a series of small groups dealing with the main novel of the language arts course, April Raintree (Culleton, 1992). In conjunction with the book, I chose a newspaper article which discussed an aboriginal healing ceremony between a victim and offender which took place inside the Law Courts building.

Each group was preplanned, with flexibility for absenteeism. The groups met once outside of the classroom setting in the cafeteria; refreshments were provided. Tredinnick (1993) feels small groups can be effective in single sessions. Shulman (1984) concurs, as long as there is balance within the group process. It was in this setting that I was able to interact more closely with the students.

Bonnie and Vanessa were in the same small group; both these young women are of aboriginal descent. During the group discussion, Bonnie appeared to feel the need to compete with Vanessa for attention. Vanessa started the group discussion and spoke about the symbolic significance of sweet grass and the eagle feather. Shortly after, Bonnie claimed that Louis Riel was her grandfather. This was met by gentle confrontation by the group who stated that the chronological timing would be wrong; he

would have had to be her great grandfather. The group did allow her to save face in this situation.

In this same group Vanessa indicated that she felt it would be beneficial if her mother attended the class to volunteer information, but only if she did not have to be there. She indicated that she was proud of her mother's knowledge and accomplishments, but the last time she invited her AA Group to their home, her mother repeatedly called her "baby" and she was embarrassed. Vanessa appeared to be expressing her need for autonomy and individual identity.

In a discussion of self-identity in another group, two participants (Bob and Jeff), shared their past experience with alcohol and drugs. The other participants were very quiet but encouraging of these disclosures. According to Winters and Easton (1983), peer pressure within a group can help to reduce denial and maintain positive behaviours under pressure.

The last small group was composed of students who had been absent or unable to be in the other groups. The students presented as very quiet and nonparticipatory. I recognized it would not have been ideal for these students to be in a group together. According to Toseland and Rivas (1984), group composition should include members with both like and different characteristics and with the ability and desire to work within the group.

Sculpting Exercise

A sculpting exercise was chosen because it appeared to fit the dynamics of this

class. A number of class members had difficulty expressing themselves in writing, while others were unable to communicate verbally. Sculpting through silent, stationery role playing allows individuals to present a situation to a larger group and at the same time internalize what the sculptor sees before her. According to L'Abate, Ganahl, and Hansen (1986), "depending upon how it is used, the process can give distance from one's experience, allowing perspective, or it can throw one more completely into it, awakening feelings and enhancing awareness" (p. 167).

To begin, the class was provided with brief, point form instructions along with a simple explanation of sculpting. Each small group preselected a scene from April Raintree (Culleton, 1992) and prepared the sculpture for the larger class. I engaged the assistance of the school social worker along with the teacher and teaching assistant on the day of the presentations. I was aware of the teacher's concerns that the students would not want to participate in front of their peers.

Initially, the students required some encouragement; however, after the first group presented their sculpture the exercise went very smoothly. None of the students refused to participate. I did have a concern that Mary was selected by her group to portray a victim in a rape scene. Unfortunately, what her group did not know is that she has been a victim of rape herself. Mary was absent on the day of the exercise. It was interesting that each group chose a scene from the book which showed a power differential between individuals. The students encouraged each other by clapping when each group had finished their presentation. After the presentations I discussed with the class how they might use sculpting in their personal lives by psychologically reconstructing aspects of

their lives that they would like to see differently, and then putting themselves in different roles within the sculpture.

Feedback on the evaluation forms indicated that the sculpting assignment may have highlighted some issues in the novel. One student commented that it was like a video of the book: she could see what April Raintree was doing, and knew that she (the student) would not want to be in April's position. Another response indicated that "it was neat because I got to see different parts of the book". Finally, the exercise appeared to create opportunities for different role taking by students: "yes I enjoyed the sculpting work cause I got to be the group leader for organizing the sculpting." The students appeared to enjoy the assignment. This may have been because it provided a different method of expressing feelings and visualizing others' perspectives.

Parent-Child Exercise

The purpose of this exercise was to promote educational involvement between the parents and their children. The exercise consisted of eight questions with regard to family background, culture, gender roles and education. The students were provided with a question sheet and encouraged to interview one parent. An incentive was provided in the form of a music store gift certificate. As each interview was handed in, the name of the person was entered in a draw for the certificate.

After a two week period only nine interviews were completed. There were a number of reasons given for not completing the exercise: (a) Jim indicated that he had been kicked out of his house and he was not able to do the work. Out of concern, I later

followed-up with Jim regarding his situation. When he realized that I was concerned about his safety he confessed he was "fooling", but he was reluctant to tell me that he did not want to do the assignment; (b) Bruce said that his mother was embarrassed about her education and did not want to do the exercise. In discussion with the teacher, I became aware that Bruce's mother had an active alcohol problem and he may have not have wanted to engage her in the exercise; (c) Carol stated from the beginning she would not do the assignment as she did not get along with her parents, and that this type of interview would just end in an argument.

In reviewing the parents' answers, most parents were encouraging their children to gain more education. However, the parents also felt the education level (Grade 12 and less) they had attained was acceptable for the work they performed. All but one parent saw gender roles changing and were glad for the change. It was only women who were interviewed for the exercise, which may have impacted this question. Most of the parents interviewed considered it important for children to have an appreciation of their heritage.

The information gathered from the exercise provided some valuable insight into parental thinking. There appeared to be a lack of motivation on the part of the adolescent; this was evident in that even with an incentive, the students were not willing to complete the exercise. It may have been that they did not perceive its relevance, or that during this period of individuation the students did not want to work cooperatively with their parent. Further feedback from some students suggested that their parents may have been uncomfortable sharing their educational achievements with their children, the teachers and myself. The questions may have forced the parents to deal with their values and past

accomplishments.

Individual Exercises

The students had worked in large and small groups; I wanted them also to work on an exercise individually in written form. This would allow the students to express personal opinion and connect the material to their situations. The following exercises of the "Visiting Professor" and the "Assertiveness Continuum" were presented later in the fall term. By that time the students had begun to show more effort and skill in written assignments.

The Visiting Professor

The purpose of this exercise was to exemplify stereotypical gender roles. The class was asked to write a detailed description of my professor and the next session the professor attended the class. The students' generalized views were met by the descriptions of a stereotypical male, old and serious, as opposed to the young, pretty, pregnant and friendly professor who arrived at the class. The students appeared to enjoy this exercise and it served the purpose of highlighting the issue of stereotyping and gender roles.

The Assertiveness Continuum

One of the short stories in the curriculum pertained to assertiveness as a gender

issue. The purpose of the exercise was to introduce the students to the term "assertiveness" and the importance of this concept in relation to self-esteem and its relevance to their lives. Along with an individual assignment, each student received an assertiveness continuum in which to place the story character. A discussion resulted as to how each student felt they might fit on the scale. This exercise seemed easily understood and students were interested in how they perceived themselves and others. Further, this exercise appeared to generate interest among the students. The information regarding assertiveness provided to the students prior to the exercise was helpful. I noticed that periodically after the introduction of the term, the concept of assertiveness was used by students in other discussions, and also in the form of positive feedback on four of the evaluation forms. The concept may have been interesting to the students as it provided a relevant piece of learning. The students were able to place themselves on the continuum to see where they fit. Some students' comments on the evaluation form suggested it may be helpful for them personally. Vanessa indicated that she felt her mother was an assertive person. Bonnie felt she would like to be more assertive, and Bruce stated that he liked to be aggressive. The students appeared to grasp the concepts of passive-assertive. According to Human Resources Development Canada (1994), one of the criteria identified for change in the education system is the integration of material into the school curriculum which is relevant to daily living.

The Parental Intervention

Theorists consider the interaction between the school and the family as essential to the social and academic success of the adolescent (Ziegler, 1987). This thinking is consistent with the ecological approach of this practicum, when considering the interacting systems and their impact on the adolescents. The parental involvement in the project took the form of phone contact, home visits, parent orientation, a parent coffee evening and a parent-child exercise.

Initial Telephone Contact

The project began with telephone calls to the parents or guardians of the students to explain the objectives of the practicum. The purpose was to begin engaging parents in order to develop parental involvement and to request the voluntary participation of their children. The parents were advised during the phone call that a letter of permission would be provided to them for their signature. Parents were asked to contact me if they had any questions regarding the project. Confidentiality of the project was stressed.

The phone contact resulted in two noteworthy discussions with parents, Tom's father and Vanessa's mother. Both conversations impacted our meetings at the parent orientation, parent coffee evening and my perception of the students' classroom involvement.

Tom's Father

Tom is a physically challenged adolescent who has been disabled since birth. In conversation with Tom's father, I found him to be assertive with regard to my project. As well, he was very knowledgeable in the area of disability. He felt strongly that disabled persons were a subculture and that I should make sure that this subcultural area was addressed with the class. During the course of the conversation I asked Tom's father, if Tom was comfortable, would he be willing to participate in providing more information or becoming involved in the class. He appeared interested and indicated he would get back to me.

Both Tom's father and mother attended the parent orientation. Both parents were very critical of what they perceived as obstacles to their son's progress in the school system (i.e., the slowness of the elevator, the inability for him to participate in all sports). I once again encouraged both parents to participate in the project and provide me with information. During the course of the term neither parent participated in the parent-child exercise, attended the coffee evening or called with the information they wanted to discuss regarding disabilities.

The classroom teacher and I talked about this family and she indicated that they frequently called the school with concerns and advocated on their son's behalf. The teacher noticed that Tom was much more independent this school year. He had approached the school office himself during the term and appeared more self-sufficient when dealing with classroom situations. The administration had noticed a decline in the phone calls from Tom's parents over the first term. By inviting Tom's father to

participate in the classroom I may have produced conflict with Tom's need to become more independent in adolescence.

Tom's scores on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale were high in each cluster except the Popularity Cluster. The noted increase in assertiveness may be a result of increasing self-esteem. Consistent with his view of peer acceptance, Tom interacted in class with two other boys but for the most part remained fairly isolated. His work was considered to be below academic level, and verbal participation and attendance were sporadic.

Literature on health suggests health problems such as physical disability impact negatively on self-esteem (Antonucci, Peggs & Marquez, 1989). In turn, low self-esteem is consistent with decreased academic achievement. The literature also confirms that parental involvement may impact to increase adolescent self-esteem and achievement; however, in this case Tom may be struggling at the adolescent stage of life to seek autonomy and his own self-identity (Erikson, 1968, Marcia, 1966). According to Swap (1987), "parental involvement is not desirable when it intrudes on the independence of the child" (p. vii). Eccles et al. (1993) speak about parents' protectiveness as children attempt to individuate and begin to rely more on peers than family. Out of concern, the family may begin to become more restrictive rather than allowing the adolescent the opportunity to gain independence.

Tom's parents appeared to be advocating on Tom's behalf rather than empowering him to seek independence. Their attack on the school system may be an attempt to protect but at the same time deny his apparent lack of motivation and academic difficulty

by focusing on his disability. Tom's recent attempt to become more self-reliant may result in increased self-esteem, which in turn may impact positively on his effort at school. Further, Tom's parents may have been struggling to find and adjust to new roles as Tom moves through adolescence.

Vanessa's Mother

Vanessa is a bright, articulate adolescent female of Metis descent. My first contact with her family was the introductory phone call to her mother, a single parent. According to Vanessa's mother, she promotes an aboriginal radio station. Vanessa's mother indicated that both she and her daughter were politically active in the area of self-government. After outlining the nature of the project, Vanessa's mother questioned me at length regarding aboriginal issues. Since we would be working from the novel April Raintree (Culleton, 1992), she was curious about my knowledge of the book. I asked her if she would be interested in attending the class to provide information on aboriginal issues. She appeared enthusiastic.

Vanessa had disclosed her problem with substance abuse to the school administration in her previous school year. According to the teacher, in the last school year Vanessa was frequently late or absent from class, her marks were poor and her appearance was unkempt. However, at the beginning of the present school year, these concerns were not evident. Vanessa may be addressing her substance abuse problems; in addition, her mother appears very involved and interested in her daughter's education in the school system and within their culture. A supportive home environment provides the

basis for increased self esteem and motivation (Ziegler, 1987). Gender plays an important role in the adolescent development of self-identity. Parents who are highly nurturing or affiliative, particularly same sex parents, exert a strong influence on their children (Sargent, 1985).

Vanessa and her mother are highly involved in their aboriginal culture. Vanessa may be struggling to establish a dual identity by balancing the demands of the dominant culture with her aboriginal background. It also appears that Vanessa's mother may be positively influencing her self-esteem by acting as a positive role model.

Home Visits

The purpose of my home visits were to have personal contact in order to encourage parental participation, gain insight into family dynamics, and to pick up outstanding project permission letters. Ziegler (1987) agrees with the importance of home visits to connect with students wanting to leave school prior to graduation, or students displaying "at risk" characteristics related to dropout. Meeting with the entire system may help to resolve potential dropout. Ziegler (1987) also feels that face to face contact is more powerful than a phone call or letter.

The following home visits illustrate the potential impact this intervention could make by enhancing interpersonal contact.

Jim's Home Visit

I spoke with Jim's father at some length, reviewing the process for the practicum.

Jim's father, like his son, presented as shy and soft-spoken. He indicated that while he did not have much education, he thought it was important for children to do well in school; in order to accomplish this they had to feel good about themselves. Jim's mother attended the parent orientation alone. She indicated that both she and her husband were supportive of the project and would like to be involved if needed. I explained that later in the term there would be a parent-child exercise that they could complete with Jim. I feel the parental attendance may have been a result of the initial face to face contact with Jim's dad.

Mark's Home Visit

Mark is an aboriginal adolescent living with his mother. I spoke with Mark's mother and arranged to pick up the consent letter; unfortunately she was not there when I arrived. Mark appeared nervous and anxious regarding my visit. After I explained my purpose he relaxed but was unable to find the form. Mark's contact with the school was brief. He dropped out early in the first term. My impression of Mark was that he was a bright but unmotivated student. I read some of his work which appeared well done, but at the same time he put himself down in conversations. The school spoke with his mother and she indicated that he could leave school if he got a job. There was no contact after that telephone call.

Mark's situation reveals many of the criteria for potential school dropout (Human Resources Development Canada, 1994). Mark lives in a minority, single parent home, is of low socioeconomic status, has apparent low self-esteem and has low parental

reinforcement of education. Mark's home visit suggested that Mark's mother may not be as involved as I originally thought. Even though we had arranged for me to meet with her, she was not home at the arranged time and she had not left the permission letter. However, Swap (1987) feels it is important to recognize that parents may be unavailable due to personal demands to provide much involvement. Mark may have returned to school if there had been more follow-up with both the mother and Mark through a referral to the school social worker.

Parent Orientation

The parent orientation was the opportunity for staff and parents to meet one another and exchange information. The school gymnasium was lined with tables for each subject or service area. Parents lined up to speak with the staff members of their choice. Of the 25 students in the "at risk" class, eight parents attended the orientation. The teacher was pleased with this response, since the previous year only two parents had attended. I attended the orientation and was able to meet with some of the parents I had made contact with by telephone. The purpose was to answer questions parents might have about my work in the school and also to encourage parental involvement. I had met Jim's father at a home visit; Jim's mother attended the orientation and expressed support for the project. Tom's parents also attended and discussed the importance of addressing the disabled persons' concerns in the school.

The orientation was not conducive to any in-depth interaction; it was clearly not

the type of environment in which a parent or teacher would be comfortable exchanging personal information. This was particularly true for the Student Services table, which frequently deals with the more sensitive issues. Parent orientation could be more meaningful for parents and teachers if the school would explain to parents how they might become more involved in their child's education. According to Ziegler (1987) parent orientation sessions which include information giving and training for voluntary classroom work may enhance positive relationships with parents and assist in building positive parent esteem. Similarly, the parent-teacher conferences are usually academically focused. According to research by Epstein and Becker (1982), parent-teacher interviews are ineffective; they point out that teachers seldom make home visits to discuss a student's broader educational experience.

Parent Coffee Evening

This informal gathering presented an opportunity to have direct contact with the parents in order to provide an update on the practicum project, introduce the parent-child exercise and discuss the importance of parental involvement in education. After discussion with the classroom teacher it was decided that a written invitation to parents would be adequate. The invitation would be attached to the student report cards. The teacher, however, learned that the reports would be sent out after the scheduled evening. As a result, the students were given the notes to deliver to their parents. At this point I followed up with a telephone call to the parents.

Both the classroom teacher and the vice-principal attended this evening. One of the major discussions during the evening was the need for more parental involvement at the high school level. The teacher, vice-principal and myself engaged the parents in some problem solving around this idea. According to Ziegler (1987), parents would like to remain involved at the senior school level. Vanessa's mother arrived toward the end of the evening. According to Vanessa, her mother works to promote awareness of the aboriginal culture. The administration feedback regarding Vanessa's mother was that she had been contacted the previous year with regard to Vanessa's disclosure of substance abuse. The administration's efforts were met with apparent denial and anger, manifested in "yelling and screaming". The school administration's impression was that Vanessa's mother had mental health concerns. During the coffee evening, Vanessa's mother's participation in the conversation included many critical comments regarding stereotypical gender and aboriginal issues being reinforced in the school system, beginning at the elementary level. The comments were not acknowledged by the vice-principal or the teacher. The school administration appears to have had a history of difficult interactions with Vanessa's mother. Knowledge of the parental system and attempts to deal with the substance abuse and academic failure of a child may frequently be met with denial. This use of coping and resulting anger may be misunderstood by teachers who may not be trained in dealing with family social concerns (Kurtz & Barth, 1989). Further, Chavkin and Garza-Lubeck (1990) suggest that ethnic minorities are particularly vulnerable when accessing the educational system and may require some assistance to become involved.

The other parents who attended were Erika and Ellen's (twins) mother, and

Janet's mother. These mothers arrived together, having taken the bus on a very cold night. The low turnout by parents may have been the result of a number of concerns. The weather was very cold, and the parents may not have all received their written invitations from their children. Also, the parents of these "at risk" adolescents may have been given frequent past negative information from the school regarding their children. These factors may have contributed to the low parental turnout. The group was small and informal; the women who attended seemed to enjoy the interaction. The staff had information to provide to the parents and when that was complete I presented what my project had accomplished to date. The women were interested in the concept of self-esteem, gender roles and how families were changing. We discussed the importance of parent involvement in education and indicated that another local high school had recently started a "parent association". The women appeared very interested in this idea and spoke at length about the possibilities of participating in such a group. The vice-principal indicated that she would follow up the idea and contact the interested parents, as my time with the school was limited.

Both Erika and Ellen's mother as well as Janet's mother are single parents, who indicated they left school due to early pregnancy and were supported by social assistance. Both women appeared to have a deep commitment to their daughters' education. Erika and Ellen's mother had just completed a computer course and was trying to get employment for the first time in many years.

Janet's mother had poor health and was almost blind. She indicated that Janet took responsibility for a great deal of the homemaking as well as for her "older" brother

who had a severe substance abuse problem. Janet's mother appeared to want to participate in her daughter's education, but the reality was that she already had difficulty maintaining her home and family. According to Fuhrmann (1990), adolescents are at risk when they are forced to take on roles that they are not mature enough to deal with at their life stage. Forcing children to grow up too fast may result in school failure, substance abuse, depression and chronic unhappiness.

The "at risk" factors for dropout are evident for these three adolescents. All are the products of early pregnancy school dropout, single parent homes, health issues, and low socioeconomic status. There is, however, a positive message these mothers are passing on to their daughters; through education they can achieve what their mothers were unable to achieve. Further, these mothers openly acknowledged how early pregnancy led to their current situation. Erika and Ellen's mother modelled positive, motivating behaviour by returning to school for training in order to secure employment. The impact of same gender influence is significant (Preto, 1989).

The School Intervention

My initial involvement with the school began through contact with the Child Guidance Clinic, who referred me to a social worker situated in a high school setting. I made a written request to the school board who reviewed the proposal along with the measures to be administered. After approval, I met with the vice-principal of the high school along with the teacher working with the alternative class. My request was given

full support by both the teacher and vice-principal, who considered the ecological approach of the practicum project to be consistent with the school's effort to assist this "at risk" group of students. I spoke at length with the female vice-principal on two separate occasions. She expressed the importance of enhancing female gender issues for adolescents. She indicated that most administrators in the school system were still male and that the education system was just beginning to change. She particularly emphasized the teaching of assertiveness to young women and men.

The classroom teacher provided me with a copy of the potential curriculum material and encouraged my input for the fall term. The teacher involvement in the classroom setting proved to be very helpful. The teacher was able to provide me with realistic expectations of the academic level of the class. Initially, I was concerned about my ability to be assertive enough within this teaching environment to be allowed to work interdependently with the teacher. Winters and Easton (1983) suggest that the social worker in the school setting may be perceived as an "intruder" and that the school social worker's "mobility and separate professional identity" may be threatening to the school administration (p. 2). Throughout the practicum I struggled with these issues and questioned my discomfort. I explored my feelings and concluded that initially it was a challenge for the teacher and I to define our roles. As well, there was a brief period of each attempting to gain control. I was working within a classroom setting, an environment that had not changed since I was in high school. During the initial class I sat in a desk at the front of the room facing the teacher; immediately I was a student in the class. The information and work I presented to the students was first approved by the

teacher. I believe it was easiest for both the teacher and myself to assume the familiar roles of teacher and student.

A further observation was the importance of systemic thinking when working within the school system. The parents could be important contributors to the education system and ultimately the education of their adolescents. There is a significant amount of literature regarding the need and importance of parental involvement in the education of children. There is also much literature indicating that the school system wants to involve parents; however, it is the parents who have been unmotivated to participate (Swap, 1987). When I was organizing the parent-coffee evening, I originally was going to send out written invitations and follow-up with a telephone call. The teacher thought that would be too much pressure on the parents. According to Swap (1987), there is a need for parents to be actively involved, but it may be the educational system that has fears regarding scrutiny and resultant accountability. Swap (1987) reports cases where parent task forces have been struck to make change, but the underlying control is still with the education system. The task force can be "expertly managed, not to provide a new perspective, but to confirm existing views, opinions or recommendations" (Swap, 1987, p. 87). Swap (1987) further indicates that "fear compels these protective strategies, fear of exposing problems to public scrutiny, of disrupting the status quo, or coping with public recommendations that administrators feel are inappropriate (p. 87). I have learned that parents hold significant power with regard to education. The education system appears to understand this, but as yet the parents have not organized themselves to achieve their potential role. It may be an illusion that parents play an influential role in

the school system. By disempowering the parental system, the school system may be limiting both the teachers and workers who are attempting to garner creative or innovative methods when working with students.

Termination

Termination was the final task of the practicum process. At the start of the school term, I outlined the beginning and end points of my involvement for the students. One month prior to the last class and weekly thereafter, I reminded the students of the remaining projects and when I would be finished at the school. According to Toseland and Rivas (1984), preparation for the ending phase of group work is important, and endings can be either planned or unplanned.

The last day I was in the classroom I brought a "thank-you" cake for the class. At this time I summarized the accomplishments of the term and expressed my appreciation, indicating how the students' involvement had furthered knowledge both for myself and others. It was interesting to note that Bruce did not attend this class. Over the term I noticed Bruce's behaviour changing and that he and I had more positive interaction. It may have been that Bruce found the ending phase of the class difficult. According to Toseland and Rivas (1984), as the end date approaches, some members stop attending.

Approximately two weeks after the last class I sent each student a handwritten thank you note which focused on each of their contributions to the practicum and a positive message about themselves. A note went to each student regardless of whether

they remained in school or dropped out. As well, I forwarded a letter to the classroom teacher, the vice-principal and the school board.

I left copies of the evaluation form with the teacher, who had the students complete them at a later date.

Emerging Themes in the Practicum Process

Through the application of the ecological approach, the practicum process focused on the parental system and the school system, and their impact on the adolescent "at risk" of dropout. As a result of this approach, common themes within these systems emerged. What follows is a brief discussion focusing on these themes, concluding with the implications for social work.

The "At Risk" Adolescent

One of the major themes of the practicum was the "at risk" adolescent. Like other situations surrounding people, "at risk" adolescents affect and are affected by their environment as well as the interacting systems. I learned that the adolescent in danger of leaving school early is a complex individual (Human Resources Development Canada, 1994). The "normal" adolescent stage of development, with its numerous changes and challenge of identity development, provides the basis of the "at risk" adolescent's environment. In conjunction with this life stage, the adolescent may have numerous

impacting social concerns. These concerns include the family, with issues such as its socioeconomic situation, health and education. School is also viewed as an adolescent stressor, with pressure to achieve. I learned that the cues which may suggest stress in the adolescents' life may be masked by anger or acting out behaviours.

Through the practicum process I have discovered the need to consider the adolescents' social situation as primary. The social barriers, unless dealt with, may negatively impact the opportunity for educational achievement and ultimately effect adolescent self-esteem.

In the high school where I completed my work, the "at-risk" student is identified as she enters the grade 10 level. I agree with the literature which suggests that early intervention is necessary to more effectively deal with the concern of dropout. The school social worker, the school system, and the parents need to be aware of and apply preventative measures prior to entry to junior high school (Eccles et. al., 1993).

The Alternative Classroom as an Intervention

Another theme raised as a form of intervention is the alternative classroom or school. The alternative classroom is an environment which supports the "at risk" adolescent. Through my involvement in this setting I discovered a personal dilemma. The alternative classroom requires taking the student outside the regular classroom, which in turn may leave the student vulnerable to isolation and labelling by others (Fine, 1985). This form of intervention comes at a time when students with learning and

physical disabilities are being integrated into the regular class setting. However, in observing the students in the alternative class I did not feel they were unhappy with this arrangement. The teacher indicated that students from previous years continued to make contact with her, and there appeared to be a collegial atmosphere.

Another positive aspect of this setting was that it incorporated many of the integral elements of the alternative school such as personal relationships between student and teacher, small classroom size and a non-competitive atmosphere which may contribute to the school's goal and students' success in not dropping out (Eccles et. al., 1993; Franklin, 1992). Students considered to be "at risk" should be made aware of and be provided with the necessary information in order to choose between the regular and alternative settings.

Professional Cooperation Within the School

A further theme of the practicum was the need for social workers to interact with and determine their role with other school professions such as administrators, teachers and psychologists. I observed that there is not only a need for role clarity for professionals, but also for those individuals who subscribe to the services of the school (Gibelman, 1993). I was initially unsure of establishing myself in the school setting; it was a struggle to assert myself in the dual role of student and social worker. As a student, I was aware of the need to learn from others, and as a social worker I felt that I had skills to contribute.

The Importance of Parental Involvement

Throughout the practicum there was a recurring theme suggesting the importance of the parental system and its effect on adolescent achievement and sense of self (Swap, 1987; Ziegler, 1987). The challenge is not just recognizing this reality, but also enlightening the parents on the significance of their role. I learned the importance of home visit contact to encourage parents to participate in their childrens' education. I also learned that it is vital to give parents the opportunity to be part of the planning for their "at risk" children. I believe that when parents become active participants working with the school, the social worker and their children, they are able to communicate more easily with all systems, particularly during a crisis.

After identifying the need for parental involvement, a further challenge is to actively engage the parental system in a partnership with the worker and the school systems. I learned that both the worker and the school must be cognizant of the numerous demands that parents may be attempting to balance (e.g., work, family responsibilities, health, other children). Also, parents may have had previous negative involvement with the school, particularly if their children have shown "at risk" characteristics. Consideration must be given to the above possibilities in order to engage parents as participants.

Gender and Cultural Issues

The literature discusses and the practicum process illustrates the influence same sex parents may have on their children. As a result of the parent-child exercise and the parent coffee evening, parents' views of the changing roles of men and women surfaced. There was acknowledgement by mothers or female guardians that the roles for women are changing and that they welcomed and encouraged the change for their sons and daughters. This was evident in one parent-child exercise in which a mother responded that she wanted her daughter to be more independent than herself. She was a single parent with little education, relying on social assistance to sustain herself and her family. The school curriculum is slowly changing by incorporating gender differences into the material (Askew & Ross, 1988; Edwards, 1992). It was apparent in class that the teacher and the administration were committed to enhancing and drawing out gender related issues in the curriculum. The method of using the curriculum as a vehicle for change appeared beneficial and unobtrusive. It allowed for a sensitive presentation of the changing gender roles and the impact on males and females.

Similar to gender, the theme of culture was incorporated into the curriculum material. Through exercise and discussion, this theme was drawn out to increase an appreciation for cultural differences among the class members. Parental influence was evident when examining the parent-child exercise. Each exercise turned in by a parent offered the opinion that it was important for his or her child to know and have an appreciation for their heritage. Cultural appreciation holds relevance in the education of

our youth as Canada continues to grow as a multi-cultural society. Relevance in education was noted as one of the major issues for Canadian high school dropouts (Human Resources Development Canada, 1994). It was interesting to note that 32% of this class was either of aboriginal or black descent.

The high school reinforced the importance of cultural education for students by establishing a sister school in another country and offering an exchange program for students of the high school. The members of this class did not participate in the exchange program. In discussion with the teacher and vice-principal, it was apparent that the exchange program was reserved for students who achieved greater academic success and whose parents could afford to send their children on the program. The program was expensive and most of the students in the alternative class were eliminated as a result of their lower socioeconomic background. I used the exchange program as an example in one of the short story exercises and some of the students were not even aware of the student exchange opportunity.

Adolescent Self-esteem

Another emerging theme was self-esteem. All systems viewed self-esteem as an important issue. At a home visit, Jim's father expressed the opinion that even though he did not have much education, he felt that it was important for children to have a good sense of self in order to do well in school. Conversely, two mothers at the parent coffee evening stated that in order to feel good about oneself it was important to have an

education. The literature argues that educational achievement impacts and can lead to increased self-esteem; it also suggests that positive self-esteem may produce beneficial results in education (Battle, 1990; Ziegler, 1987).

Consistent with the need to increase self-esteem, the teacher considered her goal, in working with the class to prevent high school dropout, by assisting the students in successfully achieving an education. Creative teaching methods, which take into consideration the learning style of individual students, was thought to assist in the goal.

The Ecological Approach as the Guiding Framework

The ecological approach was an appropriate framework in which to consider the "at-risk" adolescent in the school. This perspective was compatible with the goal of working interactively between the adolescent, the school, and the home. The literature offered by Fine (1985) brought to life the terms "match or mismatch of the individual to his or her environment" (Fine, 1985, p. 263). This perspective further allowed me the chance to view adolescents within their larger social context and provided me with a greater appreciation of the impact of the role that might be played by the interacting systems. Using the ecological approach allowed me the clarity I needed to isolate the individual systems for the purposes of assessment. It also provided me with opportunities for entry points for the purpose of intervention. I used the above information throughout the process, and it guided me to consider all the systems when dealing with the "at-risk" adolescent. Researchers agree that the ecological approach is appropriate for working

with adolescents in the school system. However, it is important to remain cognizant of its potential limitations. The framework demands a thorough assessment of all systems, and would not be suitable for workers who are unable to spend time working in depth. In reviewing critiques of the ecological approach, there appears to be little written as to the limitations of the above approach (Meyer, 1988). The emerging themes and the interacting systems suggest that there is an important role for social workers.

Implications for Social Work

According to Frank (1990), school dropout is a complicated problem with multiple variables of the adolescent, the family, the school, and the broader social policy. Social workers familiar with the ecological framework and situated within the school setting are in a good position to assist with this concern (Fine, 1985).

Each of the above systems will be considered as to possible social work involvement.

The Adolescent

- (a) The literature suggests that early intervention, prior to junior high school, is necessary for assisting "at risk" adolescents to increase self-esteem, and to reduce stereotypical gender and cultural views (Eccles et al., 1993; Pipher, 1994). It is therefore necessary for social workers to work with the preadolescent student.

- (b) In order to build trust with the student, visibility and availability are imperative. Working in the classroom setting increases the profile of the social worker and provides the opportunity to consider issues such as gender, culture and self-esteem. The social worker might be present at extracurricular events along with the teaching staff to increase the opportunity for students to interact and build relationships with her.
- (c) The issues of gender and culture suggest the need for social workers working with minority populations to become aware of the culture, class bound values and language factors. These differences would include race-linked conversational differences and non-verbal communication (McNeely & Badumi, 1984; Sue, 1977). Further, social workers must become aware of their own culturally defined beliefs and the impact these beliefs may have on students (Pinderhughes, 1984; Segal, 1991; Sue, 1977).

The Parent

- (a) There is an apparent link between family stress and adolescent dropout. Issues concerning family health, family income, single parenting, substance abuse (either parental or adolescent) are relevant to dropout (Human Resources Development Canada, 1994). Social workers specifically trained to work with families are in a position to interface between the home and school environments through home

visits, parent interviews, referrals and counselling. Social worker visibility to parents is important in building trust and increasing communication.

- (b) The school social worker has the opportunity to provide the link for parents to remain involved from each school level to the next. According to Ziegler (1987), parents are actively involved with their children's education in the elementary school and even junior high levels; however, involvement drops off at the high school level.
- (c) Literature suggests that parents may be reluctant to connect with the school, particularly if they have experienced some negative situations involving their child. It is especially important in these situations that a school social worker be available to break barriers of poor communication with the school. This is critical in situations of "at risk" adolescents, when communication is necessary to assist the family in dealing with a potential dropout situation.

The School

- (a) The school social worker is in a position to be part of the school administration team. In order not to be perceived as an intruder, it is important that the professional roles housed within the system (e.g., teacher, psychologist) be defined. The importance is two-fold: it reduces overlap in responsibility and

- avoids confusion for students and staff.
- (b) The social worker is also in a position to work with educational professionals to implement interventions such as alternative classrooms, alternative schools, group work and parental interventions when considering the "at risk" student.

The Macro-Level

Most of the professional activity of the school social worker would primarily focus on the micro and mesosystems. These two systems are the least difficult to change. However, the most lasting change exists in the exosystems and macrosystems where policy development occurs. The school social worker might consider focusing on areas of curriculum change (e.g., incorporating gender and culture) at the policy level to be part of sustaining change.

CHAPTER FIVE

Evaluation of Outcome

According to Compton and Galaway (1984), it is the responsibility of social work to test the effectiveness of social work practice. There are three reasons to conduct evaluation: to be accountable to the funding source; to determine the impact of the intervention on the population; and to evaluate practice approaches (Monette, Sullivan & Dejong, 1986).

This practicum was interested in determining the effect of the interventions on the "at risk" adolescents within a high school classroom setting. We can surmise that an intervention may have no effect on an outcome, or may have a negative or positive effect, either of which may show as immediate or latent.

Analysis of Outcomes

The following measures were utilized to evaluate outcome: the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale, the Sex Role Questionnaire, and the Cultural Attitude Scale.

To ascertain the effectiveness of the interventions, I applied the paired t -test to the data. According to Elifson, Runyon and Haber (1982), the t -test is considered to be a robust test. As such, even with a small sample size and fairly large departures from a

normal distribution, inferences from the t -test will likely remain valid.

The matched pairs t -test which fits this data analyzes the difference score for each matched pair. Each person serves as her own control (Harnett & Murphy, 1985).

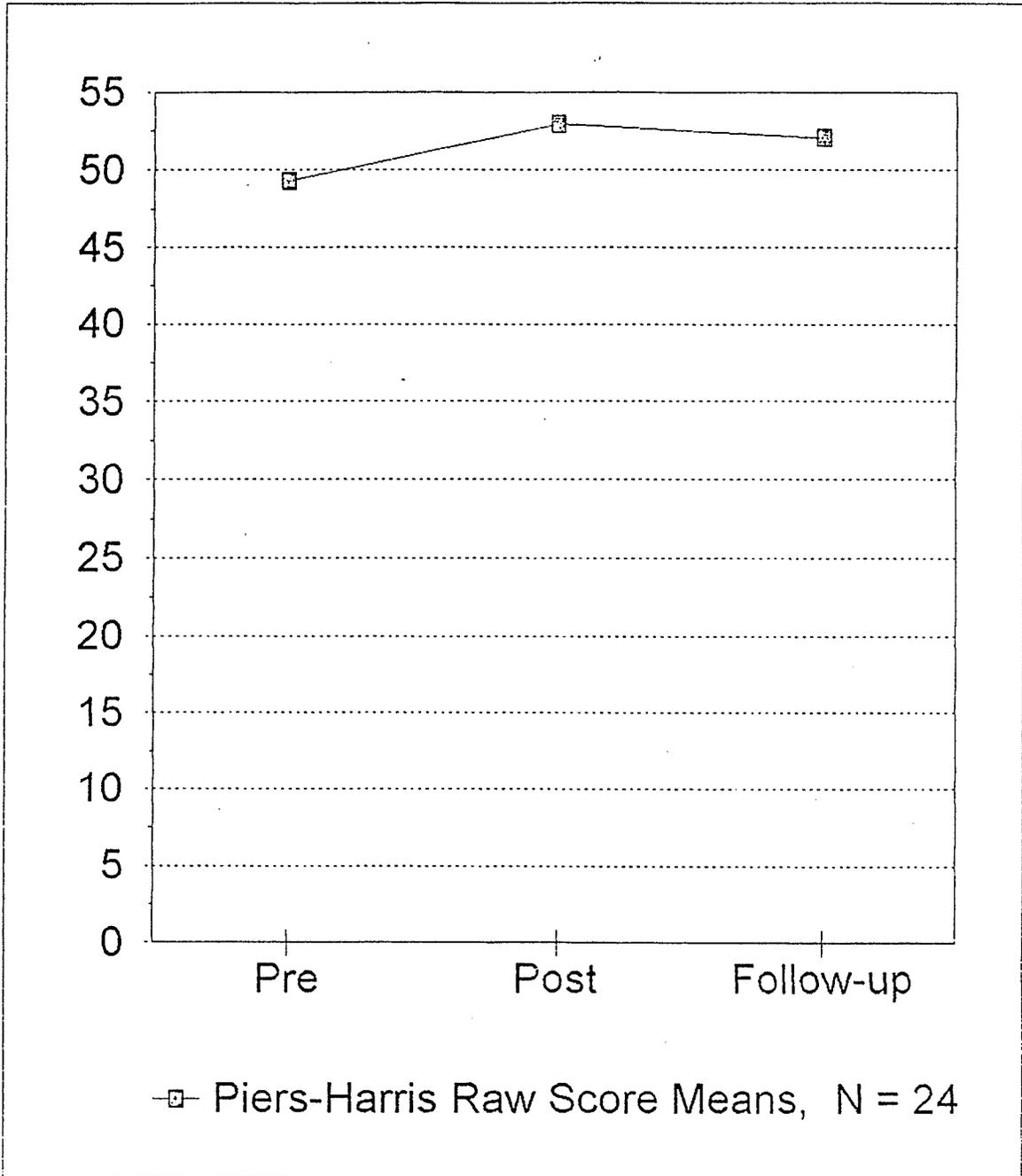
Throughout this practicum the alpha level was set at .05.

Aggregate data to reflect the progress of the class is limiting and does not reveal gender differences. As a result, the data was sorted by gender to analyze the impact of the intervention.

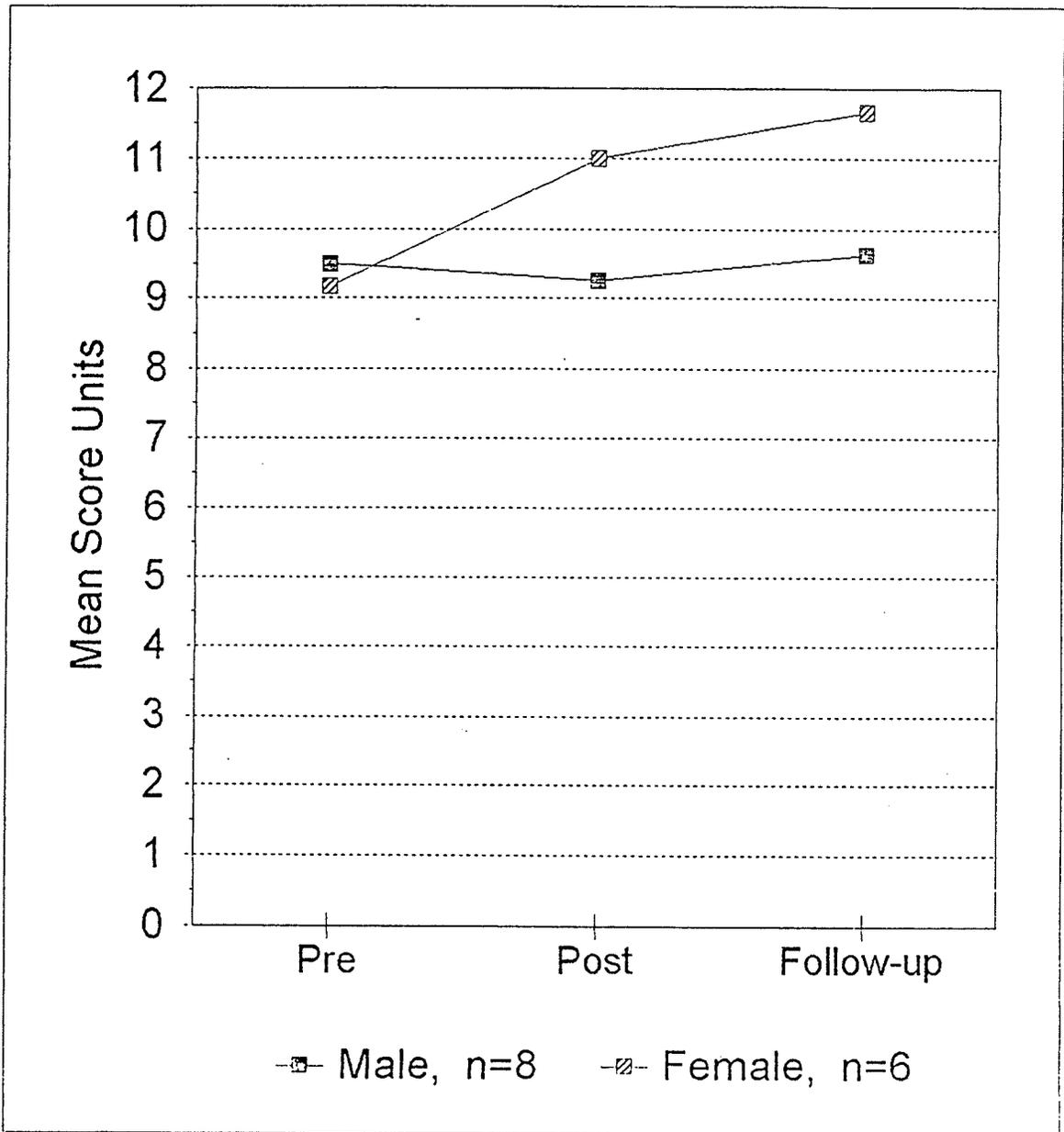
Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale

Analysis of the pre and post scores on Piers-Harris total scores for all students does not indicate change. Analysis of post and follow-up measures also did not indicate change. However, Figure I shows a trend of improvement in the self-concept of the class as a whole, pre to post measures, and a slight decrease in raw score post to follow-up. Further analysis of the Piers-Harris scale by gender for each of the clusters shows noteworthy change only in Cluster II. The trends for Cluster II change are shown in Figure II. Scores for males remained stable, while scores for females increased pre to post and continued to increase post to follow-up. Pre to follow-up change for females is significant, $t_{(6)} = 2.79$, $p = 0.032$. In the absence of a no-intervention control group, it is not possible to attribute the change to the intervention.

Piers-Harris Total Scores.



Piers-Harris Cluster II Means by Gender.



Cultural Attitude Scale

Analysis of the Cultural Attitude Scale shows no change for the class as a whole or by gender. Pre to post trends show an increase, whereas a decrease might have been expected. A slight decrease post to follow-up was observed. These findings may be the result of a small sample size, a lack of validity (the scale was not validated), and comprehension difficulties (the scale was pre-tested on adolescents with a higher comprehension level than the academic level of the students in the "at risk" class).

Sex Role Questionnaire

No change from pre-test to post-test was found for the class as a whole or by gender. As shown in Figure III, there was a trend for male and female respondents to show a marginal decline in female sex role stereotyping, pre to post and post to follow-up. As shown in Figure IV, the trend was for male and female respondents to show a marginal decline in male sex role stereotyping pre to post but increased post to follow-up. The marginal trends in both Figures III and IV suggest that male sex role stereotyping may be more pronounced and more stable, and that males may stereotype more than females.

Female Role Stereotyping by Gender.

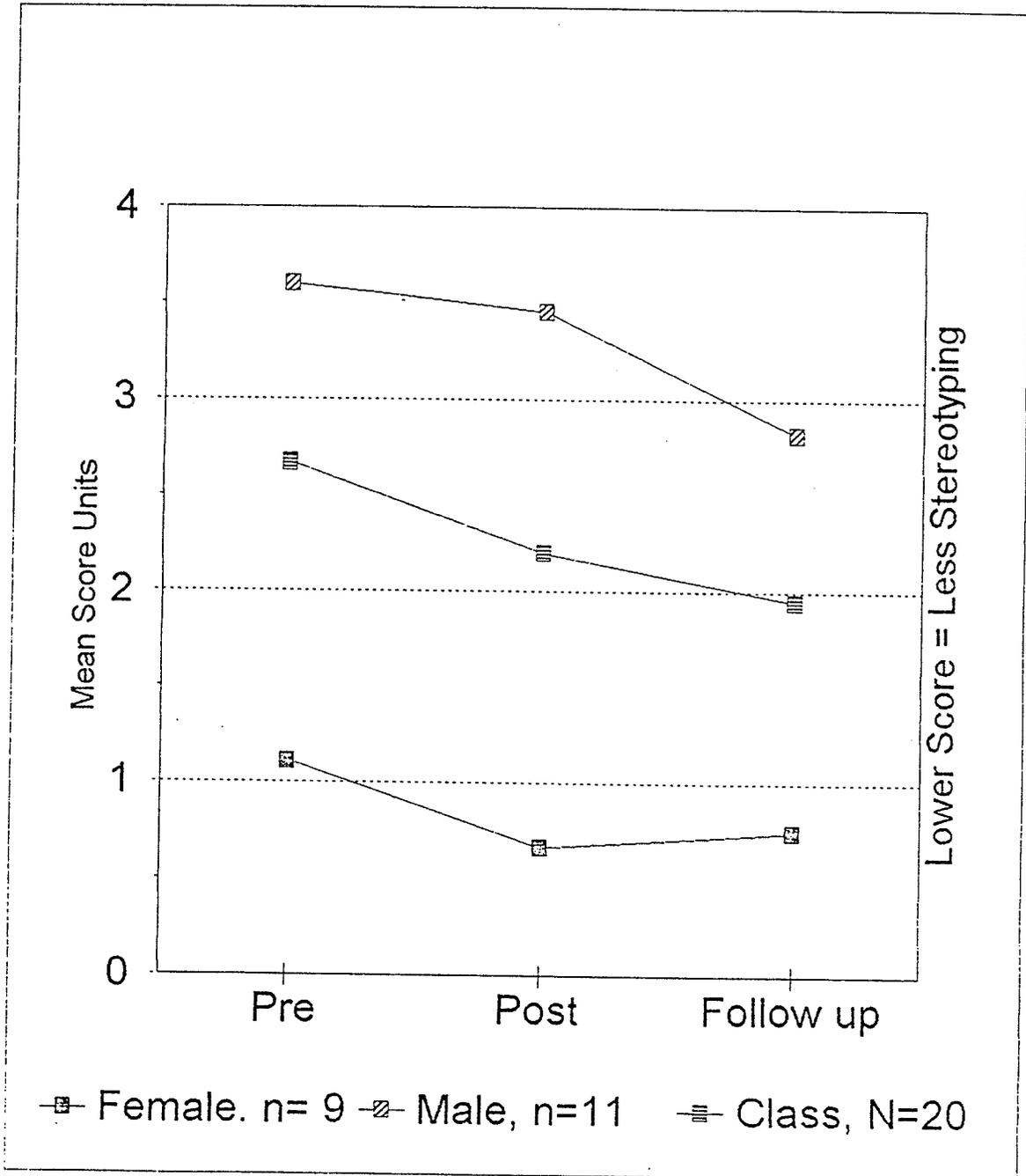
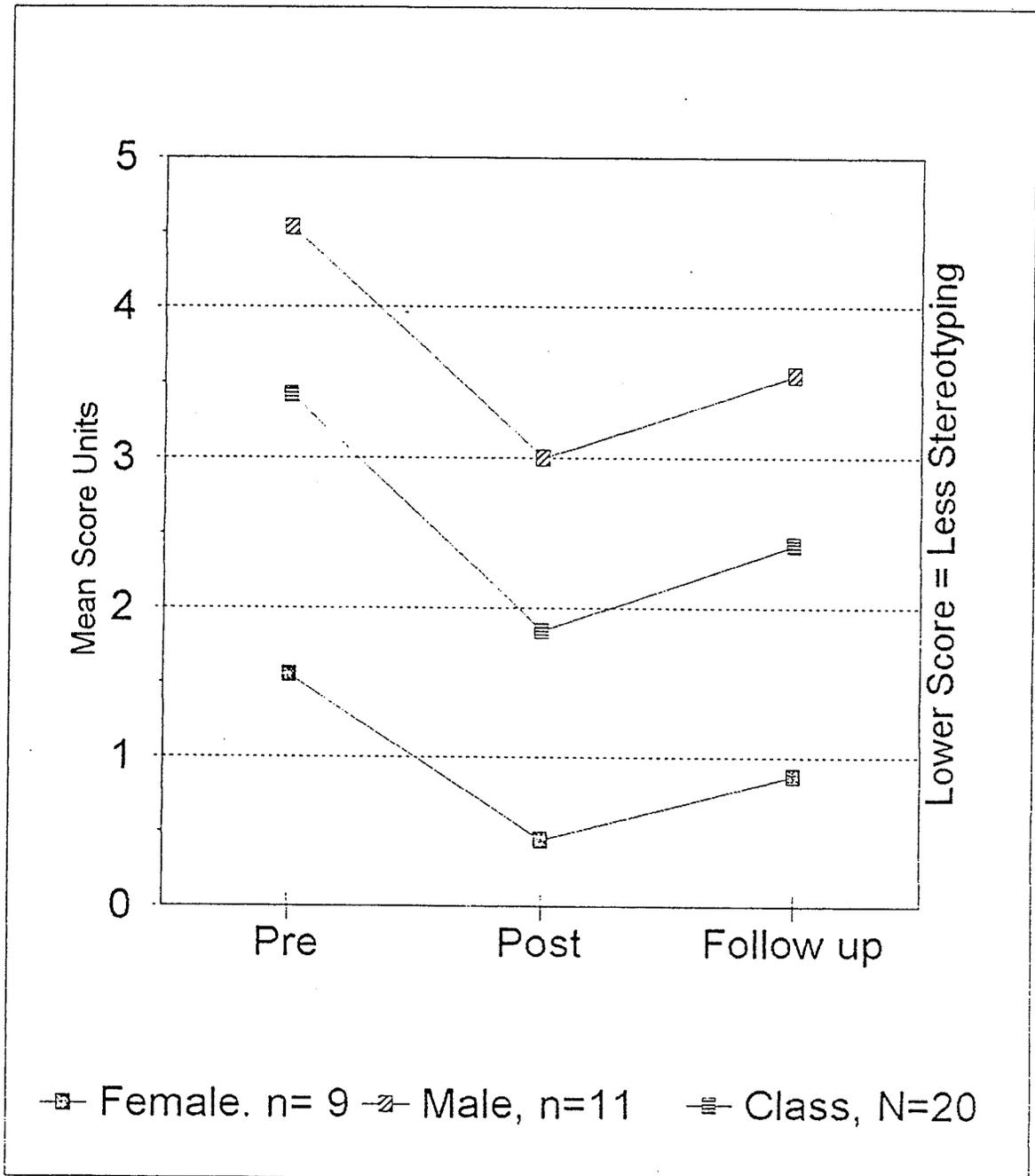


Figure IV

Male Role Stereotyping by Gender.



Alternative Methods of Evaluating Data

A concern of clinical research is making inferences on data from small samples. Such is the situation with this practicum. When attempting to determine statistical significance of a small data set, it is possible that important information regarding successful intervention may be lost. According to Kazdin (1992) alternative methods of evaluation are needed. The method of clinical significance and case study are valuable in determining change within a small sample.

Tests of statistical significance are limiting as the tests do not show differences within a sample, information which is crucial to the clinician. Clinical significance considers whether the findings make a difference to daily life. Even small changes which may be statistically dismissed can affect functioning. Clinical significance describes change that the clinician and significant others recognize as meaningful (Kazdin, 1992).

According to Kazdin (1992), under particular circumstances, case study can provide intervention knowledge and can be considered a valuable tool. The use of anecdotal data alone is considered unreliable; however, if used in combination with objective information and systematic data collection, case study is a relevant form of research.

For the purposes of this practicum I collected both objective as well as anecdotal information to supplement the systematic data collection. As seen above, the data was not deemed statistically significant, which may be a result of the small sample. However, in reviewing the individual scores on the raw data, observations within the school setting,

and personal interactions with the students, this information along with the above trends suggest some positive change.

Bruce expressed to the class that he felt that women should remain in the home and leave more job opportunities for men. However, later in the term he mentioned to me that he liked women to be both pretty and smart. This movement is supported by his outcome on the Sex Role Questionnaire. With "0" being considered least stereotypical and "11" being stereotypical, Bruce's pre-test score for girls was "7" and for boys "10". By the follow-up Bruce's follow-up score was "3" for girls and "4" for boys. Further, Bruce reacted in a challenging manner at the beginning of the intervention. He attempted to refocus the class members to himself and gain control. When the teacher requested the boys not wear their hats for the class visitor he was the only boy who left his on during the class. Bruce's pre-scores on all three measures was consistent with his acting out behaviour. The Piers-Harris scale is scored in a positive direction, the higher scores indicating increased self-esteem compared to normative data. Bruce's pre-test scores indicated low self-esteem in the Behaviour Cluster, Intellectual Cluster, and School Status Cluster. These scores were consistent with his classroom behaviour and academic motivation. He reported low self-esteem in the Physical Appearance and Attributes Cluster, high self-esteem in the Anxiety Cluster, an above average self-esteem in Popularity Cluster and finally a slightly above average score in the Happiness and Satisfaction Cluster. By follow-up Bruce's self-esteem improved in both the Behaviour and Happiness\Satisfaction Clusters. He also remained stable with low self-esteem in Physical Appearance and Attributes, and remained stable with high self esteem in the

Anxiety Cluster. Bruce's individual scores revealed a slight drop in the Intellectual Cluster and Popularity Cluster. The drop in the Popularity Cluster may be consistent with his change in classroom behaviour; as he began to be less verbally challenging and created less of a disturbance, he may have perceived that his peers were less accepting of him. He also appeared to be more concerned about his school work, showing more pride in the product and achieving improved grades. The test results may have resulted in an attempt to positively question his ability and school performance.

During the course of the term I was able to observe and interact with Bonnie. Early in the term, Bonnie disclosed information to me regarding her history. This was the first year Bonnie had taken her education in the classroom setting. She was a survivor of sexual abuse; she was raped at a young age and moved to a number of foster homes. Her mother, who also had been sexually abused, was diagnosed with schizophrenia and was unable to care for Bonnie. The situation of sexual abuse and absent parent are characteristics which may suggest "at risk" of dropout (Human Resources Development Canada, 1994). The teacher reported that the foster mother had called the school indicating that Bonnie had complained of racist remarks being made in the classroom, and that one of the boys had been making sexual remarks to her. These allegations were unfounded; however, her foster mother stated that Bonnie would create "havoc" when things in her life were stable, in order to make herself the centre of attention. These behaviours appeared to decrease as the school year progressed. This was also consistent with her increasing scores on the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale.

In the pre-test on the Piers-Harris Scale, Bonnie scored far below average in every

cluster except the Behaviour Cluster, where her score fell within the average range. At post and follow-up, her scores continually climbed to average and above. The Sex Role Questionnaire results showed a marked positive change from pre to follow-up regarding stereotypical views for each gender.

Further meaningful movement was noted on Jim's scores, pre to post and post to follow-up on The Sex Role Questionnaire. Jim also showed positive change in self-concept in all six clusters of the Piers-Harris Scale from pre to follow-up. Stephen's scores on the Cultural Attitude Scale also revealed positive change in 8 of 17 questions pre-test to follow-up. As well, Janet showed movement toward "0" on the girl's portion of the Sex Role Questionnaire, with a score moving from pre-test "2" to "0" at follow-up.

The scores of the Piers-Harris Scale indicate that for the seven students who dropped out of school during the first term, five of the students showed below average to low scores on all Piers-Harris clusters. Low self-esteem is one of the major contributors to school dropout (Allen-Meares et al., 1986; Human Resources Development Canada, 1994).

The class began the first term with 25 students. Throughout the course of the term, three additional members joined the alternative class. Of the original 25 students, 7 students dropped out of school, five boys and two girls. The reasons for dropping out were not all disclosed; one girl became pregnant and the other girl ran away from home. Two of the boys were known to be involved with drug use. All the students who dropped out did so in the post to follow-up period.

The situations cited above indicate that there may have been movement in a

positive direction for some students. The effects of the intervention may not have been the only factors impacting the students. The internal threats to validity such as history and maturation must be considered (Monette et al., 1986). According to Kazdin (1992), some concerns are episodic in nature and intervention applied may not be solely responsible for the change. This may be true of the "at risk" students in the class. Situational crises such as drug use may be short in duration and if eliminated may be responsible for a change in circumstance.

Evaluation Form

After I had completed my work in the school I had the teacher give each student an evaluation form. According to Toseland and Rivas (1984), a series of easy to understand questions, both open and closed ended, are helpful in collecting participant feedback. I was interested in knowing how the different exercises were perceived by the students, and their opinions on what might be changed.

Small group discussions were considered to be "somewhat helpful" to "very helpful". Students commented that they found small groups to be "less embarrassing" and would like to have had more small groups as opposed to the large group setting where they felt ill at ease to express their opinions. The exercises pertaining to stereotype and racist behaviours were also considered "very helpful". The favourite stereotype exercise was the "Visiting Professor". The Assertiveness Continuum was considered "somewhat helpful" with two positive comments that students were interested in the

concept. The Sculpting exercise was considered a "little helpful" but the comments appeared to be positive. The feedback on the evaluation sheets showed this exercise to be a favourite for some students. They stated, "I liked it (sculpting) because I didn't have to read or write anything;" another comment was "I liked the Sculpting exercise because I got to pull Delcy's hair". These comments exemplified and confirmed the enjoyment and appropriateness of the exercise. The parent-child exercise was considered "not at all helpful" by most of the respondents. One comment was "Don't bring parents into this program or discussion because it embarrasses us and it doesn't make things any better or easier". In contrast, however, another student wrote, "I enjoyed it because I got to learn more about my mom". Most students made few comments about changes in the format, indicating they would leave the content as presented.

CHAPTER SIX

Critique of the Practicum

Evaluation of Professional Learning

In order to assess my learning through this practicum process, I will review my professional learning goals and provide a discussion of these goals.

I set out two broad learning goals: to develop knowledge and skills as a social worker within a school setting. These goals I see as two-fold: knowledge and skill based. I feel that my knowledge of the school setting and the practice of social work within this setting have been enhanced. I have researched and developed an extensive literature review in all areas pertaining to the adolescent, the parent and the school. I have sought out discussions with school social workers, teachers, school administration, my practicum advisor, the practicum committee, adolescents and parents which all have strengthened my knowledge base throughout the practicum process.

During the practicum process, I believe my social work skills have been augmented in a number of areas; this was reinforced by my advisor, the classroom teacher, the vice-principal, and through the general level of satisfaction expressed by the students on the evaluation form. I feel my interpersonal skills have developed through my interaction with adolescents, parents, and administration. Further, I have increased my presentation skills from the onset of the practicum through interaction with my advisor, the Child Guidance Clinic, the school board, and the school administration as

well as through the classroom presentation to students. I have also practiced the skill of team cooperation with other professionals within the school setting. Finally, I have learned the important task of organization and planning through intervention development, and providing weekly written and verbal feedback to my advisor outlining my work in the school.

The second broad goal was to increase my understanding of and opportunity to work with "at risk" adolescents, their parents and the school using an ecological approach. Once again, I feel that both my knowledge and skills were strengthened and challenged. The development of literature and increased understanding of the ecological approach became clear as I began working with the interacting systems. I found the ecological approach to be effective when working within the school setting. The model does not allow for the concern to rest with one individual (e.g., the "at risk" adolescent); rather, the focus moves to the dynamic transactions between the person and their environment (Allen-Meares et. al., 1986). This perspective gave me clarity by isolating the systems for appropriate assessment and intervention. Further, I found the approach adaptable to both the parental and adolescent life stages.

I found I was able to increase my awareness of the threats that may put an adolescent "at risk" of school dropout, and further the social work role of making other systems in the adolescents' lives aware of the characteristics which may impact educational success.

I was able to strengthen my social work value of "working with the client" by observing teacher and student feedback. It became apparent that it was essential for me to

modify my presentation from a lecture format and also become more compatible with the academic level of the students.

At the beginning of the practicum I outlined four specific goals. The first was to examine the variables of culture and gender issues through the use of curriculum material. Initially, I was able to achieve this goal by familiarizing myself with the curriculum material, and then obtaining a knowledge base by researching the literature as well as developing classroom exercises.

The second goal was to examine if the self-esteem of the "at risk" student appeared to be enhanced by drawing out culture and gender issues in the curriculum. I feel I was able to help the "at risk" adolescents move toward increased self-esteem. The outcome of the measures may not have been conclusive; however, it is my feeling that the knowledge I gleaned from the students on an individual basis was clinically significant. Further, the information these adolescents received may be self-esteem-enhancing and relevant to their daily living in the future.

The third goal was to interact with the parent system in relation to the adolescent. Through both research and interaction with parents, I began to realize the impact they have on their adolescents' lives, which might be positive or negative. Parents play a significant role in their child's self-esteem and academic achievement. I garnered from parents their desire to remain involved with their child's school experience at the high school level. Further, since parents impact so significantly on their children, it is my opinion that when working with the families of "at risk" adolescents it is imperative that the issues of parental education, gender, culture and social concerns be considered when

planning an intervention.

The final goal involved working with other school professionals in order to determine the role of the social worker in the school setting. The school setting offers a diverse group of professionals. I learned that it is important to clarify the role of social work within the school setting as well as determine the role of other professionals. It is also imperative that the social worker interact as part of the administrative team to give feedback and receive input, to better serve the "at risk" adolescent.

When I consider my practicum process I feel I would like to have had more opportunity to interact with the parent system. I see parental involvement as imperative to adolescent education success. Further, in reviewing my goals, I feel my learning experience would have been broader if it included some work in the area of student counselling services. This may have resulted in a link between the classroom work and the school student services.

As to the goals I outlined at the onset of this practicum, I am pleased with the results and feel that each has been met.

Overall Critique of the Practicum Experience

In reviewing this practicum, I feel that the high school setting was the most appropriate setting in which to learn more about the adolescent who may be "at risk" of dropping out of school. The opportunity for exposure to the adolescent life stage in a professional setting was a new experience for me and I was able to work closely with this group.

I welcomed the experience of working in the role of a school social worker and interacting with other members of the school team. This occasion afforded me the opportunity to learn others' professional perspectives with regard to this group of young people.

The use of evaluation measures was a new experience. I now appreciate the importance of their use in both assessment and intervention. I feel the practicum experience has been an excellent method for myself in terms of learning a new area of social work.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have gained clarity in the use of the ecological perspective. Through this process I have developed more understanding of the adolescent life stage and what might make certain adolescents more susceptible to dropping out of high school. Further, I have had an opportunity to consider what interventions in the school

setting might be useful in reducing the risk of early school leaving. Parents and their involvement with their "at risk" adolescent was of particular interest. The parental system is complex with its life stage concerns, and would be worthy of further study.

Finally, in a broad sense, the process has taught me the discipline needed to work through and complete this most challenging task. The practicum offered me new learning and I can only conclude that the experience was successful, because it has left me with a need to learn more about the adolescent and school social work.

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Consent Form

September, 1994

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Delcy-Ann Selymes. I am currently a social worker preparing for my Master of Social Work degree. I will be conducting a project beginning September, 1994 with Grade 10 Language Arts students. My project has been approved by the school division and has enthusiastic support of the collegiate staff.

In the project I will be looking at how adolescents currently see gender and cultural differences. I am also interested in how adolescents' understanding of these differences effect how they feel about themselves. I will be working with the Language Arts teacher in the classroom as she helps students understand various books they are reading as part of the regular Grade 10 curriculum. I will be providing information, group exercises and one at home parent/guardian and adolescent assignment to make their experience in the classroom richer. In September, 1994, February, 1995 and April, 1995 students will be asked written questions about their perception of gender/cultural differences and their feelings about themselves.

While I will have access to student records I want to assure you all information and identities will remain confidential. I will provide each of you the opportunity to review the results of my project after April, 1995. I would like to stress that your child's participation is strictly voluntary and his/her participation will in no way effect his/her Language Arts grade. If at any time you should want to withdraw your child from the project, you can contact me through the school to make these arrangements. Please feel free to contact either the vice-principal or the Language Arts teacher if you have any questions. I would like to thank you in advance for the opportunity to work with your child and look forward to meeting you in September, 1994.

Yours truly

Delcy-Ann Selymes, BSW

I, _____ am aware of the project in the Language Arts class and agree to allow by son/daughter _____ to participate.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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APPENDIX B: The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (pgs. 154-156)

Appendix C: The Sex Role Questionnaire (SRQ)

SEX ROLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle YES or NO

GIRLS

1. I think it is all right for girls to play on the same sports team with boys.
Yes No
2. I think it is all right for girls to get into fist fights.
Yes No
3. I think it is all right for a girl to be a leader in a group of boys.
Yes No
4. I think it is all right if girls try to act tough like boys.
Yes No
5. I think it is all right for girls to carry heavy things without being helped by a boy.
Yes No
6. I think there are some jobs that girls can't do because they are girls.
Yes No
7. I think that girls should be more interested in taking care of a house than getting a job.
Yes No
8. I think it is only the mother's job to take care of children.
Yes No
9. I think girls who are good in sports act like boys.
Yes No
10. I think it is more important for a girl to be pretty than smart.
Yes No
11. I think girls can do any job they want to do.
Yes No

BOYS

1. I think it is all right for boys to play sometimes with dolls.
Yes No
2. I think it is all right for boys to cry.
Yes No
3. I think it is all right for a boy to walk away from a fight when another boy hits him.
Yes No
4. I think it is all right for a boy to have a girl as a good friend.
Yes No
5. I think boys who don't fight back when hit are sissies.
Yes No
6. I think it is all right for boys to say they like reading better than sports.
Yes No
7. I think that anything girls can do, boys can do better.
Yes No
8. I think boys should be stronger than girls.
Yes No
9. I think it is better for a father to make more money than a mother.
Yes No
10. I think it is more important for a boy to be good at sports than in school.
Yes No
11. I think it is all right for boys to have real long hair.
Yes No

Permission to use The Sex Role Questionnaire was given by:

Professor Eugene L. Gaier and Professor Catherine A. Emihovitch

Appendix D: The Cultural Attitude Scale

Cultural Attitude Scale

Please circle one of the answers to the following statements: (answer sheet provided)

strongly agree - agree - undecided - disagree - strongly disagree

1. I feel it's best to have fun with only people of my culture.
2. I feel foreign exchange students should be educated in their country.
3. It is ok for people from other cultures to wear their country's traditional dress.
4. I feel proud of my heritage.
5. I think it is important for me to learn about other cultures.
6. I like to eat different cultures' traditional food.
7. I feel embarrassed about my roots.
8. I think it would be interesting to live and work for a period of time in another country.
9. I feel proud of my parents.
10. It is fun to participate in my culture's traditional activities.

11. It is interesting to spend time with friends who are not of my cultural background.
12. I think it is important for cultures to keep their heritage "alive".
13. I think it's a good idea to change a person's name so it sounds "Canadian" - to fit in.
14. I would like to visit other countries.
15. It is neat to ask questions about my "roots".
16. I would (in the future) share my cultural roots with my children.
17. I think when people come to live in a new country they should try and fit into the dominant culture.

Appendix E: Evaluation Form

EVALUATION FORM

I would appreciate your personal responses to the following questions. You are not required to sign this sheet.

1. Please circle YES or NO and explain.
 - (a) Did you enjoy the discussion groups in class? (Yes/No)
WHY?
 - (b) Did you enjoy the small groups outside the class? (Yes/No)
WHY?
 - (c) Did you enjoy the poster making exercise? (Yes/No)
WHY?
 - (d) Did you enjoy the student/parent exercise? (Yes/No)
WHY? (if you did not participate in this exercise please tell me why)
 - (e) Did you enjoy meeting the “nonstereotypical” professor”? (Yes/No)
WHY?

(f) Did you enjoy the sculpting exercise? (Yes/No)

WHY?

(g) Did you enjoy the passive-assertive-aggressive continuum? (Yes/No)

WHY?

2. Please circle your response to the following:

(a) I found small class discussion groups to be:

Very Helpful
Somewhat Helpful
A Little Helpful
Not At All Helpful

(b) I found the exercise where we made anti-racist posters to be:

Very Helpful
Somewhat Helpful
A Little Helpful
Not At All Helpful

(c) I found the exercise when we learned about the passive-assertive-aggressive continuum to be:

Very Helpful
Somewhat Helpful
A Little Helpful
Not At All Helpful

(d) I found the exercises on stereotyping genders/cultures to be:

Very Helpful
Somewhat Helpful
A Little Helpful
Not At All Helpful

(e) I found the sculpting exercise to be:

Very Helpful
Somewhat Helpful
A Little Helpful
Not At All Helpful

(f) I found the student/parent exercise to be:

Very Helpful
Somewhat Helpful
A Little Helpful
Not At All Helpful

(g) I found the working in small groups outside the class to be:

Very Helpful
Somewhat Helpful
A Little Helpful
Not At All Helpful

3. If Delcy were to do this work with another class what could you suggest she do differently or leave the same?

(a)

(b)

(c)