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**EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF A
SELF-ESTEEM PROGRAM ON
AFRICAN AMERICAN GIRLS**

by
Andrea Alston-Brundage

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
Spring, 2001

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved 6/4/01

ABSTRACT

Andrea Alston-Brundage

Examining the Effects of a Self-esteem Program on African American Girls

2001

Dr. John Klanderman and Dr. Roberta Dihoff
Master of Arts Degree in School Psychology

The purpose of this study was to examine the self-concept of African American girls, ages 10-15 and to implement the Zola Circle program in an attempt to enhance their self-esteem.

Two groups of girls attended the Zola Circle workshops. Both groups attended the workshops for five weeks. The girls were given the Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory Test before attending the workshop and at the conclusion of the workshop. A follow-up test was given to group one five weeks after the completion of the workshop.

The Analysis of Variance test (ANOVA) was computed to assess pretest differences between the two groups participating. The results of the analysis showed no significant differences between the two groups. The study was successful in producing supportive and relevant data regarding the measurement of attitudes toward the self in social, academic, family and personal areas.

MINI ABSTRACT

Andrea Alston-Brundage

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This study examined the self-concept of African American girls ages 10-15 and introduced the Zola Circle program in an attempt to enhance their self-esteem. No significant increase in the Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory test scores was found after introducing the Zola Circle Program.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM

The Need

Studies have shown that self-esteem in adolescents tend to plummet, at age 10-11, around the time puberty sets in. Girls tend to plummet more dramatically than boys do as age increases. The literature suggests that girls in high school have significantly less faith in their abilities than boys. Apparently girls tend to have more narrow dreams about their futures and they expect less from life.

There are many negative elements that cause confusion to African American adolescent girls, e.g., videos, lyrics to music and magazines that disrespect females. Messages of other cultures standards for beauty can be perplexing. The Hip Hop culture, which most of today's youth embrace, send messages of female sexuality manipulating men to advance in society. Images of young females subjecting themselves to humiliation just to advance in society and buy the material things that show prosperity are blatant. Avenues, which show sex as, power and being the vernacular of a female dog allows you to acquire those material things. Videos and music that portray African American females as token pieces certainly do not help increase adolescent girls self-esteem. Urban society is saying to young African American females that the way to escape abuse, neglect and poverty is to minimize one's self-respect. With these things in mind the researcher thought it imperative to embrace African American girls at the

developmental age that life so drastically changes for them. Adolescent girls are experiencing so many things, around age 10 that would make for an uncertain period. Researchers suggest that having extra support around this age would assist with instilling positive views of self-worth and communication.

The Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the self-concept of African American girls, ages 9-12 and to implement the Zola Circle program to attempt to enhance their self-esteem.

The Hypothesis

African American girls who participate in the Zola Circle workshops will have a more positive self-concept than their peers, who did not participate in the self-esteem workshops.

Theory

Conflict within the self is lowest in early adolescence, it peaks in middle adolescence, and then begins to decline in later adolescence. At various times, adolescents make a thorough assessment of themselves, comparing not only their body parts, but also their motor skills, intellectual abilities, talents, and social skills with those of their peers and especially with their ideals or heroes. If a self-appraisal is negative, it may result in self-conscious, embarrassed behavior in the girls. It may also lead to in juvenile delinquency and teenage pregnancy.

In one research study (Rice, 1995), the Mooney Problem Checklist and Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale, 201 were administered to adolescents ages 14 to 16. Gender differences in the number and nature of problems reported and the relationship of self-esteem were examined. Results showed no significant differences between girls and boys in areas of education and vocational future. However, there was a significant relationship between self-esteem and the number of reported problems.

Areas that influence the self-esteem of girls are health and physical development, home and family. Literature reports an association between low self-esteem and body image of women and the difficulty adolescent girls have in trying to obtain this image. It appears the association between low self-esteem of girls and having problems with home and family has to do with the effects on girls from restrictive parents who pose different restriction on their male siblings.

Self-esteem grows out of human interaction in which the self is considered important to someone. The ego grows through small accomplishments, praise and success. High self-esteem is associated with positive psychological adjustment in adolescence. Individuals with low self-esteem often acquire a number of symptoms of emotional ill health. Low self-esteem has also been found to be a factor in drug abuse and alcohol. Adolescents with low self-esteem are vulnerable to criticism and rejection. The more vulnerable adolescents feel, the higher their anxiety levels. They often feel awkward and uneasy in social situations and avoid embarrassment whenever possible.

Around the time of puberty girls begin to groom themselves to please boys. It is a complete change. They are taught that the primary relationships cultivated are those of the opposite sex. Friendships with girls become less important and the mother daughter relationship is with difficulty. This would make for the opportune time to assist girls with the changes they are experiencing.

Definitions

Camaraderie is good will and lighthearted rapport between or among friends.

Ego is the personality component that is conscious, most directly controls behavior, and is most in touch with external reality.

Global Self-esteem is totality of the individual's cognitive thoughts and affective emotions regarding the self, including social identity.

Resiliency is the ability to recover rapidly from change or misfortune.

Self is a person's perception of his or her nature, character and individuality.

Academic self-esteem is the value an individual places on academic status. Being comfortable with their position in the classroom.

SES is the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale

Self-concept is the view or impression people have of themselves; it is their self-hypothesized identity, which develops over a period of many years. It is the cognitive perceptions and attitudes people have about themselves.

Self-esteem is a vital human need. It is the value individuals place on the selves they perceive. If their self-appraisal leads to self-acceptance and approval, to a feeling of self-worth, they have high self-esteem. If they view themselves negatively, their self-esteem is low.

Assumptions

The researcher assumes that the conditions in the classrooms are similar. It is assumed that the teachers conduct their classes in similar ways and no one teacher is more motivational than the other. It is also assumed that each workshop encounter is similar.

Limitations

Limitations include the short period of time given to effect change in the adolescents. The program will start in January after the Christmas break and will end twelve weeks after the first workshop. The program will be given to girls from one community in Southern New Jersey. The study population will not reflect a wide range of diversity or socio-economic backgrounds.

No follow up program or future evaluation after May, to see if there will be additional progress or if students' self-esteem remains high over time. Workshops will be no longer than 1 1/2-2 hours a day, once a week, for six weeks.

Overview

An adolescent who possesses high self-esteem will likely possess qualities essential for success. Self-esteem will have a huge impact on the progress or failure of the adolescent. For this reason, the researcher's review in chapter two will cover the most current information available on self-esteem and self-concept of adolescent girls. The study will concentrate on how adolescent girls are effected by the Zola Circle workshops. In chapter three the researcher will layout the design of the study. The reader will be informed of the size and measure of the sample population along with

analysis of the project. In chapter four the researcher will interpret the results of the pre and post self-concept test. The girls who participate in the self-esteem workshops should show a more positive self-concept than those who do not. Chapter five will contain the summary and conclusions pertaining to the study.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

Adolescence is one of the most critical periods in life in terms of developing self-esteem. According to Erik Erikson, this is the time when a person needs to gain a firm sense of identity, knowing oneself as a unique individual apart from others, having a sense of ones' own abilities and talents, and being able to feel valuable as a person with future purpose. This period brings powerful and confusing physical changes. Bodies grow and change abruptly. These changes are often embarrassing for teenagers. Hormonal shifts bring about unpredictable emotional states that make stability and control of emotions very difficult. Social pressures reach a peak as adolescent attention is drawn progressively from the family toward friends and the group. An adolescent girls need to belong are stronger now than at any other time in life. In order to fit in, she will often take on the characteristic and expressions in terms of dress, behavior, language, beliefs of whatever group is open to her. Sometimes this requires 'putting down' many of the traits and life stages of her family. During the identity crises of adolescence a girl will automatically question all aspect of herself, including the notions of herself, she has adopted from others in the past. She may become rebellious and reject all evaluations of others, which of course demonstrates her power over them. A young girl may become so confused and unsure of herself that she will repeatedly ask others for approval and advice of all kinds. No matter how she approaches this need to gain an identity, she will undergo a critical reorganization of self-view and a resulting change in self-esteem.

The challenges of early adolescence can be intense for girls. There is a great concern for youth that may exhibit acts of violence, self-harm, substance abuse, eating disorders and distorted body images, and depression. Numerous reports have indicated a drop in girls' self-esteem through adolescence (AAUW 1991, Minnesota Women's Fund, 1990). Boys tend to regain their self-esteem by their high school graduation, while girls' levels of self-esteem often do not rebound. Girls increase emotional expression from early adolescence through late adolescence. Girls in late childhood and adolescence are both more negatively and more positively influenced than boys by body image (Polce_Lynch, Myers & Kilmartin, 1998)

Self-esteem in Adolescent Girls

Body image disturbances have been the focus of researchers for years. However, they have focused primarily on the adult female and not so much on the adolescent. Recently more studies have been geared toward the adolescent. One in particular was conducted in West Georgia. The 23 girls participating in the study had a mean age of 12.11 and were randomly assigned to three groups: eight in cognitive-behavior therapy, eight in cognitive therapy and seven in study skills. Four pretest measures addressing three components of body image disturbance and the related affective domain were administered Eating Disorders Inventory-2 Body Dissatisfaction subscale (cognitive component), Body image Avoidance Questionnaire (behavioral component), visual size estimates (perceptual component) and Self-Perception Profile for Children (affective component). Treatment was provided for seven sessions. Both therapy groups focused on topics such as physical appearance and body image, role of beliefs in body image,

cognitive errors, stress inoculation, behavioral aspects of body image and relapse prevention. The study skills group received instruction in study skills and assistance with classroom assignments. Post-tests were administered. The results indicated a significant improvement in the three components of body image disturbance and in global self-esteem for all three groups. A post hoc analysis showed cognitive-behavior therapy did result in significant improvement in the behavioral aspect of body image perception. The sessions appeared to sensitize adolescents to issues of body image and may lead to improvement in body image perception. The researchers of the body image test felt that providing information about body image disturbance in middle school classrooms, and through school counseling and psychology programs incorporating behavioral techniques may help establish a proactive stance in treating body image disturbance and preventing the manifestation of eating disorders (**Waggoner, 1991**).

Weight concerns and dieting are apparent before adolescence. Early dieting awareness would be negatively associated with perceived self-worth particularly in girls. Self-endorsed dieting was more strongly correlated with negative self-perception, especially in girls. Predictors of dieting awareness in girls included global self-worth, body mass index, and frequency of mother dieting. Young girls are drawn to weight control to improve their self-worth, and mothers are influential in this regard (**Hill, Pallin, 1998**).

There is a great deal of information available regarding the objectification of females. Female's bodies are more often looked at, evaluated and sexualized (**Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997**). Males place greater emphasis on a potential mates physical attractiveness than do females. Given the links between females physical

appearance and sexual desirability to males, it is easy to see how females attractiveness relates to their own sexuality. In a study with children between the ages of 7 and 12, girls rated their ideal figure as smaller than the one they considered most attractive to boys, and substantially smaller than their current figure (Tiggemann & Wilson, 1998). American males generally find relatively thin females most desirable. Heavier females are generally stigmatized especially with regard to issues of courtship, and may have decreased opportunities for dating (Kallen & Doughty, 1984). A large proportion of females in this culture believe they are overweight. Having a positive view of one's physical attributes would allow for greater confidence in heterosexual interactions which may lead to greater opportunities for validation.

The relationship between mother and daughter has been reviewed as an indicator for levels of self-esteem in adolescent girls. A study of 212 pairs of mother and adolescent daughters supported the belief that girl's self-esteem and competence was elevated if there was positive synchrony. The daughters' self-esteem was measured using the Behavior Assessment System for Children Self-Report of Personality. Competence was determined by grade point average (Gross, 1998). Parents with expressive traits were more likely to communicate acceptance which, in turn, fostered adolescent adjustment. The quality of the relationship with one's parents continues to influence self-esteem during adolescence. Family members, peers and societal forces have been identified as primary contributors to the reflected appraisals that contribute to global self-esteem. Societal forces have been assumed to be a primary contributor to self-esteem. Social identity is the individual's perception of her social world and her place in it. According to the Social Identity Theory, adolescents girls engage in two basic processes

of group categorization and social comparison that result in varied levels of self-worth, depending on their attachment to, and evaluation of, the groups to which they belong (**Carlson, 2000**). Adolescent girls strive both for a positive self-worth and a positive valuing of their groups.

At some point adolescent girls trade their dependency on parents for dependency on peers. Interaction with significant others for the development of self-esteem among girls is vitally important. Studies show there is a positive correlation between self-esteem and the need for inclusion in social groups (**Morval 1972**).

A commonly held belief by many researchers, teachers, school administrators and health professionals is that low self-esteem is associated with drug use/or abuse. Proponents of this belief state that because tobacco, alcohol and other types of drugs are harmful, only those with low self-esteem would be inclined to ingest such substances. Many drug prevention and treatment efforts have been directed at enhancing the self-esteem of youth. Researchers have concluded that self-esteem is not only statistically significant, but meaningful and useful in the prediction of drug use.

A study measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale showed self-esteem decreased with age (**Royse, David, 1998**). No single explanation can account for why some children and adolescents develop healthy self-esteem and others seem compelled to view themselves as inferior and inadequate. Female adolescent self-esteem is under siege. Teens are learning to be more critical and less accepting of themselves as they leave childhood and prepare to enter adulthood.

Differences Between Minority Girls

In Texas a study was conducted with 898 Hispanic, African American and Caucasian students between 11-16 years old. Path analytic techniques were used to assess 5 processes- family stress, Self-Esteem Scale, authoritative parenting style, ethnic identity and teacher support that contributed to self-esteem. For all ethnic groups, higher self-esteem was predicted by authoritative parenting and perceived teacher support and related inversely to family stress. Ethnic identity was a significant prediction of global self-esteem among minority girls. Hispanic girls reported significantly lower self-esteem (**Journal of Early Adolescence, 2000**). Another study was conducted with 164 7th-8th-grade girls from African American, Caucasian, Chinese American and Latino's. The Harter's Adolescent Self-Perception Profile and interviews were used to assess both overall feelings of self-esteem and feeling about specific aspect of the self such as physical appearance, scholastic competence and acceptance by peers. The results suggested that girls from different racial and ethnic groups use different standards to judge self-worth. They view themselves as having different strengths. Caucasian girls were found to have the most conflicted attitudes toward the role-played by physical attractiveness in determining self worth.

African American girls appear to have the highest opinions of themselves. In an ongoing study by Psychologist Sumru Erkut, PhD and a team of researchers at Wellesley College, African American adolescent girls tend to be happier with themselves than young girls of other ethnic groups. In 1995, Erkut studied girls in the Boston area schools to highlight how their self-esteem varied with race and ethnicity. Erkut administered global self-worth measures to 40 African American girls, 41 Caucasian girls, 29 Latino

girls and 40 Chinese-American girls. The African American girls scored highest on the measures, followed by Latino, Caucasian and Chinese-American girls, in that order. African American girls considered themselves the most socially accepted and romantically appealing. Latino girls also saw themselves as enticing to the opposite sex. Caucasian girls scored highest on athletic competence and second highest on social acceptance. Good grades mattered to all the girls. High academic achievement was the strongest predictor of high self-worth among African-American girls. This was different from past research where African American girls had high self-esteem but low academic self-esteem. Chinese- American girls felt they excelled only at having close friends, following rules and behaving well. They especially valued their friends' support, which they viewed as compensation for the limited support their hard-working immigrant parents could provide to them. Physical appearance mattered less to them than it did to other groups. Caucasian girls were practically obsessed with their looks while Latino girls considered it very important and African American girls considered attractiveness somewhat important. Beauty was only a mild predictor of African American girls' self-esteem and most strongly predicted Caucasian girls' self-esteem. African American girls were mostly satisfied with their looks; Caucasian girls were mostly dissatisfied with their looks, which drastically lowered their self-esteem. Caucasian girls tend to fixate on beauty standards set by the Caucasian led media while African American girls tend to ignore them. African American girls formed individual notions of beauty based on their own ideas and other's compliments. Regardless of ethnicity, all adolescent girls seem to value camaraderie with their friends. All adolescent girls desire guidance and support from their parents and teachers (Murray, 1999). A number of researchers found a

positive relationship between self-image and acceptance of group identity (**Grossman, Wirt & Davids, 1985**). A positive self -image can promote identity achievement. Involvement with and commitment to an ethnic group serves as an emotional buffer against negative intergroup experiences and discrimination.

Hispanics are the fastest growing minority of the nation's population. There is a great discrepancy of gender roles in Latino families. It has been stated that minority girls are at greater risk for low self-esteem when they come from cultures in which gender roles are differentiated more sharply and males are accorded greater prestige. Although transformations are occurring rapidly, continuity with traditional gender roll expectations remain a feature of contemporary Latino families (**Vega, 1995**).

Adolescent girls tend to use more peaceful, less violent methods of coping with stress, such as social support networks, in lieu of ventilation strategies (**Bird, Harris, 1990**). When age differences in coping among adolescents are found in the literature, older adolescents are found to rely on themselves more frequently than are younger adolescents (**Stark, Spirito, Williams & Guevremont, 1989**). African American adolescents who hold positive attitude about their minority identity may be partially protected against negative stereotypes and may be better prepared to withstand internal and external pressures. Studies have shown that adolescents who report higher levels of self-esteem deal more directly in solving problems than adolescents who report lower-levels of self-esteem (**Moos, 1990**).

Adolescents' use of problem-focused (proactive) styles of coping with stereotypes and discrimination was associated with higher self-esteem and the use of emotion-focused strategies, e.g., verbal retorts, was related to lower self-esteem. Both African

American and Caucasian adolescents would rely more on problem focused coping strategies than on emotion focused coping strategies. African American adolescents reported using diversions, self-reliance, spiritual support, close friends, demanding activities, solution of family problems, and relaxation more frequently than Caucasian adolescents. Caucasian adolescents reported ventilating feelings and using avoidance strategies more frequently than African American adolescents did. The availability of various forms of social support in the African American community, as well as the extended family systems of the African American culture, may provide African American children with a mechanism for positive socioemotional development despite other hardships, such as racism and poverty.

Changes in self-esteem parallel changes in body esteem. Low body esteem has been associated with depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and eating disorders. Many adolescent girls develop eating disorders due to low self-esteem and low body esteem. An adolescent girl having a poor self-concept/low self-esteem is likely to change her appearance as a way to meet societal standards and improve her self-esteem (Stice, 1994). The increased drive to improve appearance is thought to lead to dietary restraint and ultimately in some cases, to bulimic symptoms (Plivy & Herman, 1993). Researchers have found that Caucasian girls, despite being proportionately thinner, are more concerned about issues surrounding eating and body weight (Neumark-Sztaner, et al, 1999). This finding is also consistent with an investigation by Henriques et al (1996), who found that general positive or negative social feedback influenced the body esteem of Caucasian girls but did not influence the body esteem of African American girls.

Self-Esteem in African American Girls

Maureen Hornung, the director of the Liberty Partnership Program and Bankstreet College in N.Y. says that females in the African American community are very strong role models. "Many of them are single parents holding down a job. They have to be strong. They are infusing strength in their daughters". Ms. Hornung's research states self-esteem drops about 33% for Caucasian girls when they reach puberty and 38% for Latinos, it drops only 7% for African American girls.

Experts are looking at the dynamics within African American communities and are studying other methods to help girls retain their self-esteem well into womanhood. Most researchers agree that strong parental guidance, equal opportunities in school and positive relationships with other woman and girls increases self-esteem. Groups that put girls in the company of other girls and woman, have proved to be key in the ongoing development of positive self-esteem. Women need women and when they are together, the women prosper. That is what makes Girl Scouts so effective. It is an all girl environment, and it provides the opportunity for girls to be with other young people their own age. "The total framework of Girl Scouting is giving girls a chance to try new things" (Royce, 1998).

African American girls have many unique challenges, particularly those of lower socio-economic groups. African American girls often undertake adult responsibilities, such as care of younger sibling or household duties, at an early age. African American female teenagers are more likely to be sexually active at an earlier age and less likely to use reliable birth control methods than their peers (Henly, 1993). The African American girls reach puberty before girls in other ethnic groups. Despite these challenges, African

American girls exhibit strength and resiliency in many areas. Often times assuming adult responsibilities early can result in high self-confidence and independence. African American girls have lower levels of substance use (Gottfredson, 1996) and generally have higher self-esteem and more positive body image than Caucasian girls (Akan, 1995).

African American females have traditionally been socialized to have what people refer to as masculine characteristics (e.g., self-confidence, assertiveness) and feminine characteristics (e.g., expressiveness, nurturance). Self-confidence and assertiveness can provide resiliency for adolescents. African American males tend not to prefer thin, smaller figure females. This could be very significant when it comes to self-esteem if one feels they are or are not considered attractive by others (Molloy, 1998). It is important for African American girls to develop a positive relationship with their mothers in order to have a sense of identity versus individuality and autonomy. During adolescence girls tend to explore who they are in relation to others rather than in isolation. This process usually takes place in the context of the early mother-daughter relationship. Through this special bond girls have the opportunity to experience the continuity of the connection to their mother (Surrey, 1991). Females continue to seek out mutually empathic connection in all primary relationships. A fundamental aspect of girls' psychological growth is seeing herself as a relational entity. The loss of a relationship or the threat of disconnection may damage adolescent girls' self-esteem and lead to destructive behavior. The literature suggests that interpersonal relationships are particularly important for African American adolescent girls (Markstrom-Adams, 1995).

A study was conducted to assess the impact of an intervention on strengthening resiliency among African American preadolescent girls using a relational and Afrocentric focus. The study included at-risk African American girls between the ages of 10 and 12. Sixty-nine girls were recruited into the intervention group and 115 were recruited into the comparison group. The hypothesis suggests that significant increases in Afrocentric values, ethnic identity, gender role beliefs, and self-concept would increase among those in the intervention group. Self-concept was assessed using the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale. The subscales include Behavior, Intellectual School Status, Physical Appearance and attributes, Anxiety, Popularity and Happiness and Satisfaction. The Africentric Value Scale for Children was used to assess Afrocentric values. Ethnic identity was assessed using the Children's Racial Identity Scale (CRIS). This 9-item scale measures affective, cognitive, behavioral and physical aspect of cultural and racial identity. Analysis of the Afrocentric values showed that there was a significant effect for the intervention group. They scored significantly higher than participants in the comparison group. Analysis of the CRIS measure showed significant difference in racial identity. The intervention group scored significantly higher than those in the comparison group. The intervention participants scored higher on the appearance measure as well. There was no significant difference between the two groups on the Femininity and Masculinity sex role subscales. **(Belgrave, 2000)**

For African American girls, positive feedback from adults and a strong positive identification with the individual's ethnic group might be additional critical contributions to self-esteem. Family and peer support are great buffers against institutional racism or

incidences of prejudice that would otherwise be expected to lower the self-esteem of African American girls.

A recent study was conducted to find racial differences in coping strategies and self-esteem. The findings revealed racial differences in adolescent coping strategies of venting feelings, seeking diversions, developing self-reliance, avoiding problems, seeking spiritual support, investing in close friends, engaging in demanding activities, solving family problems and relaxing. African American adolescents reported using diversions, self-reliance, spiritual support, close friends, demanding activities, family problems, and relaxation more often than did Caucasian adolescents (**Champman, Mullis, 2000**).

During adolescence, African Americans struggle not only with the normal developmental tasks associated with adolescence but also with stressors associated with poverty and its problems (**Spencer, Dupree and Swanson, 1996**). It has been suggested that stressful experiences of African American girls and how they cope with these stressors may differ qualitatively from the experience of Caucasian girls (**Maton et al., 1996; Smith, 1985; Wilson, 1989**). African American girls often experience stress because of their ongoing exposure to racism and economic disadvantages. To cope with stressors African American youth brought up in their families learn to rely on and maintain a certain degree of self-governing. This group autonomy promotes positive identity and self-esteem of its members (**Martinez & Dukes, 1991**). African American families prepare their children to function in a society whose dominant culture harbors negative messages about African Americans. This preparation involves communicating to the children the realities and dangers of the world. During this process the parent also discusses how to correctly identify and cope with barriers and how to seek support for the feelings evoked

when confronting these barriers. Research points to the significance of social support mechanisms in the lives of African American adolescents (**Cohen & Wills, 1985**). The research from Cohen and Wills suggests that strong support from social relationships aid in coping with environmental stress.

Summary

Adolescents are socialized to believe that males should have a muscular body, strengthened and made more functional while female's bodies are to be preserved, protected and made more beautiful. Girls suffer psychologically from negative body image, lowered self-esteem and achievement conflicts. Physically girls health is undermined by current beauty norms that lead to eating disorders, cosmetic acne and plastic surgery. With the increasing power of the media to define standards of appearance that exacerbates the adolescent's problems it is necessary to counter young girls views with alternative models. They should be encouraged to accept natural differences, to appreciate diversity of appearance and cultivate strong competent body images rather than merely decorative ones (**Freedman, 1984**).

There appear to be factors that protect girls from low self-esteem during adolescence. Among the protective factors are ethnicity, family support and personal coping strategies such as perceived competence in social, academic and physical appearance. African American girls were more likely to observe positive aspects about themselves than other aspects.

CHAPTER THREE

DESIGN OF STUDY

Sample

There were twenty-four girls ages 10-15. The participants are from a middle school located in a city in Southern New Jersey. The city is predominately African American and Latino with high levels of poverty, crime, drug activity and unemployment. Participants were considered at risk because of their socioenvironmental context. Ten girls were assigned to the control group (group1). Fourteen girls were assigned to the second group.

Measure

The researcher will use the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventories (CSE) by Stanley Coopersmith. This test measures the respondent's attitude toward herself across several domains. The CSE has 25 items, requires approximately ten minutes for completion, and can easily be hand scored. In a review by Scott D. Struck, in 1995, he states, "This measure is considered one of the best of its kind and demonstrates good reliability and validity". The test is designed for persons age 8 and up. The researcher will be observing the variations between groups.

The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory is a scale that measures the self-esteem of adolescents in relation to their peers, parents, school and personal interests. Each question would be answered with either a Like Me or Unlike Me response. The total

score will be the number of self-esteem items matching high self-esteem items. The total number will then be multiplied by a factor of 4, resulting in a maximum possible total self-score of 100, so that results of the forms will be readily comparable. Higher scores reflect a higher self-concept.

The CSE is designed to measure evaluative attitudes toward the self in social, academic, family and personal areas of experience. The publication date is 1981. The test should be group administered. The most recent price for the inventory is \$29.00 per kit. The test will take ten minutes to complete. The publisher of the CSE is Consulting Psychologist Press, Inc. It scores six areas, General Self, Social Self-Peers, Home-Parents, School-Academic, Total Self Score and Lie (Murphy, Impara, Plake 1998).

There were 24 six to eighth grade girls participating in the study. The girls are from a Southern New Jersey city in a low-income school district. The age mean was eleven years and eight months.

Testable Hypothesis

There will be a difference in overall results between Class I (initial group to participate in Zola Circle) and Class II (initially does not participate in Zola Circle). The difference will be maintained between Classes II and I after the second five-week session.

Program Design

The Zola Circle will be a five-week program. There will be two classes consisting of 6th, 7th and 8th grade girls. One class will be the experimental group the other the control group. The experimental group will attend the workshop the first five

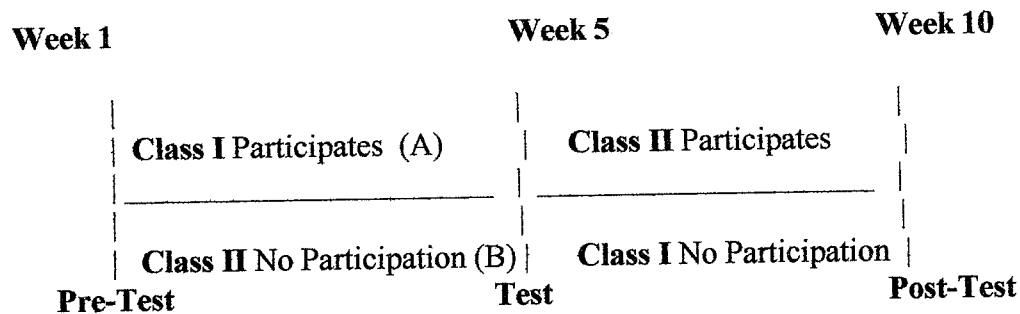
weeks and have a break for six weeks, while the control group will have the break in the first five weeks and attend the workshop the last five weeks. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory will be given to all the girls before the first five weeks are scheduled. The Coopersmith will be given again at the end of the first five-week session and again after the control group finishes the program. The pre and posttest will determine if the Zola Circle had an affect on test scores immediately after the program and after a period of time without the program.

The program will be conducted in an open format, allowing for unstructured circle discussion and sharing. Participants will, however, be respected and listened to when they are speaking what is on their minds. The format will consist of an opening by the circle leader, introduction of the theme for the day, expressions, activity, sharing of the activity and closing.

The five-week activity schedule will consist of discussions pertaining to gender issues, relationships, body images, role models, dreams and values. What it means to be a girl and defining ourselves will be discussed during the Gender Issues Workshop. The many different relationships with self, family, friends, teachers and community will be discussed the next week. How the media and our culture portray what girls' bodies should look like, the beauty myths, self-care and nutrition will be discussed during the body image workshop. The participants will discuss aspirations and goal setting during the Dream Workshop. Choice making, truth telling, fitting in and courage will be the topics during the value workshop. Daily journal writing is encouraged. Choosing and

discovering role models will be discussed during the Role Model Workshop. A wrap-up will also be incorporated in the role model session. Each girl will be encouraged to recognize and appreciate others contributions. The group will discuss what the girls have learned and what the best and worst experiences were in the Zola Circle. Hopefully the five-week sessions will be a positive learning experience for each participant and they will take what they've learned and apply it to their everyday life.

Timeline



- Everyone gets Pre-test 6th: A, B
7th: A, B
8th: A, B
Class I participates in Workshop 1st five weeks 6th:A
7th:A
8th:A
 - Everyone gets tested again 6th: A, B
7th: A, B
8th: A, B
Class II participates in workshop 2nd five weeks 6th:B
7th:B
8th:B
 - Everyone gets Post-test
- Get the names of each student and their teacher
- Assign numbers to each

Each Session will consist of the following:

Opening- Facilitator begins by reading a poem or article and whoever desires can do the same.

Girl Talk- Go around the circle and have each girl discuss what's going on in their lives, what they are feeling, what their day or week has been like. Use an open-ended sentence to get them to verbalize feelings.

Theme Introduction- discuss what is planned for the session.

Activity- discuss what the characteristics are for the topic

- discuss what guideline or rules are necessary for the topic
- ask group to write guidelines or make posters on poster board
- express activity in a creative manner

What is the Zola Circle?

The Zola Circle is a structured support group for girls from ages 10-14. It is designed to foster self-esteem, identify role models, develop relationships with positive individuals, counter trends toward self-doubt and allow for self-expression through verbal sharing and creative activity.

Each week a group of girls similar in age meet with a facilitator for an hour and a half. During this time the girls share with each other their concerns and interests. The girls can express themselves through creative activities such as, role-playing, journaling, poetry, art and drama. Themes are introduced each week relating to the girls lives, such as self-care, social skills, friendships, relationships and decision-making.

When girls express their opinions and ideas in a safe environment, it strengthens their confidence and encourages them to express themselves more fully. By discussing expectations in a supportive setting, girls gain greater awareness of their options and strengthen their ability to make choices that are consistent with their values, interests and talents. The Zola Circle does not aim to provide advice but to encourage girls to share experiences that may be helpful to each other. Confidentiality is very important to girls involved in the Zola Circles. The need to treat what is said in the group private is paramount.

The Zola Circle format may enhance the girl's interest in education, moral development, athletics, community service and career development. It is all about strengthening relationships with family, friends and the community.

Analysis

The researcher will use a pre-test, post-test to analyze the data supplied by the participants of the Zola Circle. There will be a pre-test for both classes the first week of the Zola Circle. Once Class I completes the workshop Class I and Class II will be given the CSE again. This will give scores for Class I immediately before the workshops. The Coopersmith will be given again at the completion of Class II's workshops and five weeks after Class I's workshops are completed. The results of the post-test will indicate how the self-esteem workshops effected Class I immediately after the workshops and if Class I maintains the same level after a five week period. The post-test will also show the differences between scores of the classes immediately following the workshop verses a five week lay off.

The researcher will record the mean, the minimum and maximum values for each group. There will be three sources of variability: The scores between groups (workshop effect), within the groups (random error) and the total (degree of freedom, sum of squares and the mean square). The researcher can further examine the group differences by using a “post hoc” comparison test i.e., the Tukey or the Scheffe tests.

Summary

There were twenty-four girls involved in the Zola Circle. They were broken up into two classes. Each girl was given a Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (CSE) pre-test. Class I was the first group to participate in the five-week Zola Circle program Class II did not participate in any self-esteem program until after both classes were given an intermediate CSE. Class II participated in the Zola Circle workshop for five weeks. Immediately after Class II’s participation both classes were given the CSE post-test. Each Class participated in a one in a half to two hour, a week, workshop for five weeks. There will be one theme a week. The discussions will be on gender issues, relationships, body images, role models, dreams and values. Each week a specific topic will be discussed and an activity relating to that topic will be assigned. Daily journal writing is encouraged and voluntarily discussed during the meeting. Pre and Post-tests are scored and a one-way ANOVA is used to show the differences in the classes.

CHAPTER FOUR ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the self-concept of African-American girls, ages 9-12 and to implement the Zola Circle Program to attempt to enhance their self-esteem.

As shown in Table 4.1, the one way ANOVA resulted in no significant difference in group one's test two and test three scores. There was no difference between group one's test two and group two's test two and test three scores. The significance of .092 and .010 at the .05 level (two-tailed) does not prove to be significant; therefore the hypothesis stating there would be a difference in scores before and after group one participated in the Zola Circle was not supported by this data.

Table 4.2 is the Post Hoc test showing the mean difference is not significant at the .05 level. Table 4.3 is showing the mean for each test by group. When comparing the scores the values were not found to be significant.

TABLE 4.1

Multiple Comparisons

Tukey HSD

Dependent Variable	(I) test	(J) test	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
group1	test1	test2	-3.2000	7.4633	.904	-21.7047	15.3047
		test3	-1.6000	7.4633	.975	-20.1047	16.9047
	test2	test1	3.2000	7.4633	.904	-15.3047	21.7047
		test3	1.6000	7.4633	.975	-16.9047	20.1047
	test3	test1	1.6000	7.4633	.975	-16.9047	20.1047
		test2	-1.6000	7.4633	.975	-20.1047	16.9047
group2	test1	test2	.4000	7.1625	.998	-17.3587	18.1587
		test3	1.0000	7.1625	.989	-16.7587	18.7587
	test2	test1	-.4000	7.1625	.998	-18.1587	17.3587
		test3	.6000	7.1625	.996	-17.1587	18.3587
	test3	test1	-1.0000	7.1625	.989	-18.7587	16.7587
		test2	-.6000	7.1625	.996	-18.3587	17.1587

TABLE 4.2

group1

Tukey HSD^a

test	N	Subset for alpha = .05
		1
test1	10	64.2000
test3	10	65.8000
test2	10	67.4000
Sig.		.904

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 10.000.

group2

Tukey HSD^a

test	N	Subset for alpha = .05
		1
test3	10	64.8000
test2	10	65.4000
test1	10	65.8000
Sig.		.989

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 10.000.

TABLE 4.3

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
group1	Between Groups	51.200	2	25.600	.092	.912
	Within Groups	7519.600	27	278.504		
	Total	7570.800	29			
group2	Between Groups	5.067	2	2.533	.010	.990
	Within Groups	6925.600	27	256.504		
	Total	6930.667	29			

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to examine the self-concept of African American girls ages 10-15 and to implement the Zola Circle program to attempt to enhance their self-esteem.

The Zola Circle workshop was conducted over a ten-week period. One group of girls attended the first five weeks of the program. A different group of girls attended the workshops the last five weeks. Each group was given the Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory Test before attending the workshop and after. A follow-up test was given to group one five weeks after the completion of the workshop. The study was successful in producing supportive and relevant data regarding measurement of attitudes toward the self in social, academic, family and personal areas.

CONCLUSION

Test results indicated that the girls who participated in the workshop scored slightly higher but with no significant increase. Scores decreased slightly when there was a five-week follow up test. However, there was no significant change after the post-test. The test results did not support the hypothesis. However, the after school advisor/teacher stated she observed an improvement in social areas of the girls who attended the Zola Circle program. The study makes a contribution to understanding more about how to

promote resiliency as a factor among African American Adolescent girls. The program and ethnic contributions affected some aspects of self-concept, social and ethnic identity even if the test scores don't show significant improvement.

DISCUSSION

Despite the many challenges, African American female adolescents face they exhibit strength and resiliency. Resiliency is especially needed for adolescents who live and attend schools where there are high contextual risk factors such as drugs, violence and criminal activity. This study assessed the impact of self-esteem program that focused on strengthening resiliency among African American adolescent girls using a gender specific and cultural focus. The program was intended to affect variables by providing methods that increase girls' positive feelings about self and enhance a sense of culture.

The results of the SEI scores indicate minimal benefits to the Zola Circle. However, the feedback from teachers indicates a positive benefit. There was no significant difference between group 1 and group 2, pre and post-test scores.

One possible reason for the lack of difference between the two groups is that the workshop may not have been of long enough duration to affect attitudes. Perhaps negative values, and beliefs are so ingrained and pervasive that a more intensive and longer workshop period is needed before changes take place. Conversely, perhaps new innovative methods of assessing adolescent roles are needed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

For future research, the researcher suggests using a larger sample of subjects to get a broader picture. Extending the amount of time the girls are involved in the workshop per week is an important factor. Sessions should be at least two hours a week allowing more time for discussion and activities. The length of time should be longer. Instead of five weeks the workshop should be extended to eight weeks.

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APPENDIX A
WORKSHOP CURRICULUM

Class I

Introduce the Program- Zola Circle

Administer the pre-test

Review guidelines and purpose of Zola Circle

Hand out journals

discuss the purpose of the journals

Introduce the theme

Relationships

Iyanla Vanzant's Don't Give It Away, Dear One

What is a healthy relationship

I.D. who we are in relationships with

I.D. components of a healthy relationship

I.D. components we do not want to have in a healthy relationship

Ask girls to write in journals about feelings during the week.

Class II

Read Maya Angelou

Discuss last week's assignment

Discuss body image

Ask the girls to answer the following questions in their journals

I think my eyes are...

I like my eyes because...

I think my ears are...

I like my ears because...

I think my mouth is ...

I like my mouth because...

I think my nose is ...

I like my nose because...

I think my face is ...

I like my face because...

I think my hair is...

I like my hair because...

My feet are...

I like my feet because...

My legs are...

I like my legs because...

The following questions can be answered at home.

When I look at me I see...

This makes me feel...

I think the real me is...

The best thing I know about me is ...

I feel good about myself when...

The best thing I can do for myself is...

The thing I want most for myself is...

When I see myself I see...
I like myself because...
I am good at...
I am good because...
I am strong enough to...
I really love to...
I am beautiful because...
I am powerful because...
I am great because...

Activity will be making a collage.

Class III

Reading of choice

Discuss last week's assignment

Discuss dreams, values and expectations

Answer the following questions

I really want to...

This would make me feel...

Three things I am willing to do to get what I want are...

Is what I want good for me? Why or why not?

Will anyone be hurt or harmed if I get what I want?

Am I ready to handle the responsibility of having what I want?

Activity is making a mobile

Class IV

Reading of choice

Discuss last week's assignment

Discuss role models

What makes a good role model?

Determine why we need or don't need positive role models

Answer the following questions

Why is it important to have role models?

What makes a good role model?

Tell us about some of your role models.

Activity is card making

Class V

Reading of choice

Discuss last week's homework assignment

Discuss gender issues- respect oneself and being a girl

Positive attributes of being a girl

What is your favorite thing about being a girl?

What would you change if you could?

What give you pride in being female?

Have you ever thought what it would be like to be a boy? Why or why not?

Activity is making keepsake boxes

Class VI

Reiterate

1. You can do anything if you put your mind to it
2. All things are possible, think positive
3. Respect yourself, respect others, Love yourself
4. It's okay to make mistakes as long as you learn from them
5. Set goals and work towards them
6. Find a role model
7. Always keep the lines of communication open

Administer post-test

Hand out evaluations

Take photos

Distribute certificates

APPENDIX B
PERMISSION SLIP

Passive Permission Slip

(Assuming all girls will participate unless we receive this slip)

My daughter _____ **cannot** participate in the Zola Circle Workshop that will meet on Wednesdays from 3:00 p.m. I understand that the Zola Circle encourages creative and verbal expression and that the circle guidelines provide the foundation for the circle communication, however, I must decline participation of my daughter at this time.

Parent Signature and Date

Parent signature and Date

We are very sorry that your daughter will not be able to participate in the Zola Circle. We hope that you will continue to allow her to have a voice and spread her wings into maturity. Thank you for your time.

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