

University of Nevada, Reno

**Differential Effects of a Ninth-Grade Activity Friendship Group and a
Ninth-Grade Talk Therapy Friendship Group on Connection to
Peers, Adults, and Extracurricular Activities**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Counseling and Educational Psychology

by

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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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Abstract

The transition to high school presents numerous challenges to ninth grade students. Although many academic interventions have been implemented in attempting to ease this transition, research supports the importance of also addressing students' social needs. Friendships are an integral part of personal development. Particularly in adolescence, friendships assist individuals in forming a sense of self worth. In addition, adolescents use friendships to measure their behaviors and feelings in the context of society. Through relationships with others, adolescents modify their behavior in order to achieve acceptance and to meet social expectations. This study addresses the importance of social interventions through examining the use of activity therapy and talk therapy friendship groups with ninth grade students. During freshman orientation, 438 students completed a survey that assessed their desire for social connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities. Of these students, 10 participated in friendship groups for 9 weeks. The treatment group ($N = 5$) received 50 minutes of activity therapy once a week, and the comparison group ($N = 5$) received 50 minutes of talk therapy once a week. During the first and last weeks of the study, students in both groups completed the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale (MAFF) and the Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale (MSR). The Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test and Mann-Whitney U Test were conducted, and no significance was found in comparing the within and between group measures. The study also explored the use of friendship groups using a qualitative analysis, including interviews, observations, and artifacts. Two students who did not participate in the friendship groups served as a small control group and were included in interviews. All students in both friendship groups presented data that supported the

construction of the theme of trust as related to self-expression and respect. The students in the activity therapy group also provided data supporting the theme of cooperation. Results from the qualitative measures provided support for the potential use of friendship groups as a social intervention for assisting ninth grade students as they transition to high school.

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Chapter One – Introduction

“Nobody tells me...Nobody keeps me Informed. I make it seventeen days come Friday since anybody spoke to me.” – Eeyore (Milne, 1994, p. 314)

Introduction

Freshmen students experience a variety of challenges as they enter high school, and like Eeyore, many students may feel lost or neglected. As students commence the significant transition to high school, they face both academic and social difficulties. Although both elements are important to adjustment, it appears that little attention is given to the social obstacles that confront these students. However, it is difficult for students to concentrate on academics when they are experiencing problems socially. Therefore, it is imperative that high schools offer students skills and opportunities to develop meaningful friendships. One such method may be through the use of activity friendship groups. In these groups, students learn the skills necessary for creating and maintaining friends. In addition to meeting other students, activity groups benefit students through teaching communication skills, problem-solving, decision-making, teamwork, and acceptance of diversity.

Statement of the Problem

The transition to high school is often stressful and overwhelming for many ninth grade students. In addition to adjusting to new teachers, increased homework loads, and more difficult coursework, freshmen students must also acquaint themselves with larger school buildings, more students, new school procedures, and an increase in freedom and choices. Oftentimes, high school is the first opportunity when students are permitted to leave campus for lunch, select the majority of their classes, and choose from a vast array

of extracurricular activities. For several students, the transition experience is an arduous challenge that seems impossible to overcome.

Considering the many obstacles facing students during the transition to high school, it is not surprising that ninth grade has a higher failure rate than all other grades (Johnston & Johnston, 2003). Ninth grade has become an impasse for many students, and the number of students repeating their freshman year has steadily increased over the past 30 years (Haney et al., 2004). The ninth grade failure rate is especially problematic since adolescents who repeat their freshman year tend to have more discipline referrals and lower attendance rates than students promoted to tenth grade (Trejos, 2004). Additionally, students repeating the ninth grade have lower graduation rates than their promoted counterparts (Haney, 2001). Indeed, ninth grade GPA is the single best predictor of a student's likelihood to graduate in four years (Allensworth & Easton, 2007).

Many school districts have recognized the importance of providing interventions guided at easing the transition to high school. Schools have developed transition programs that provide ninth grade students with upperclassmen mentors, core teams or houses, tutoring, strengths development, and orientations scheduled prior to the start of the school year (Austin, 2006; Hertzog & Morgan, 1999; Jackson, 2007; McIntosh & White, 2006; Messer, 2007; Walsh-Sarnecki, 2007). While these transition interventions focus on the academic difficulties freshmen experience, little attention has been devoted to the social struggles these students endure ("Raising the Bar," 2005; Trejos, 2004). Furthermore, students have reported that mentors and tutors have not helped them during the transition process (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005). Students require more than academic

interventions in order to succeed in high school. Therefore, it is imperative that schools also endeavor to meet the social needs of transitioning students.

Purpose of the Study

This study addressed the importance of providing social interventions to ninth grade students during their transition to high school. Although interpersonal relationships are influential throughout the lifespan, friendships are markedly important during adolescence, when individuals begin to develop autonomy from their families (Antonucci & Akiyama, 1995; Crosnoe & Needham, 2004; Hartup & Stevens, 1997). Moreover, the role friendships play in school is of particular significance considering the large portion of time students spend with each other (Henrich, Kuperminc, Sack, Blatt, & Leadbeater, 2000).

Friendships have both positive and negative influences on student behavior, emotional stability, and academic success (Cook, Deng, & Morgano, 2007; Crosnoe & Needham, 2004; Urberg, Değirmencioğlu, & Pilgrim, 1997). Furthermore, students experience depression and other deleterious effects when they lack friendships (Nilzon & Palméus, 1998). One solution for students who have difficulty making friends is to teach them skills in a friendship group. Although this is an intervention generally reserved for younger students (Badini & Bean, 1997; Barrett & Randall, 2004; Keat, Metzgar, Raykovitz, & McDonald, 1985; Rosenthal, 1993), adolescents may benefit from a similar experience when it is appropriately adapted to meet their developmental level.

Traditional group counseling places a strong emphasis on verbal skills. Group members have the opportunity to share orally, as well as listen to others and provide verbal feedback. The conclusion of the group may include a spoken summary or a round

robin, with each group member given the opportunity to respond briefly to the session (Jacobs, Masson, & Harvill, 2002). Activities may be used as a means of engaging group members in discussion, but the focus remains on processing the experience at the conclusion of the activity (Jacobs et al., 2002). These basic structural guidelines hold relatively true regardless of the theoretical orientation of a group. However, they do not account for the fact that children communicate differently than adults (Landreth, 2002).

Play therapy addresses the process through which children naturally communicate, connecting the concrete and the abstract (Landreth, 20002). Although adolescents are beginning to develop formal operations and the ability to grapple with abstract concepts, they have not necessarily acquired the same reasoning skills as adults (Wadsworth, 2004). In addition, students who are shy and withdrawn may be developmentally below their peers in the realm of social skills and communication (Schneider & Tessier, 2007). The same students who are transitioning between middle and high school are also transitioning between child and adult communication processes, and they require counseling techniques that fit their unique developmental period.

Converting play therapy techniques into group activity therapy addresses both the communication and developmental needs of adolescents (Ginott, 1961). These students are cognitively ready to engage in directed activities, but they may still find difficulty in expressing themselves verbally (Bratton & Ferebee, 1999). Unlike traditional group counseling techniques that focus on processing an activity, group activity therapy recognizes the intrinsic value of the activity itself. The goal of group activity therapy is not to use activities only as a method to encourage students to talk (Landreth, Baggerly, & Tyndall-Lind, 1999). Although adolescents will likely engage in more discussion and

processing of an activity than would younger children, they also experience learning and growth through the specific activities. According to Landreth (2002), “Play therapy offers the opportunity to respond to the total behavior of the child, not just the verbal behavior” (p. 17).

This study explored the use of activity therapy with adolescents, and investigated its use in friendship groups as compared to traditional talk therapy. The purpose of this examination was to determine the use of activity friendship groups as an effective social intervention for students transitioning to high school. The ultimate goal of this research was to provide school counselors with an efficient tool in working with ninth grade students as they adjust to high school.

Research Questions

This study investigated the following three research questions:

1. At the beginning of the school year, what do ninth grade high school students state they want in terms of social connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities?
2. How does a friendship group increase ninth grade students’ social connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities as measured by the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale, Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale, observations, and interviews?
3. What is the differential effect of a ninth grade friendship group emphasizing activities and one emphasizing verbal processing on connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses addressed the research questions for this study:

1. At the beginning of the school year, ninth grade high school students will state that they want time with friends, emotional connection to adults at school, and a variety of extracurricular activities that meet their diverse interests and abilities.
2. Participation in a friendship group will increase ninth grade students' social connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities as measured by the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale, Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale, observations, and interviews.
3. A ninth grade activity friendship group will increase students' connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities at a higher rate than a ninth grade friendship group emphasizing verbal processing.
4. A ninth grade activity friendship group will generalize skills and increase friendship formation outside of the group at a higher rate than a ninth grade friendship group emphasizing verbal processing.

Rationale

In a recent study, 80% of ninth grade students reported that making new friends helped them successfully transition to high school (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005). However, most transition programs focus only on academic interventions, and pay little attention to the social needs of freshmen students, despite the fact that the two elements intertwine. Research demonstrates that students with low-achieving friends exhibit more behavioral problems (Crosnoe & Needham, 2004). Conversely, constructive friendships result in

higher grades, attendance rates, and extracurricular involvement in adolescents (Cook et al., 2007).

The strong connection between academic and social success in schools indicates the need for counselors to devote attention to assisting students in the development of close and positive friendships. This seems particularly true with freshmen students, who are struggling with all aspects of the transition to high school (Johnston & Johnston, 2003; Trejos, 2004; Wheelock & Miao, 2005). Schools have the responsibility of meeting the range of developmental needs of these students, which includes social growth (Johnston & Johnston, 2003). Indeed, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2003) national model for school counseling includes personal/social development as a domain separate from academic and career development. As such, it is imperative for counselors to examine possible methods for working with students in enhancing social skills.

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of operational definitions as they apply to the terms used in this study.

Activity group therapy – specialized group counseling technique that provides a setting and activities consistent with the developmental needs of children, preadolescents, and adolescents (Slavson, 1944)

Adolescent – individual between the ages of 12 and 18 engaged in the developmental progression from childhood to adulthood (Andersen, 2007; “Adolescent,” n.d.)

Freshmen – ninth grade students transitioning to their first year in high school

Friendship – the voluntary and reciprocal desire to be with an individual in a relationship that satisfies socio-affective needs, generally not including family or sexual acquaintances (“Friend,” n.d.; Parker, Rubin, Price, & DeRosier, 1995; Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998)

Extracurricular involvement – participation in one or more school or community activities scheduled outside of the regular school day or during the lunch period (e.g., sports teams, clubs, student leadership, dance classes)

Intergenerational bond – emotional connection to at least one adult at school displayed through caring, kindness, familiarity, and guidance (Crosnoe & Needham, 2004)

Limitations

A significant limitation of this study involved the method of participant selection. Since students self-referred themselves for participation in the groups, they already expressed a desire to improve their social skills and develop friendships. This phenomenon precluded studying the experiences of students less motivated to meet other students and become more involved in extracurricular activities. As such, the study was limited to determining the efficacy of an activity friendship group with students who were already motivated to form friendships. This indicates the need for a further study to determine the use of an activity friendship group with students who will not self-refer.

An additional limitation was associated with the choice students had in attending group sessions each week. Numerous students missed several weeks due to class obligations. This may have delayed students’ abilities to build trust with each other, and it may have taken longer for the entire group to cohere. Although all students may have met

the goals of the group, those students who attended all or most of the sessions likely benefitted most from the group.

The sample size of this study was small due to several influencing factors. First, because students self-referred themselves to participate in the friendship groups, sample size was limited to those who were willing to volunteer. Additionally, recommendations for adolescent counseling groups suggest a group membership of 5-8 members, with no more than 12 (Jacobs et al., 2002). Since the researcher facilitated the groups, time and resources limited the number of students to up to 24 who would participate in the study.

A larger sample size would have increased power and allowed for increased generalizability of results. However, a review of play therapy research indicates that sample sizes are frequently small in such studies (Bratton & Ray, 2000). For example, Hume (1967) conducted weekly play therapy sessions with 20 children in first through fourth grade, finding that a combination of play therapy with teacher in-service was most effective in improving behavior. Hannah (1986) found that play therapy resulted in positive behavior changes in a study with 10 participants. Twenty-six children participated in another study that also found play therapy to improve behavior (Brandt, 1999). Additionally, Crow (1994) demonstrated that play therapy benefited self-concept in 22 first-grade students with reading difficulties. More recently, Baggerly and Parker (2005) found evidence of play therapy as not only developmentally effective, but also culturally appropriate for use with African American boys in a study including 22 participants.

The small sample size of the students participating in the treatment and comparison groups was partially remedied by including a larger number of students in

answering the first research question. The 2008-2009 freshman class at the school participating in the study consisted of 474 students, 438 of whom completed the Freshman Orientation Survey during the fall semester. The data collected from these students elaborated on themes found within the friendship groups.

A final limitation of this study incorporated the potential for researcher bias since the researcher conducted the treatment and comparison groups. The researcher controlled for this through regular supervision and consultation. The Freshman Orientation Survey was not at risk for this same bias due to the anonymous nature of the survey, as well as the administration of the survey by several school counselors.

Delimitations

This study included participants from one high school in a large western school district. All freshmen students at this school present on the day of orientation completed a survey at the beginning of the study as part of the school's established orientation program. Participation in the friendship groups was limited to freshmen students who volunteered, and whose parents/guardians provided permission. Composition of the friendship groups was not limited by gender, ethnicity, special education or 504 certification, or English Language Learner (ELL) status. Each group consisted of 5 students.

Summary

The transition to ninth grade is difficult for many students. Although many schools have attempted to facilitate the transition period through academic interventions, few transition programs address the social needs of incoming freshmen students. The insufficient attention to social interventions is troubling considering the significant

influence friendships maintain in adolescent development. Friendship groups are typically designed for use with younger students, but friendships continue to play an important role in adolescence. When designed to meet the particular developmental needs of this age group, friendship groups may demonstrate positive effects for use in high school. Furthermore, friendship groups may increase students' participation in extracurricular activities and the development of intergenerational bonds.

Whereas most counseling groups focus on verbal processing, this study argued that activity groups are a more developmentally appropriate method for working with students who are transitioning from middle to high school. Although these students are beginning to develop the ability to reason abstractly, many of them are developmentally below their peers in terms of social skills. In addition, the transition period is disconcerting and may inhibit a student's verbal expression.

Chapter Two – Review of the Literature

The following literature review provides a theoretical framework with which to contextualize the examination of activity friendship groups for ninth grade students transitioning to high school. The areas of exploration include (a) high school transition, (b) role of friendships in adolescence, (c) friendship groups, (d) group talk therapy in schools, (e) history of play therapy, (f) efficacy of play therapy, (g) play therapy in schools, and (h) group activity therapy.

High School Transition

Change is often a difficult process, and the transition to high school is not an exception. The challenge many students experience in transitioning to ninth grade appears in the numerous students who fail their freshman year (Haney, 2004; Trejos, 2004; Wheelock & Miao, 2005). The high failure rates of freshmen students is troublesome considering that research demonstrates ninth grade to be a pivotal year in students' lives (Hertzog & Morgan, 1999; Kerr, 2002). Indeed, success during ninth grade increases a student's chances of graduating and enjoying the overall high school experience (McIntosh & White, 2006).

In order to assist students with the transition process, many schools have implemented specialized programs for ninth graders. Assigning upperclassmen mentors to incoming freshmen has become commonplace throughout school districts (Jackson, 2007; Messer, 2007; Walsh-Sarnecki, 2007). One rationale for providing mentors is recognizing that students will frequently seek help from their peers before approaching an adult (Galloway & Gallenberger, 1999). Many schools are also developing freshmen academies or houses similar to the core teaching concept present in many middle schools

(Jackson, 2007; McIntosh & White, 2006). Freshmen academies create specialized sections of the school building that separate ninth grade students from upperclassmen. These students generally share core teachers, a common lunch period, and a counselor assigned only to freshmen (McIntosh & White, 2006). Students who have participated in freshmen academies have experienced greater academic performance, improved attendance, and fewer discipline referrals than other ninth graders (McIntosh & White, 2006). In addition, parents have commented that the freshmen academies have helped their students become involved in school activities (McIntosh & White, 2006).

Another intervention intended to increase student success during the transition to high school has involved strengths development (Austin, 2006). Through this program, students first identify their positive characteristics, and then they participate in activities that require them to use their strengths in order to complete an academic challenge (Austin). The strengths development intervention has resulted in increased academic performance and self-efficacy in terms of academic achievement for ninth grade students (Austin).

Additional transition programs have included freshmen orientations and tutoring sessions (Galloway & Gallenberger, 1999; Jackson, 2007; Johnston & Johnson, 2003). According to Galloway and Gallenberger (1999), freshmen transition programs must promote a positive school environment for students that create bonds not only between ninth graders and other students, but also between these students and adults at the school. Schools may also create a welcoming environment by actively inviting freshmen to participate in extracurricular activities (Galloway & Gallenberger, 1999). Indeed, several

graduating students state that extracurricular activities like sports helped them to succeed in school (Carter Harley, 2006).

Evaluation shares as much importance as implementing a transition program. In surveying ninth grade students, Butts and Cruzeiro (2005) found that students did not find mentors or tutors helpful in the transition to high school. These students also reported that having less time with friends, not addressing problems external to school, and adjusting to a larger school building inhibited their transition (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005).

Conversely, 62% of students stated that participating in school activities was helpful, 89% reported that having friends in class was helpful, almost 85% stated that hanging out with the “right people” helped, and 80% contributed their success to making new friends (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005). In addition, Pratt and George (2005) found that students transitioning to secondary school focused their concerns largely around the issue of friendship rather than academics. These results indicate a strong need for looking beyond academic interventions to assisting students with their social needs during the transition to high school.

Role of Friendships in Adolescence

Friendships are important throughout the course of life (Antonucci & Akiyama, 1995; Hartup & Stevens, 1997), and they perform two principal functions in preadolescence: (a) confirmation of one’s self-worth through honest feedback received in a safe relationship, and (b) development of enhanced social skills (Sullivan, 1953). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) acknowledges the important role friendships play in the personal development of students, as demonstrated by the National Standards: “Learn how to make and keep friends” (Campbell & Dahir, 1997, PS:A2:8).

The ASCA National Standards also include enhancing communication skills, learning to appreciate diversity, exhibiting cooperation skills in groups, improving the ability to express feelings and create personal boundaries, and developing feelings of self-worth (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). These skills are important tools in creating and maintaining meaningful friendships.

Although friendships are of general importance, the role they play in school is of particular significance considering the large portion of time students spend with each other (Henrich et al., 2000). It is important to realize the many ways in which friendships influence students. Although adolescents tend to select friends who share similar qualities (Schofield, Pattison, Hill, & Borland, 2001; Kandel, 1996), research has also demonstrated that friends model behaviors even when accounting for selection (Aseltine, 1995; Matsueda & Anderson, 1998). For example, adolescents with friends that engage in destructive behaviors are often more likely to engage in those same behaviors (Cook et al., 2007; Haynie, 2001; Urberg et al., 1997).

Substance abuse is one destructive behavior shown to relate to friendship circles. According to Crosnoe and Needham (2004), adolescents increase their participation in risky behaviors in proportion to the amount of alcohol their friends drink. Likewise, Schofield et al. (2001) found a correlation of 0.6 between an individual's own smoking habit and his or her friends' smoking norms, with individuals expressing stronger attachments to their friends displaying a greater similar smoking habit than those expressing weaker attachments. In addition, adolescents tend to increase their involvement in risky behaviors such as smoking and illicit drug use over time, which appears to be a result of social group involvement (Pearson & Michell, 2000). Pearson

and Michell (2000) found that many individuals who left their friendship circles over time continued to engage in similar behaviors as those original circles. Furthermore, those individuals who began to engage in opposite behaviors tended to be those adolescents who left non-risk-taking groups to join risk-taking groups (Pearson & Michell, 2000).

Despite the negative influences friends may have on adolescents, friendships also model positive behaviors. Constructive friendships result in higher grades, attendance rates, and extracurricular involvement in adolescents (Cook et al., 2007). Positive friendships also decrease the likelihood that adolescents will use drugs or partake in misbehavior (Cook et al., 2007). Crosnoe and Needham (2004) found that adolescents with friends who achieved high academically engaged in fewer delinquent behaviors.

Friendship formation is important not only for its influential role on positive and negative behaviors, but also for the detrimental effects students experience when they lack peer relationships. In particular, withdrawn students are more likely to experience depression than students who interact with their peers (Nilzon & Palméus, 1998). Additionally, shy students are more likely to be victims of bullying (Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999). Schneider and Tessier (2007) postulated that shy children may lack appropriate skills in developing friendships with more socially adept individuals. Therefore, it appears that shy students need assistance in forming friendships. This is especially important considering the positive benefits friendship and acceptance offer, including increased feelings of self-worth and likelihood of high school graduation (Bagwell, Newcomb, & Bukowski, 1998; Tarrant, MacKenzie, & Hewitt, 2006; Véronneau & Vitaro, 2007). Furthermore, adolescence is a time when individuals seek

friendship to fulfill a desire for intimacy and loyalty (Furman & Bierman, 1984; Sullivan, 1953). Withdrawn and shy students may need someone to facilitate the fulfillment of this need.

Friendships become increasingly important in adolescence (Levy-Tossman, Kaplan, & Assor, 2007). In addition to experiencing depression, adolescents who lack close friendships are also more likely to engage in substance abuse (Hussong, 2000) and to drop out of school (Parker & Asher, 1987). However, intimate peer relationships assist in identity formation and enhance self-esteem (Berndt, 1999). Moreover, intimacy in friendships that involve trust relates to how students approach learning (Levy-Tossman et al., 2007). Students who view learning as an opportunity for growth also tend to engage in friendships that are genuine and allow for disclosure of weaknesses (Levy-Tossman et al., 2007).

Since friendships greatly influence adolescents, it is imperative for students to carefully select their friends. School counselors can assist students in friendship selection in order to increase both academic and social success through pairing weaker students with stronger counterparts (Cook et al., 2007). For instance, pairing adolescents with students who participate in extracurricular activities may increase the likelihood they will also participate (Véronneau & Vitaro, 2007). Kinney (1993) reported that freshmen who participated in extracurricular activities felt more confident and secure in the transition to high school as they gained acceptance from upperclassmen. In addition, Lleras (2008) found that extracurricular involvement in activities such as sports correlated to later educational and salary achievement.

The social influence of adolescents is not limited to their relationships with peers. In addition to developing friendships, adolescents also benefit from intergenerational bonds (Crosnoe & Needham, 2004). Crosnoe and Needham (2004) found that adolescents with close relationships to adults at school had fewer discipline problems, even when their friends engaged in destructive behaviors other than drinking. Moreover, students with positive relationships with their teachers are more likely to pass ninth grade and remain on track for graduating high school (Miller, 2000).

Considering the many important roles friendship and social connection play in the development of adolescents, school counselors have the responsibility to provide students with appropriate social interventions when necessary (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). Many students who lack meaningful friendships do not have the social skills needed to establish strong interpersonal relationships (Schneider and Tessier, 2007). Therefore, school counselors may work with these students in order to develop such skills.

Friendship Groups

Although teachers are able to identify the students in their classes who do not have friends, they often do not have the time needed to help these students enhance their interpersonal skills outside typical curriculum opportunities (Rosenthal, 1993). Current curriculum standards highlight the necessity of helping students learn how to work cooperatively in groups (Nevada Department of Education, 2007), but teachers are strained with time in meeting other standards, and they may only be able to provide students with group activities occasionally. Therefore, it is the responsibility of school counselors to work with those students who need additional practice in order to help them

develop their social skills (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). One such method is through the use of friendship groups.

Friendship groups serve several purposes. The first is to assist children in learning social skills so that they may build interpersonal relationships. According to Keat et al. (1985), counselors should design friendship groups so that children generalize the skills they learn in developing relationships in other contexts. Another purpose of friendship groups is to help children gain a positive sense of self so that they also feel more positive about attending school (Keat et al.). Although children in friendship groups may not immediately enjoy school altogether, they may find the group as one reason to motivate them in attending school (Keat et al.).

Children in friendship groups generally learn communication skills such as listening, asking questions, reading nonverbal cues, and building an emotional vocabulary (Keat et al., 1985). Children may also learn problem-solving skills and teamwork through participation in friendship groups (Keat et al.). Keat et al. found that conducting a friendship group with five third grade boys increased the boys' cohesion, feelings of trust, and willingness to appropriately self-disclose.

Although counselors may conduct friendship groups for the purpose of helping a single child learn how to make friends, all children who participate may benefit (Newton, Taylor, & Wilson, 1996). Increased empathy, problem-solving skills, listening skills, expression of emotions, understanding of the relationship between actions and feelings, and cognition about how a person may change are examples of skills children may learn in friendship groups (Barrett & Randall, 2004). According to Newton et al. (1996),

children heavily influence each other, and often they will modify their behavior as a consequence of their interactions more readily than when working alone with an adult.

Friendship groups work through a combination of content and process (Rosenthal, 1993). The content of the group teaches children the skills they need to develop interpersonal relationships. The process element acknowledges that the group experience is influential as an entity separate from the content of the group (Rosenthal, 1993). In a friendship group, children may support one another and share common experiences (Badini & Bean, 1997), which are process elements that build community in a group. Through both content and process, Rosenthal (1993) found that children who participated in a friendship group experience became more cooperative, adopted friendlier demeanors, and improved their academics.

Counselors may adapt friendship groups to meet the particular needs of students. Mervis (1998) recommended using a model of peer-pairing for students who were not suited for a group environment, such as students with increased hyperactivity, aggression, or shyness. Mervis found that students who participated in peer-pairing increased their ability to interact and cooperate with others in a setting that felt safer and more comfortable to them than a larger group. It is imperative that students are selected carefully for peer-pairing since the consequences of rejection are more significant than in a group setting where children have the opportunity to create bonds with different group members rather than a single peer (Mervis).

Social opportunities increase during the transition from middle to high school (Kinney, 1993). Whereas many students may have been labeled as unpopular in middle school, high school provides them with a greater number of groups to which they may

belong (Kinney, 1993). In addition, students generally find it less important to gain school-wide acceptance in high school, as they find a particular group that fits their personality (Kinney, 1993). The increase of diversity in high school threatens the hierarchical social structure often present in middle school, which presents students with more opportunities to make friends when they may not have been able to in middle school (Kinney, 1993). However, some students may need assistance in recognizing the social opportunities available in high school if they have not been used to them before. Therefore, although friendship groups are generally reserved for younger populations, they possess promise for use with adolescents.

Group Talk Therapy in Schools

According to Myrick (2002), developmental guidance programs are intended to meet the needs of all students. In addition, the ASCA (2003) National Model states that one of its purposes is ensuring that “the school counseling program is comprehensive in design and delivered in a systematic fashion to all students” (p. 14). Providing group counseling is one method for school counselors to meet the needs of many students in an efficient manner (Zinck & Littrell, 2000).

School counseling groups serve the purpose of teaching students skills, and allowing them to practice those skills in order to experience more school success (Bauer, Sapp, & Johnson, 1999/2000). Counselors may facilitate a variety of groups in school, including topics on divorce, anger management, bullying, grief, social skills, study skills, friendship, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, sexuality, and goal-setting (Jacobs et al., 2002). Cognitive-behavioral and person-centered are two modalities of working with students in a group setting (Bauer et al., 1999/2000).

Cognitive-behavioral groups tend to include more structure than person-centered groups (Bauer et al., 1999/2000). Counselors use a variety of cognitive and behavioral techniques in facilitating these groups, such as decatastrophizing, redefining the problem, decentering, assigning homework, hypothesis testing, exposure to stimulus, and role playing (Beck & Weishaar, 2008). In using similar techniques with high school students, Bauer et al. (1999/2000) found that students improved their ability to express emotions, began using behaviors to achieve interpersonal goals, increased their feelings of self-worth, and limited their number of discipline infractions.

Behavioral groups lend themselves well to a school setting due to their emphasis on learning (Bauer et al., 1999/2000; Warner & Hansen, 1970). Verbal-reinforcement and model-reinforcement, which involves vicarious learning, are two types of behavioral counseling (Warner & Hansen, 1970). When using these methods with high school juniors, Warner and Hansen (1970) found that both verbal-reinforcement and model-reinforcement significantly diminished feelings of alienation in students. The significance of this study demonstrated that behavioral techniques are effective in resolving problems that aren't concretely defined in behavioral terms (Warner & Hansen, 1970). Furthermore, there was a significant difference in those students who met in one of the two behavioral groups and those students who met with a counselor who did not use behavioral techniques (Warner & Hansen, 1970).

Zinck and Littrell (2000) integrated cognitive-behavioral techniques in their solution-focused approach with at-risk adolescent girls. Students participated in a group experience that involved elements of education, counseling, and skills development (Zinck & Littrell, 2000). Counselors presented brief lessons to the students, and then

provided them with the opportunity to discuss their individual issues (Zinck & Littrell). In addition, students completed homework assignments between sessions, which were discussed and evaluated at each group meeting (Zinck & Littrell). Students who participated in this group demonstrated an increase in confidence, self-reliance, assertiveness, and interpersonal skills (Zinck & Littrell). Students also decreased their aggression and substance abuse (Zinck & Littrell).

Supportive groups use person-centered techniques including unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence (Raskin, Rogers, & Witty, 2008; Bauer et al., 1999/2000). According to Yalom (2005), acceptance from group members sometimes facilitates personal growth and understanding at a deeper level than acceptance from the therapist. Whereas cognitive-behavioral groups tend to use structured exercises such as goal setting and contracting, supportive groups follow the group's agenda (Bauer et al., 1999/2000). Group members are free to present topics of interest, with group feedback and encouragement acting as important therapeutic elements (Bauer et al., 1999/2000). Students involved in supportive groups have experienced success in terms of opening up to other members about their feelings and experiences, generalizing friendships external to the group, enhancing their self-concepts, and improving decision-making skills (Bauer et al., 1999/2000).

Supportive group counseling has demonstrated efficacy with a variety of issues, including adolescents who experience phobia of school (Contessa & Paccione-Dyszlewski, 1981). Counselors facilitating supportive groups utilize a non-directive approach that includes skills such as summarizing, reflection, and indirect questioning (Contessa & Paccione-Dyszlewski). Through the use of such skills, counselors model

acceptance and support of group members, which students then adopt in working with each other (Contessa & Paccione-Dyszlewski). Contessa and Paccione-Dyszlewski found that students participating in a supportive group experience developed a cohesive bond that extended beyond the group sessions.

History of Play Therapy

Definition of play therapy. Play therapy is a counseling theory that attempts to address the unique communication and developmental needs of children. Landreth (2002) defines play therapy as

A dynamic interpersonal relationship between a child (or person of any age) and a therapist trained in play therapy procedures who provides selected play materials and facilitates the development of a safe relationship for the child (or person of any age) to fully express and explore self (feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviors) through play, the child's natural medium of communication, for optimal growth and development. (p. 16)

Play therapy acknowledges that the counseling process must consider a child's course of development in order to be effective.

Significance of play. Piaget's (1963) theory of cognitive development incorporates four stages: sensorimotor (birth to age 2), preoperational thought (age 2-7), concrete operations (age 7-11), and formal operations (begins after age 11; as cited in Wadsworth, 2004). Children in the concrete operations stage are able to process experiences in a concrete manner with an emphasis on the here-and-now (Piaget, 1963, as cited in Wadsworth, 2004). According to Piaget (1951/1962), play provides a connection between what is concrete and abstract. Play is the metaphorical representation of

children's experiences, their responses to those experiences, their emotions associated with those experiences, their desires, and their self-perceptions (Landreth, 2002; Landreth et al., 1999). Landreth (2002) stated, "Toys are children's words and play is their language" (p. 132). As such, children accomplish through play therapy what adults accomplish in traditional talk therapy (Landreth, 2002).

Historical development of play therapy. Individuals have acknowledged the importance of play for centuries (Landreth, 2002). Rousseau (1762/1979) emphasized that adults may better understand children through monitoring their play. He was also the first to acknowledge that children differ from adults (Rousseau, 1762/1979). Sigmund Freud (1909/1955) was the first to publish the use of play in the therapeutic process with his work with "Little Hans" (Landreth, 2002). Indeed, "play therapy developed from efforts to apply psychoanalytic therapy to children (Landreth, 2002, p. 28). Hug-Hellmuth (1921) found that using traditional psychoanalytic techniques with children was largely unsuccessful. Children were not able to verbally express their emotions, nor were they interested in free-associating or delving into their developmental phases (Landreth, 2002). Understanding this, therapists began incorporating play into their work with children (Hug-Hellmuth, 1921; Klein, 1955). Anna Freud (1965) used play to develop a therapeutic bond with the child; however, once the relationship was established, she resorted to more verbal methods. This contradicts the concept that play is valuable in and of itself, and not simply a means to encourage children to talk (Landreth et al., 1999).

Attempts to improve psychoanalytic play therapy resulted in the advancement of release play therapy in the 1930s by Levy (Landreth, 2002). However, this technique was still structured and focused on the child's reenactment of stress-inducing circumstances

(Landreth, 2002). Structured play therapy continued Levy's progress (Hambidge, 1955). Hambidge (1955) was more directive in presenting stress-inducing events, but he also provided time for free play. Relationship play therapy was the next movement, which emphasized the present rather than past events, as well as the importance of the therapeutic relationship (Landreth, 2002; Rank, 1931/1936).

Child-centered play therapy. Rogers (1951) broadened the concepts of relationship play therapy in creating Person-Centered Therapy. Rogers (1951) identified three core conditions of a therapeutic relationship: genuineness/congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathy. In addition, Rogers (1951) explained the personality structure as consisting of three parts: the person, the phenomenological field, and the self. The person encompasses who an individual really is, the phenomenological field explains how an individual views him/herself, and the self is the ideal person an individual strives to become (Rogers, 1951). When there is a discrepancy between the person, phenomenological field, and self, then maladjustment may occur (Raskin et al., 2008). Rogers (1951) explained that individuals have an inherent tendency toward self-actualization, or becoming one's best self.

Axline (1947) employed the principles of person-centered therapy with children. Child-centered play therapy emphasizes the core conditions of a therapeutic relationship and present experience (Axline, 1989). Child-centered play therapy emphasizes the following tenets for understanding and connecting to children:

1. Children are not miniature adults.
2. Children are people.
3. Children are unique and worthy of respect.

4. Children are resilient.
5. Children have an inherent tendency toward growth and maturity.
6. Children are capable of positive self-direction.
7. Children's natural language is play.
8. Children have a right to remain silent [or not play].
9. Children will take the therapeutic experience to where they need to be.
10. Children's growth cannot be speeded up [or slowed down]. (Landreth, 2002, p. 54)

The guiding principles of child-centered play therapy include: (a) creating a welcoming,

caring relationship; (b) developing a safe, permissive relationship that allows children to express themselves; (c) reflecting children's emotions to increase self-awareness; (d) setting limits only as required to bring reality into the session or to foster children's responsibility; (e) maintaining unconditional positive regard for children; (f) trusting in children's self-direction; (g) trusting in children's problem-solving capacity; and (h) understanding that play therapy moves at its own pace (Axline, 1989). According to Landreth (2002), play therapy focuses on the child instead of the problem, the present instead of the past, emotions instead of behaviors and cognitions, accepting instead of amending, understanding instead of illuminating, the child's self-direction instead of the therapist's instruction, and the child's insight instead of the therapist's erudition.

The essential elements of child-centered play therapy encompass a positive relationship; the understanding of emotions and real-life situations; testing limits within a framework of reality; and the development of self-image, self-control, and self-awareness

(Landreth, 2002). When these elements, as well as the guiding principles and tenets for relating to children, are in place, then children learn many skills in play therapy. Through play therapy, children learn: the development of a positive self-concept, self-control, self-direction, self-reliance, self-responsibility, self-expression, self-acceptance, that their feelings are acceptable, understanding for themselves and their world, decision-making, problem-solving, coping, the development of an internal source of evaluation, social skills, control over their environment, mastery over challenges, and trust in self/intuition (Landreth, 2002).

Play therapist's function. The therapist plays an important role in facilitating the learning opportunities in play therapy. Several characteristics enhance the effectiveness of the therapist: objectivity, patience, flexibility, an acceptance of ambiguity, a willingness to admit mistakes, not leading the child, and being fully present with the child (Landreth, 2002). Through facilitative responses, the therapist is able to assist children in processing their experiences and feelings (Landreth, 2002). Responses should be concise and occur approximately every 10 seconds (Landreth, 2002; J. Packman, personal communication, June 9, 2004). Additionally, the therapist should begin each statement with "You," which acknowledges the child's ownership over feelings and behaviors (Landreth, 2002).

There are several categories of facilitative responses: tracking, reflection of content, reflection of feeling, enlarging the meaning, returning responsibility, and facilitating creativity (Landreth, 2002; J. Packman, personal communication, June 9, 2004). Tracking involves a play-by-play of the child's actions, and includes statements such as, "You're putting that there." Using pronouns instead of labeling objects prevents

inhibiting a child's imagination (Landreth, 2002). According to Landreth (2002), tracking facilitates an interactive relationship so that the child does not feel as though the therapist is simply watching him/her.

Reflection of content delves deeper than tracking into the meaning behind behavior (J. Packman, personal communication, June 9, 2004). Facilitative responses in this category may include statements such as "It's important to you to put that where you think it goes." Reflection of feeling demonstrates understanding for a child's affect (J. Packman, personal communication, June 9, 2004). Enlarging the meaning involves drawing on themes in the child's play, and it may incorporate elements from one session or many sessions (J. Packman, personal communication, June 9, 2004). Returning responsibility develops a child's self-reliance and trust in self, as well as the ability to solve his or her own problems (Landreth, 2002). According to Landreth (2002), the therapist should never do for children what they can do for themselves. In facilitating creativity, the therapist allows for free expression and does not guide the child's activities (Landreth, 2002; J. Packman, personal communication, June 9, 2004).

In addition to facilitative responses, the therapist may use limit setting with a child. Every session begins with a limit when introducing the child to the playroom: "This is the special playroom where you can play with many of the toys you'd like in many of the ways in which you'd like to play with them" (J. Packman, personal communication, June 9, 2004). By emphasizing that a child may play with *many* toys in *many* ways, but not *all*, the therapist is setting a limit (Landreth, 2002). Therapeutic limit setting follows an ACT pattern: First, the therapist Acknowledges the child's feeling, then Communicates the limit, and then Targets two alternatives (Landreth, 2002). The

alternatives must allow for the child to express his/her feeling in an acceptable or appropriate manner (Landreth, 2002). The purpose of limit setting is to teach children responsibility, as well as how to handle choices (Landreth, 2002).

Function of the playroom, toys, and materials. The therapeutic relationship is not the only thing that promotes the efficacy of play therapy. The playroom and materials also encompass an important role. According to Landreth (2002), “An older, well-worn room is preferred” (p. 125). The purpose of this is that an older room has the appearance of being more comfortable (Landreth). The physical components of the playroom are important for practical and therapeutic reasons. The ideal playroom should be 12 ft X 15 ft so that it is big enough for group play therapy (two or three children), but not so large that the child is ever too distant from the therapist (Landreth). If possible, the playroom should not have windows in order to maintain confidentiality, and it should be located where it will not agitate other clients or allow children to feel an intrusion of their privacy if they are heard (Landreth).

The playroom should avoid carpet (it is very difficult to sweep sand or clean paint from carpet); the best covering are vinyl tile squares because individual squares may be replaced without difficulty and relatively cheaply (Landreth, 2002). Large plastic squares covering carpet are practical, but they also indicate to a child that it is important to not be messy (Landreth). It is ideal to have a “sink with cold running water,” or at minimum a bucket with about one inch of water (Landreth, p. 129). The playroom should also have shelves mounted on the wall at a height that does not require children to stand on something to access items on the top shelf (Landreth). A chalkboard may also be fastened on the wall, and Landreth suggests breaking pieces of new chalk so that a child does not

believe it is necessary to be cautious. The playroom should have “wood or hard-surface child-sized furniture,” such as chairs and a table (Landreth, p. 130). Lastly, the playroom should be designed with something in the middle of the room so that the child has the ability to hide or avoid the therapist (Landreth).

The play materials also play a crucial role in therapy. Landreth (2002) cautioned, “Toys and materials should be selected, not collected” (p. 133). There are three categories of toys: real-life, acting-out aggressive-release, and creative and emotional expression (Landreth). Real-life toys allow children to reenact real-life experiences. They also provide the child with the opportunity to engage in noncommittal play (Landreth). Toys in the real-life category may include a bendable doll family, a cash register, and cars/trucks/planes. The acting-out aggressive category includes toys such as a dart gun, Bobo, toy soldiers, wild animals, and a rubber sword. Creative expression toys are those that allow self-expression and have no correct way to play with them, such as clay, sand, water, and paint (Landreth).

In designing a playroom, the therapist must select toys and materials with purpose (Landreth, 2002). The use of toys can encourage a child’s self-expression and self-understanding, and they may represent themes in a child’s play (Landreth). Landreth has provided a list of recommended toys chosen for their therapeutic value, including: bendable doll family and dollhouse furniture, Bobo, cotton rope, toy soldiers, dart gun, trucks/cars/planes, musical instruments (drum, xylophone, cymbals), rubber sword, chalk and chalkboard, paint and easel, plastic food items and utensils, baby bottle, handcuffs, blocks, cash register, crayons, pipe cleaners, blunt scissors, bendable nondescript figures, medical kit, dress-up clothes, telephone, puppets, and animals.

Children may use therapeutic toys in a variety of ways. For example, Bobo can be punched to release aggression in an acceptable manner (Landreth, 2002), and it is also a metaphor for resiliency in its ability to bounce back. “The cash register provides for a quick feeling of control as the child manipulates the keys” (Landreth, p. 140). Many toys have multiple purposes. For instance, egg cartons assist in creative expression and the release of aggression through destruction (Landreth). Landreth recommends selecting toys that are durable, age-appropriate, and offer a range of expression. The therapist should avoid selecting electronic toys; children should be able to guide their play, and toys should only perform what children make them do (Landreth).

Efficacy of Play Therapy

Individual play therapy. Play therapy is an empirically supported counseling method for numerous children’s issues, including anxiety, aggression, physical and learning disabilities, social isolation, hospitalization, trichotillomania, attention-deficit disorder/attention-deficit with hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD), and conduct disorder (Axline, 1949; Barlow, Strother, & Landreth, 1985; Brodin, 1999, 2005; Callaghan, 1992; Cochran & Cochran, 1999; Dogra & Veeraraghavan, 1994; Hansen, Meissler, & Ovens, 2000; Ispa, Barrett, & Yanghee, 1988; Landreth, Homeyer, Glover, & Sweeney, 1996). Indeed, Ray, Bratton, Rhine, and Jones (2001) found that play therapy produced successful results in children regardless of age (i.e., from 3 to 16-years-old), gender, or therapist’s theoretical orientation.

Play reduces anxiety in children by providing a safe situation for processing problems and their solutions (Milos & Reiss, 1982). According to Milos and Reiss (1982), play therapy exposes children to anxiety-inducing situations, which assists them

in processing their reactions and becoming desensitized to the events causing stress and fear. Ispa et al. (1988) found that play therapy reduced anxiety in hospitalized children when they were provided with supervised play in the waiting room. By providing a safe therapeutic relationship, Barlow et al. (1985) reported that play therapy helped alleviate a child's trichotillomania: The child was bald when she began therapy, but her hair began to grow back after eight sessions.

Many studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of using play therapy with children who are aggressive or diagnosed with conduct disorder. For instance, Cochran and Cochran (1999) found that play therapy facilitated the development of appropriate relationships with adults and peers in students with behavior problems. In addition, play therapy provides students with a safe environment, which assists them with learning how to appropriately express their emotions (Cochran & Cochran).

Play therapy assists children diagnosed with ADD and ADHD in multiple ways. Callaghan (1992) reported that play allowed children with ADD to improve their social skills and concentration, as well as to increase their confidence. Similarly, play therapy has effectively reduced problem behaviors in children diagnosed with ADHD (Hansen et al., 2000).

Play therapy may also act as a learning tool for children, especially those with profound multiple disabilities (Brodin, 2005). The individual needs of children with disabilities may necessitate adapting traditional play therapy techniques. For example, the therapist may provide more structure in the play sessions, or decide to include electronic toys in the playroom in order to encourage play (Brodin, 2005). According to Brodin

(1999), providing stimuli that are developmentally appropriate to children with disabilities leads to active play.

Group play therapy. Group play therapy provides many of the same benefits as individual therapy, such as diminishing aggression, testing reality, and skills mastery (Slavson, 1979). However, group play therapy also provides an opportunity not present when working with an individual child: that of observing the interaction effect among children (Slavson, 1948/1999). In addition, children in group play therapy feed off of each other, which facilitates expression (Slavson, 1948/1999). According to Ginott (1961), group play therapy also benefits children by increasing their feelings of belonging.

Children who experience social maladjustment may benefit from participating in group play therapy, which models appropriate interpersonal interactions (Bleck & Bleck, 1982; Johnson, 1988). Group play therapy allows children to engage in peer contact, receive feedback, and attempt new social behaviors (Johnson, 1988). Moreover, skills rehearsed in the playroom generalize to external situations, as the group represents a smaller version of the real world (Johnson, 1988). Additionally, children feel secure in trying things after watching others (Landreth, 2002). According to Bleck and Bleck (1982), children naturally learn in groups, making group counseling an effective method for working with them. In conducting group play therapy with children labeled disruptive, Bleck and Bleck (1982) found that the experience helped the children develop a positive sense of self and lessen their disruptive behavior.

Play Therapy in Schools

Play therapy was used mainly by private practitioners to treat maladjusted children until the 1960s (Landreth, 2002). The development of elementary school counseling programs in the late 1960s and early 1970s promoted the use of play therapy for all children, rather than only those considered maladjusted (Landreth, 2002; Wittmer, 2000). According to Landreth (2002), the principle goal of play therapy in schools is to assist students in becoming prepared to learn.

Children in elementary school begin to practice the social skills they have learned from the interactions with their families (Kestly, 2001). Group play therapy in schools provides a safe environment in which children may practice these skills (Kestly, 2001). Baggerly and Parker (2005) found that group play therapy in an elementary school with African American boys helped promote skills as younger children identified with older participants. As a result, children participating in the play therapy group demonstrated increased self-confidence and positive racial identity development (Baggerly & Parker, 2005). According to Kestly (2001), the connotations surrounding play preclude feelings of embarrassment in expressing oneself in front of other children. Kestly (2001) also contends that group play therapy is an efficient method to use in the school because it allows the counselor to see more students in less time.

Schiffer (1969) asserted that school is a prime environment for helping children deal with emotional problems. School may be the cause of the problem, or bring attention to the problem (Schiffer, 1969). Additionally, school faculty members constantly interact with children and see them behave in an authentic setting, as opposed to clinical treatment (Schiffer, 1969). Furthermore, many students do not have the opportunity to

see a clinical therapist; their school counselor is the only one available to them (Campbell, 1993).

Group Activity Therapy

Even as children begin developing formal operations and the ability to understand abstract ideas, they have not necessarily acquired the ability to reason in the same way as adults (Wadsworth, 2004). Therefore, counselors may use guided activities with students that allow adolescents to express themselves in a manner that does not rely on verbal communication (Bratton & Ferebee, 1999).

Presenting activities in groups allows adolescents to socialize with their peers, which is an important process in their development (Bratton & Ferebee, 1999). Slavson (1944) developed group activity therapy for preadolescents, advocating the influential nature of group dynamics on behavior. According to Ginott (1961), adolescents want to experience group acceptance and belonging. Based on this desire, adolescents are able to assess and modify their behavior through group experiences (Ginott, 1961). Group activity therapy also facilitates identity formation and social connectedness, as well as enhances self-image (MacLennan, 1977).

Activity groups teach members a variety of skills in addition to social competence. Activities may promote teamwork, anger management, communication, acceptance of others, or self-exploration (Jones, 1996). In addition, activities may be designed that engage individuals in problem-solving or decision-making skills (Jones, 1996). Activities also encourage self-expression and catharsis (Bratton & Ferebee, 1999; Oaklander, 1988). Furthermore, the continued experience of an activity group allows members to integrate experiences from each week, resulting in “new decisions about

themselves, others, and how to successfully get along in the world” (D. M. Smith & Smith, 1999, p. 246). Through processing activities, group members also enhance their self-reflective abilities and interpersonal skills (D. M. Smith & Smith, 1999).

Several studies demonstrate the efficacy of group activity therapy in working with a variety of populations. Lev (1983) explained the use of a short-term activity group with severely disturbed children that was effective in facilitating relationships. Madonna and Caswell (1991) ran an activity group with preadolescents that resulted in less misbehavior and more cooperative tendencies. In addition, Oaklander (1988) described numerous activities that effectively assisted children of all ages in expressing their emotions and processing their experiences. Indeed, several of the adolescents Oaklander (1988) worked with were reluctant to share personal experiences until after participating in activities.

Research on using activity therapy in a school setting is limited; however, Packman and Bratton (2003) reported on a study that indicates the need for further examination of school-based activity therapy. Conducting activity therapy groups with preadolescents diagnosed with learning disabilities resulted in diminishing anxiety, depression, somatic symptoms, aggression, and problem behaviors in students (Packman & Bratton). Furthermore, those students who participated in the activity therapy groups demonstrated improvement in self-control, focusing on tasks, and overall quality of schoolwork (Packman & Bratton). Participating in the activity therapy groups also helped students to become more interactive and engage in self-expression, and one student became able to avoid following his friends in participating in things he did not want to do (Packman & Bratton). Group members acted as role models, and students adapted their behaviors based on their interactions in the group (Packman & Bratton). The

relationships developed within the activity therapy groups extended beyond the sessions to include interactions at recess and lunch, as well (Packman & Bratton). According to Packman and Bratton, the use of activity therapy groups in schools is beneficial for meeting the needs of many students in an efficient manner for the school counselor.

Paone (2006) also found that group activity therapy was beneficial in a school setting. Indeed, Paone reported that group activity therapy significantly increased adolescents' moral reasoning when talk therapy did not. In addition to increasing moral reasoning, group activity therapy also resulted in improved attendance and feelings of community with other group members for at-risk high school students (Paone).

Summary of Research

Despite the research that promotes the use of group activity therapy, the present study is the only one of its kind to describe activity groups for use with adolescents in high school designed specifically for friendship development. It appears that friendship is seen only as a secondary benefit of activity groups, and not as reason enough to conduct a group. However, the formation of friendships in adolescence is clearly important, and freshmen students seem particularly at risk for isolation as they adjust to the high school transition (Johnston & Johnston, 2003).

The strong connection between academic and social success in schools indicates the need for counselors to devote attention to assisting students in the development of close and positive friendships. This seems especially true with freshmen students, who are struggling with all aspects of the transition to high school (Haney et al., 2004; Johnston & Johnston, 2003; Trejos, 2004; Wheelock & Miao, 2005). Recent literature has focused on the academic difficulties that freshmen are experiencing, but little attention

has been devoted to the social struggles these students endure (“Raising the Bar,” 2005; Trejos, 2004). However, schools have the responsibility of meeting the range of developmental needs of these students, which includes social growth, as well (Johnston & Johnston, 2003). Indeed, the ASCA (2003) National Model for school counseling includes personal/social development as a domain separate from academic and career development. As such, it is imperative for counselors to examine possible methods for working with students in enhancing social skills.

Chapter Three – Research Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of group activity therapy in assisting transitioning ninth grade students in developing friendships and overall social connection to school as measured by the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale. Effectiveness was determined using a pretest/posttest treatment/comparison group design. In addition, all ninth grade students attending freshman orientation at a single school were surveyed about what they want in terms of social connection to high school, and themes were constructed by comparing these surveys to interviews with individual students. Observations from the group facilitator further informed the effectiveness of group activity therapy.

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. At the beginning of the school year, what do ninth grade high school students state they want in terms of social connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities?
2. How does a friendship group increase ninth grade students' social connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities as measured by the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale, Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale, observations, and interviews?
3. What is the differential effect of a ninth grade friendship group emphasizing activities and one emphasizing verbal processing on connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities?

Design and Theoretical Framework

This study used a mixed-methods research design, which combined quantitative processes with qualitative techniques (Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005). The purpose of combining these methods was to develop a greater understanding about the total aspect of socialization during the transition to ninth grade when participating in a friendship group (Hanson et al.). This research used a concurrent triangulation design, which involved collecting quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, and integrating the two during the interpretation of data (Hanson et al.). Through the use of a descriptive survey, inferential measurements of social behavior, observations, and interviews, a complete understanding of the process of conducting an activity friendship group with ninth grade students emerged.

In addition to collecting data through a survey and inferential scale, the researcher conducted a collective case study in order to examine the experiences of high school freshmen in an activity therapy group and talk therapy group designed to assist students in developing friendships. Since the freshman transition to high school often causes challenges for many students, a collective case study was the best approach for answering this study's research questions (Stake, 2000). By conducting a collective case study, the researcher was able to consider the shared experience of several students as they began the adjustment to high school. The researcher interpreted the data from this portion of the study using a phenomenological lens because its focus was on students' subjective experiences (D. W. Smith, 2005).

Researcher Background

The researcher has worked with adolescents as both a school counselor and a teacher for six years, working with all levels of middle and high school. She taught ninth

grade classes for four of these years, both in summer school and during the regular school year. In addition, she has studied and practiced play and activity therapy for five years in the contexts of counselor and supervisor. The researcher has worked as a play therapist with over 30 children and adolescents at both a university clinic and in a school setting. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome, separation anxiety, anger, depression, social skills problems, parental divorce, grief, and academic difficulties are examples of the concerns these children have addressed. She has also presented on the use of activity therapy in high schools, and supervised five university students during their play therapy micropracticums. Additionally, the researcher has assisted in the supervision of a university school counseling internship program. She adopts the tenets of child-centered play therapy in her work as a counselor. These tenets incorporate the following beliefs about how to interact with children:

1. Children are not miniature adults.
2. Children are people.
3. Children are unique and worthy of respect.
4. Children are resilient.
5. Children have an inherent tendency toward growth and maturity.
6. Children are capable of positive self-direction.
7. Children's natural language is play.
8. Children have a right to remain silent [or not play].
9. Children will take the therapeutic experience to where they need to be.
10. Children's growth cannot be speeded up [or slowed down]. (Landreth, 2002, p. 54)

Participants

A total of 474 first-year ninth grade students were recruited from a high school located in a small urban city. The students completed an anonymous survey as part of the school's annual freshman orientation in the fall of their ninth grade year (see Appendix A). The counselors use this survey each year, making it a customary procedure during freshman orientation. Due to absences on the day of orientation, a total of 438 students completed the survey. Six of these students did not complete the second page of the survey, providing only information about their demographics and planned participation in sports, clubs, music/drama, and other activities. Table 1 presents the demographic information for the 438 ninth grade students surveyed.

Table 1

Demographics of Students Completing Freshman Orientation Survey

	Total number of students ($N = 438$)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	210	47.9
Female	223	50.9
Unknown	5	1.2
Age		
12-years-old	1	0.2
13-years-old	25	5.7
14-years-old	362	82.7
15-years-old	47	10.7

Table 1 Continued

	Total number of students ($N = 438$)	Percentage
Age continued		
16-years-old	1	0.2
17-years-old	2	0.5
Ethnicity/Race		
African American	12	2.7
American Indian/Eskimo	5	1.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	50	11.4
Caucasian	249	56.9
Hispanic/Latina/Latino	51	11.6
Other	43	9.8
Unknown	28	6.4
Academic status ^a		
504	11	2.5
English Language Learners (ELL)	7	1.6
General education	269	61.3
Honors/Advanced classes	129	29.4
Special education	23	5.3

^aThe total number of students exceeds 438 because one student is in the Honors program, as well as has a 504 Plan.

During freshman orientation, students had the opportunity to volunteer to participate in counseling groups, including a friendship group for ninth graders, by completing a confidential form distributed and collected by the school counselors (see Appendix B). Of the 438 students present on the day of orientation, 26 students volunteered to join a friendship group. Each of the students who self-referred to participate in a friendship group met individually with the researcher, who acted as the group facilitator, in pre-group interviews. During these interviews, students were given information about the research study and the nature of the two types of friendship groups that would be utilized (i.e., activity therapy and talk therapy). Students were told that they would be randomly assigned to either the activity therapy or the talk therapy group. The group facilitator reviewed the purpose of the groups, the group schedules, and confidentiality with each student. The group facilitator gave the students a parent permission form explaining the study for parents/guardians to review and sign (see Appendix C), and an informed assent form for the students to review and sign (see Appendix D). Those students who returned their signed forms by the deadline to the group facilitator at the school site were included in the study.

Of the 26 ninth grade students who volunteered, 10 students returned their signed assent and parent/guardian permission forms to participate in the research study. These 10 students were randomly assigned to either the activity or talk therapy groups. Five of the students were randomly assigned to the activity group, and the other five were randomly assigned to the comparison talk therapy group. Random assignment was completed by drawing students' names from a hat and assigning them to either group one

or two. The groups were randomly assigned as either activity therapy or talk therapy by then drawing the numbers from a hat.

In order to participate in the study, students must have met the following criteria:

1. The students must have been first-year ninth graders in the class of 2012.
2. The students must have had full consent of parents or legal guardians to participate in the study.
3. The students must have given their full assent to participate in the study, agreeing to attend at least 40% of sessions in order for their data to be included in the final analysis. Students must have assented to the use of their data, including information from the freshman orientation survey, the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale, Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale, observations, and interviews.

Participants included four male and six female students, and they ranged in age from 14 to 16-years-old. Ethnicities of the students included African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, European American, and Hispanic/Latina/Latino. The students who participated in the friendship groups ranged from enrollment in honors level coursework, advanced classes (e.g., geometry), and standard ninth grade classes (e.g., algebra 1-2). There were participants who were 504 eligible, enrolled in academic support classes, and/or certified for special education. Additionally, one student was designated Fluent English Proficient, meaning that Spanish is spoken in the home, but she tested out of the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Another student was exited from the ESL program prior to beginning high school. Also, one student was

previously retained in middle school one year. Table 2 displays the distribution of demographics for each friendship group.

Table 2

Demographics of Group Members

	Treatment group ($n = 5$)	Comparison group ($n = 5$)
Gender		
Male	2	2
Female	3	3
Age (at conclusion of study)		
14-years-old	3	3
15-years-old	2	1
16-years-old		1
Ethnicity		
African American	1	2
Asian/Pacific Islander		2
European American	1	1
Hispanic/Latina/Latino	3	
Academic status		
504		1
Academic support or retained		3
General education	2	1
Honors/Advanced classes	1	

Table 2 Continued

	Treatment group (<i>n</i> = 5)	Comparison group (<i>n</i> = 5)
Academic status continued		
Special education	2	

The friendship groups were not limited to students who were not already participating in extracurricular activities. When the groups began, two students were enrolled in the school orchestra program, and one student was a member of concert choir. Additionally, two students were members of different world languages clubs (one of whom was also in orchestra), and one student stated that he planned to try-out for baseball in the spring. Also, one student participated in the High School ROTC program. In individual pre-group interviews, the group facilitator explained to students that the purposes of the friendship group would be to help students meet other peers, experience increased connection to adults at school, and become more involved in extracurricular activities. During these interviews, all of the students expressed an interest in meeting other students and becoming more involved in extracurricular activities. Despite the activities that some students were already engaged in, they stated that they were still not feeling connected to school.

There was one incident of attrition that occurred during the research study. After two sessions, one student in the activity therapy group moved to a different city and school, and he could no longer participate in the study. For the remainder of the study,

the activity therapy group maintained the other four members, and the talk therapy group maintained its five original members.

After the friendship groups terminated, the group facilitator interviewed three students from the activity therapy group and four students from the talk therapy group (the number of students interviewed was determined by scores of interest from the pretests and posttests), as well as two students who did not participate in the friendship groups for a total of nine interviews. The two students who did not participate in the friendship groups were randomly selected from the entire ninth grade class at the school to serve as a small control group. Although the original ninth grade class consisted of 474 students, movement occurred throughout the year, and the total number of students in the freshman class was 490 by the conclusion of the friendship groups. In order to account for this change, the researcher queried only those ninth grade students with an entry date of August 25, 2008, which was the first day of school. This ensured that only those students who were included in the freshman orientation and had the opportunity to complete the group recruitment form would be selected for an interview.

The query produced a result of 454 students, and two students were randomly chosen using Excel's Random Number Generator program. The group facilitator met with these students individually to explain the purpose of the research study and interview, limits of confidentiality, and the proposed use of their data. The group facilitator gave the students a parent permission form explaining the study for parents/guardians to review and sign (see Appendix E), and an informed assent form for the students to review and sign (see Appendix F). Both of these students returned their forms and became participants in the study. The control group consisted of one fifteen-

year-old European American male student enrolled in honors level courses and one fifteen-year-old Latina student enrolled in academic support classes. The male student participated in two sports, and the female student planned to try-out for one sport in the spring.

In the interviews, students from the two friendship groups were asked to reflect upon their experiences in the group, and how their experiences had generalized to situations outside of the group. The students who did not participate in the friendship groups were asked to reflect upon their adjustment to high school. These interviews were compared to the surveys taken by all ninth grade students at the beginning of the school year, and the researcher constructed themes from the data.

Setting

The study took place in an urban school district in one of eleven four-year public high schools. The school day is organized into six 50-minute class periods. Total enrollment in the school for the 2008-2009 year was 1,948 students, and class sizes averaged approximately 30 students each. Student enrollment was 52.8% male and 47.2% female. The school demographics reported from the 2007-2008 school year were as follows: 69.1% Caucasian, 14.5% Hispanic, 11.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 3.2% African American, and 1.7% American Indian/Alaskan Native. In addition, 10.2% of students enrolled in the school were certified for special education, 1.8% were ELL, and 10.8% qualified for Free/Reduced Lunch. Of the 89 teachers, 5 administrators, 6 counselors, and 1 librarian employed at the school, 70% have earned an advanced degree (Masters or higher), and 11 have earned National Board Certification. The school offers a range of athletic programs, over 30 active clubs, and a student leadership class. Additional school

programs include HSROTC, special education, ELL, media productions, and fine arts. Approximately 75% of the school's graduates enroll in post-secondary programs.

The activity and talk therapy friendship groups occurred in a conference room located in the counseling area of the school. The room contained no windows, and it was surrounded by the counseling staff offices. This room is generally used for meetings, and it was not designed as an activity room. However, counselors have frequently used the room for running various groups with students, and the surrounding staff members are tolerant of excessive noise. A large table in the room could be used during activities or moved against a wall to allow for chairs to be placed in a circle.

Instruments

Freshman orientation survey. The researcher designed a combination free response and Likert-type survey to distribute to all first-year ninth grade students during fall freshman orientation (see Appendix A). The purpose of the survey was to answer the study's first research question and identify what freshmen students report they want in terms of social connection when they first transition to high school. Questions included topics about friends, faculty, and extracurricular involvement. Content validity was established through review and feedback from five school counselors possessing from 4 to 27 years of experience working in a school setting, including two counselors who are Nationally Board Certified and four of whom hold the National Certified Counselor credential. The researcher revised the survey based on the comments received from these expert professionals.

Students answered the freshman orientation survey in a classroom setting. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete, and answers were kept anonymous.

Students returned their surveys to a box in the front of the classroom once they were completed. The researcher collected all surveys and scored them according to descriptive statistics (i.e., percentages and medians).

The Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale. The Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale (MAFF; Mehrabian, 1994b) was used to measure the study's second and third research questions, addressing the result of participating in a friendship group on social connection, as well as the differential effect of a ninth grade activity therapy friendship group and a ninth grade talk therapy friendship group on connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities. The MAFF purports to measure individuals' sociability and interpersonal comfort (Mehrabian, 1994b). According to Mehrabian (1994a), affiliative tendency is the expectation of positive interpersonal interactions.

The MAFF was designed for ages 15 and older (Mehrabian, 1994b). Although the majority of participants in this study were 14-years-old, there is not a significant cognitive difference between ages 14 and 15, as they both fall under the stage of formal operations (Piaget, 1963). Therefore, the MAFF was still an appropriate instrument for this study. The MAFF consists of 26 items using a 9-point Likert scale (Mehrabian, 1994b). Of the 26 items, half use positive wording and half use negative wording (Mehrabian, 1994b). Most individuals may complete the MAFF within 10 minutes (Mehrabian, 1994b).

The MAFF was standardized on a sample size of 916 university students in the 1970s (Mehrabian, 1994b). Internal consistency was high, with a Kuder-Richardson-20 (KR-20) coefficient of 0.80 (Mehrabian, 1994a, 1994b). Test-retest reliability was established from a sample of 108 individuals who took the MAFF after a four-week

interval, which yielded a KR-20 coefficient of 0.89 (Mehrabian, 1994b). In addition, Strumpfer (1974) found a split-half reliability coefficient of 0.75 using the Spearman-Brown correction.

Construct validity was established for the MAFF through examining hypotheses of affiliative tendency in terms of behaviors measured by the items on the scale (Mehrabian, 1994a). Intercorrelations among many factors on the MAFF provided evidence that the scale indeed measures affiliative tendency (Mehrabian, 1994a). These factors included preference for friends, preference for groups or individuals, overt demonstration of affection, and feelings of comfort in social interactions (Mehrabian, 1994a).

Concurrent validity was evaluated by comparing the MAFF to the Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale (MSR) and to other interpersonal measures, including the Social Anhedonia Scale, the Liking People Scale, and the Need-Affiliation Scale (Mehrabian, 1994b). According to Mehrabian (1994a), validity coefficients with the Liking People Scale and Need-Affiliation Scale were moderate ($r = 0.59$ and 0.47 , respectively). The MAFF also demonstrated a moderate relationship with the Social Anhedonia Scale ($r = -0.66$; Mehrabian, 1994a). This negative relationship was expected because anhedonia indicates a lack of pleasure, which contradicts the nature of affiliative tendency (Mehrabian, 1994a).

Factor analysis of the Social Anhedonia Scale also provided evidence for construct validity of the MAFF (Mehrabian, 1994a). Those factors that loaded on the MAFF included positive expectations for interpersonal interactions, as well as feelings of social interest, which are incorporated in the definition for affiliative tendency

(Mehrabian, 1994a). Therefore, in examining concurrent validity, construct validity was also supported through demonstrating that the MAFF indeed measures what it claims to measure.

In addition to concurrent and construct validity, Mehrabian (1994a) identified support for discriminant validity by comparing the MAFF to the Social Desirability Scale. In two separate studies, the MAFF obtained low correlation coefficients with the Social Desirability Scale ($r = 0.10-0.20$; Mehrabian, 1994a). These results provide evidence that the MAFF has low social desirability bias (Mehrabian, 1994a). Response bias was also limited by balancing the wording of items; half of the items are positively worded and half are negatively worded (Mehrabian, 1994a).

Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale. The Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale (MSR; Mehrabian, 1994c) was used with the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale (MAFF; Mehrabian, 1994b) to measure the second and third research questions in this study. The MSR and the MAFF are independent scales that measure theoretically different relationship behaviors (Mehrabian, 1994a). Whereas affiliative tendency encompasses positive social expectations, sensitivity to rejection is defined as the expectation of negative interpersonal interactions (Mehrabian, 1994a). The MSR was developed for ages 15 and older (Mehrabian, 1994c), but it was appropriate for use in this study with 14-year-olds because both age groups are in the same cognitive developmental stage (Piaget, 1963). The MSR consists of 24 items using a 9-point Likert scale (Mehrabian, 1994c). Similar to the MAFF, half of the items on the MSR are worded positively and half are worded negatively (Mehrabian, 1994c). Most individuals may complete the MSR within 10 minutes (Mehrabian, 1994c).

The MSR was standardized on a sample size of 916 university students in the 1970s (Mehrabian, 1994c). Internal consistency was high, with a Kuder-Richardson-20 (KR-20) coefficient of 0.83 (Mehrabian, 1994a, 1994c). Test-retest reliability was established from a sample of 108 individuals who took the MSR after a four-week interval, which yielded a KR-20 coefficient of 0.92 (Mehrabian, 1994c).

Construct validity of the MSR was evaluated partially through intercorrelated factors, including reluctance to engage in arguments, inhibition in expressing opinions, hesitation in approaching others for help, sensitivity to negative criticism, and avoidance of rejection (Mehrabian, 1994a). Discriminant validity was established through balanced wording of items to diminish response bias (Mehrabian, 1994a). The MSR also obtained a low correlation with the Social Desirability Scale ($r = -0.21$), which provided further evidence of discriminant validity (Mehrabian, 1994a). Furthermore, two separate studies provided low correlation coefficients between the MSR and the MAFF ($r = 0.04-0.09$; Mehrabian, 1994a). These results provide support for concluding that the MSR and the MAFF measure two different constructs.

Several comparisons to other interpersonal measures demonstrate strong concurrent validity for the MSR (Mehrabian, 1994a). For instance, the MSR highly correlated to the Trait Dominance-Submissiveness Scale ($r = -0.73$), which indicated that sensitivity to rejection and social submissiveness are similar concepts (Mehrabian, 1994a). This is further supported by the moderate negative correlation of the MSR to the Assertion Inventory ($r = -0.59$; Mehrabian, 1994a). The MSR also had negative correlations with Extroversion, Jackson's Affiliation, and Jackson's Autonomy (Mehrabian, 1994a).

Procedures

Freshman orientation data collection. Students completed the freshman orientation survey during the third week of school. The school counselors came to the students' English classes to present to them about credits, diploma requirements, extracurricular activities, and reasons to see their counselor. At the end of the presentation, students completed a survey about their social interests as they relate to school (see Appendix A). Students returned their surveys to a box in the front of the classroom, and responses were kept anonymous.

During freshman orientation, students also completed a form listing all of the counseling groups offered at the school (see Appendix B). Students were instructed to mark any of the groups that interested them. There was also a place to mark if students were not interested in any of the groups so that all students were writing, which was intended to maintain confidentiality. The school counselors collected the forms individually from each student. The researcher used the students' self-referrals to form the activity and talk therapy friendship groups.

Activity therapy friendship group data collection. The researcher served as group facilitator for both the treatment and comparison friendship groups. The group facilitator designed the activity therapy friendship group based on the recommendations of Bratton and Ferebee (1999). According to Bratton and Ferebee (1999), preadolescents benefit from groups that provide both structured activities and unstructured free time. In addition, Bratton and Ferebee (1999) have suggested allotting time for snacks and sharing. This is especially important in developing a friendship group because "the sharing of food

creates a family-type atmosphere and is a concrete act of nurturance” (Bratton & Ferebee, 1999, p. 199).

The group facilitator conducted the activity therapy friendship group once a week for 50 minutes each session (the equivalent of one class period). The facilitator rotated the class period that the group met so that students only missed a class once every six weeks. In addition, students could choose not to attend a group session if they felt they could not miss class that week.

The group met a total of nine weeks. The sessions were limited to nine due to restrictions imposed by the research site. In the course of the study, students also experienced a two week winter break. During the first week of the study, students completed the MAFF and MSR. After completion of the two questionnaires during the first session, and then during subsequent sessions, the facilitator presented a different activity each week. The activities incorporated intrapersonal and interpersonal skills recommended by the ASCA National Standards: communication, appreciation for diversity, cooperation, expression of feelings, creation of personal boundaries, and the development of self-worth (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). Activities also taught problem-solving, decision-making, self-exploration, and anger management (Jones, 1996, 1998). The activity therapy friendship group lesson plans are presented in Appendices G through O. Students had the freedom of choice in deciding to participate in all or part of an activity, which assisted in teaching students how to create personal boundaries and build trust with one another. Although the facilitator encouraged students to participate in processing the activities, students could choose not to share (Bratton & Ferebee, 1999). During the last session, students again completed the MAFF and MSR.

During the activity therapy friendship group sessions, the researcher acted in the role of “observer as participant” (Glesne, 2006, p. 50). The researcher facilitated both the activities and resulting discussion, attending to the students’ behaviors and emotions (Landreth, 2002). In each session, the researcher collected data through observations, artifacts resulting from the activities (e.g., drawings), and group interviews with the students. The researcher audio taped and transcribed all group sessions in order to triangulate the data collected from observations, artifacts, and group interviews. At the conclusion of each group session, the researcher recorded thoughts and observations on the audio tapes. In order to control for researcher bias, the group facilitator used the audio tapes to receive supervision and feedback from an expert in the field of play and activity therapy. The researcher and expert raters also used transcriptions from the audiotapes to code data and identify themes. The transcriptions were then compared to the results from the MAFF and MSR.

Talk therapy friendship group data collection. The talk therapy friendship group met once a week for 50 minutes for nine weeks during a rotated class period. As with the activity therapy friendship group, students in the talk therapy friendship group also experienced a two week winter break during the course of the study. The students completed the MAFF and MSR during the first and last sessions. During these and intermediate weeks, the researcher conducted the talk therapy friendship group using person-centered techniques in order to parallel the focus on relationship present in child-centered play therapy (Landreth, 2002; Raskin et al., 2008). The group sessions began with a round and check-in to allow students the opportunity to introduce topics of interest to them (Zinck & Littrell, 2000). According to Bauer et al. (1999/2000), group members

may provide feedback and encouragement to each other through discussion of topics important to them. The group facilitator used open-ended questions, summary, reflection, and active listening skills to promote group processing (Bauer et al., 1999/2000; Jacobs et al., 2002). Appendix P provides an example talk therapy friendship group lesson plan. During the talk therapy friendship group sessions, the researcher again acted as both an observer and a participant to collect data (Glesne, 2006). As in the activity therapy friendship group, the researcher audio taped all sessions and used the transcriptions to identify themes. The audiotapes were also used during supervision to control for researcher bias.

Interview data collection. At the conclusion of both friendship groups, the researcher conducted individual interviews with nine students. Seven students were selected for interviews based on their differential scores on the MAFF and MSR (see Appendix Q). Three students from the activity therapy friendship group and four students from the talk therapy friendship group participated in the interviews: those students with the largest difference in pretest and posttest scores on the MAFF and MSR, and those students with the smallest difference. Interviews lasted from 20 to 45 minutes, and they provided anecdotal data to support inferences from the scores on the MAFF and MSR in answering the study's second and third research questions. In addition, the interviews provided data that was then compared to answers on the freshman orientation survey taken by all ninth grade students. The interviews elaborated on information regarding students' social connection in terms of peers outside of the friendship group, adults at school, and extracurricular involvement. Furthermore, students were able to supply

additional information about the transfer of skills from participation in a friendship group to other situations.

Two students who did not participate in a friendship group were also randomly selected from the school's entire ninth grade class for an interview (see Appendix R). These students were able to provide information about their experiences in adjusting to high school, including their social connection to peers, adults at school, and extracurricular involvement. Data from these interviews were used to compare the experiences of students who participated in a friendship group to those who did not.

Statistical Procedures

Descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics provided information about ethnicity, age, gender, and academic status. Academic status identified if students were in honors or general education classes. In addition, academic status provided information regarding students' 504, special education, or ELL status. Descriptive statistics also provided percentages and medians for students' responses to the freshman orientation survey.

Inferential statistics. The researcher selected nonparametric statistics for this study due to violations of assumptions required to use a parametric statistic. Nonparametric statistics are more robust to assumption violations than parametric statistics (Cliff, 1996). The most palpable violation involves level of measurement. The MAFF and MSR consist of 26 and 24 items, respectively, that provide nine possible Likert scale responses (Mehrabian, 1994b, 1994c). This formation of questions produces ordinal data, and parametric analyses require at least interval level data (Garson, 2008). Violating the assumption of measurement level results in increasing the chance of a Type I error since it causes the actual standard error to be larger than the computed standard

error, which leads to overestimating significance (Garson, 2008). Another reason to use nonparametric statistics is that they are more conservative than parametric statistics, meaning that finding significance with a nonparametric statistic indicates that significant results will also occur with a parametric statistic (Cliff, 1996). Therefore, the Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test and Mann-Whitney *U* Test were the most appropriate tests to analyze the data for this study. The alpha level was set to equal .05 for all inferential analyses.

Wilcoxon's Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test was used to compare pretest and posttest scores on the MAFF and MSR within groups. The Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test is the most powerful nonparametric test available for use with ordinal dependent data because it takes direction of change, as well as magnitude of change, into consideration (Reinard, 2006). A correction for ties was used to increase power for this test. Morse (1999) suggests using eta squared (η^2) as a measure of effect size for the Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test. With two groups, eta squared is equivalent to Kendall's coefficient of concordance (*W*; Morse, 1999). According to Morse (1999), .01 is a small effect size, .06 is a medium effect size, and .14 is a large effect size.

The treatment group posttest scores on the MAFF and MSR were compared to the comparison group posttest scores using a Mann-Whitney *U* Test. The Mann-Whitney *U* Test is appropriate for use with ordinal data, as well as when homogeneity of variance does not exist with unequal sample sizes (Siegel & Castellan, 1988). The Mann-Whitney *U* Test may be used when data is drawn from two independent random samples (Siegel & Castellan, 1988). Calculation of effect size for the Mann-Whitney *U* Test in this study was derived from the recommendation by Morse (1999) to use eta squared (η^2).

Qualitative data analysis. The researcher approached the data collected from observations, artifacts (i.e., from the activity group), audiotapes, and interviews to identify themes in the experiences of students in the treatment and comparison friendship groups. In comparing students' behaviors and comments, the researcher was able to identify shared experiences and reoccurring topics of discussion. The researcher considered overriding themes to be the ideas that several students presented or those that occurred across several group meetings. The researcher and expert raters reviewed transcripts from group sessions in order to code the data and identify themes. In addition, interview data was compared to responses on the freshman orientation survey in order to construct themes relevant to answering the study's first research question.

Integration of data. Following the concurrent triangulation design, the qualitative and quantitative data was integrated during interpretation (Hanson et al., 2005). The researcher used the themes constructed from interviews and compared them to the results from the freshman orientation survey. This comparison provided additional information about what students desire in terms of social connection during their first year of high school, as well as how a friendship group may serve students in meeting their social needs. Data from interviews also supplemented the information gained from comparing the activity and talk therapy friendship group scores on the MAFF and MSR. Although the scores from the MAFF and MSR provided information about how students had experienced social growth, the interviews expanded this knowledge through answering in what ways this growth occurred. In addition, audiotape transcripts and observations during group sessions were used to support findings from the MAFF, MSR, and the interviews. The researcher considered the ways in which transcriptions, artifacts, and

observations validated or contradicted data collected from interviews, the MAFF, and the MSR.

Chapter Four – Results

Hypothesis One

The study's first research question asked: At the beginning of the school year, what do ninth grade high school students state they want in terms of social connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities? Hypothesis One stated: At the beginning of the school year, ninth grade high school students will state that they want time with friends, emotional connection to adults at school, and a variety of extracurricular activities that meet their diverse interests and abilities. This hypothesis was tested using the Freshman Orientation Survey (see Appendix A) and interviews with nine ninth-grade students.

Freshman Orientation Survey. The Freshman Orientation Survey revealed that 66.7% of ninth grade students surveyed planned to participate in a sport during their freshman year of high school, 28.5% planned to join a club, 32.4% planned to participate in a music or drama program, and 18.3% planned to participate in an unspecified activity. In addition, several students were unsure of their plans to participate in sports (0.9%), clubs (10%), music and drama (2.1%), and other activities (3%). An analysis of medians for this data displayed that there was no difference in level of involvement by age or gender. However, differences did occur among ethnicities and academic status.

Data from the Freshman Orientation Survey reported that students from all ethnicities planned to participate in sports; however, a difference in academic status was noted. Students certified in special education differed from all other academic statuses in their median result of not planning to participate in sports. The median results for the survey demonstrated that club participation also had differences among groups: African

American and American Indian/Eskimo students were the only ethnicities to indicate plans to join clubs. African American students were also the only ethnicity to provide evidence of participation in music and/or drama programs. None of the English Language Learners (ELL) stated that they planned to participate in music and/or drama programs. The medians across all groups indicated no plans to participate in unspecified activities. Furthermore, none of the American Indian/Eskimo students reported participation in an unspecified activity. Table 3 reports the differences in level of participation in sports, clubs, music and drama programs, and other activities by ethnicity and academic status.

Table 3

Level of Extracurricular Participation by Ethnicity and Academic Status

	Sports	Clubs	Music/Drama	Other
Ethnicity/Race				
African American	1	1.5	1	2
American Indian/Eskimo	1	1	2	2 ^a
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	2	2	2
Caucasian	1	2	2	2
Hispanic/Latina/Latino	1	2	2	2
Other	1	2	2	2
Unknown	1	2	2	2

Table 3 Continued

	Sports	Clubs	Music/Drama	Other
Academic status				
504	1	2	2	2
English Language Learners (ELL)	1	2	2 ^b	2
General education	1	2	2	2
Honors/Advanced classes	1	2	2	2
Special education	2	2	2	2

Note. The values represent median responses to whether or not students plan to participate, with 1 = yes, 2 = no, and 3 = unsure.

^aNo American Indian/Eskimo students reported participation in an unspecified activity. ^bNo ELL students reported participation in music or drama programs.

In addition to extracurricular involvement, the Freshman Orientation Survey provided students with ten statements addressing issues of connection to peers and adults at school using a four-point Likert-type scale (see Appendix A). Table 4 reports the median scores for ninth grade students overall, as well as by gender, age, ethnicity, and academic status. Table 5 reports the percentages of students who strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, and strongly disagreed with each statement.

Table 4

Freshman Orientation Survey Median Results by Gender, Age, Ethnicity, and Academic Status

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Total
Overall	2	2	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	19
Gender											
Male	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	20
Female	2	1	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	18
Unknown	3	2	4	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	22
Age											
12-years-old ^a	2	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	3	2	17
13-years-old	2	1	3	1	1	1.5	1.5	1	2	2	18
14-years-old	2	2	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	19
15-years-old	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	21
16-years-old ^a	2	3	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	22
17-years-old	4 ^a	2 ^a	3	2.5	2 ^a	2 ^a	2.5	3	3	3	27
Ethnicity/Race											
African American	2	2	3.5	2	2	1	1.5	1.5	2.5	2	19.5
American Indian/ Eskimo	2	1.5	3	1.5	1.5	2	1	1.5	2	2	18.5

Table 4 Continued

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Total
Ethnicity/Race continued											
Asian/Pacific											
Islander	2	1	3	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	18
Caucasian	2	2	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	19
Hispanic/Latina/											
Latino	2	2	3	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	20
Other	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	20
Unknown	2	2	4	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	22
Academic status											
504	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	21
ELL	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	23
General education	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	19
Honors/Advanced	2	1	3	1.5	1	1	2	1	2	2	18
Special education	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	22
504 and honors ^b	2	2	3	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	17

Note. Medians are reported using the following scale: Strongly Agree (SA) = 1, Agree (A) = 2, Disagree (D) = 3, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 4.

^aResponses for this age were constant. ^bResponses for this academic status were constant.

Table 5

Freshman Orientation Survey Percentages by Question

	Q1 ^a	Q2	Q3	Q4 ^a	Q5 ^a	Q6 ^a	Q7 ^b	Q8 ^c	Q9	Q10
Strongly agreed	10.9	47.2	9.0	42.1	50.0	59.3	38.9	56.0	14.6	20.6
Agreed	66.2	32.9	14.1	35.0	44.9	34.5	51.9	37.0	46.5	54.6
Disagreed	19.4	17.4	47.7	16.7	4.2	4.9	7.9	4.4	31.0	19.2
Strongly disagreed	2.8	2.5	29.2	6.0	0.7	0.9	1.4	2.5	7.9	5.6

^aPercentages do not add to 100 due to missing values. ^bSum of percentages exceed 100 due to rounding error. ^cSum of percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding error.

Although students mostly agreed with the statements presented to them, the medians for all groups revealed that students did not know the principal's last name (only 9% of students reported that they knew his last name). In addition, the 12-year-old, 17-year-olds, and ELL students did not know where to find tutoring assistance, and the 16-year-old and 17-year-olds did not know where to find help with bullying. The 16-year-old also reported not knowing all of his teachers' last names. Additionally, the two 17-year-old students stated that they had not maintained friendships from middle school, and the student who is both in the Honors program and has a 504 Plan disagreed with the statement that he had made new friends this year.

According to the Freshman Orientation Survey, students overwhelmingly agreed that they were looking forward to meeting with their mentors (66.2% agreed and 10.9% strongly agreed). There was also strong agreement with knowing the last names of one's teachers and counselor, as well as with having friends in class, having a regular group of

people to hang out with at lunch, and maintaining friendships from middle school. Most students indicated that they had met new friends at school this year (51.9% agreed and 38.9% strongly agreed). Although the majority of students reported knowing where to get help with tutoring (61.1% agreed and strongly agreed), a large percentage (38.9%) stated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. In addition, 24.8% of students reported that they did not know where to find help with bullying.

Interview data. In order to develop a greater understanding for ninth grade students' desires for social connection in high school, the researcher interviewed nine students. In these interviews, students provided information that elaborated on the data reported in the Freshman Orientation Survey. Students from both the activity therapy and talk therapy groups were interviewed, as well as two students who did not participate in either group. The latter students were included in order to determine if the friendship groups influenced students' experiences by comparing responses from students who had participated in the friendship groups to students who did not participate. See Appendix Q for a list of interview questions used with group members and Appendix R for a list of interview questions used with non-group participants.

The interviews resulted in two themes relevant to answering this study's first research question: intimacy and influence. All nine students provided responses to the interview questions that resulted in the construction of these two themes. Intimacy as constructed through the interviews conducted in this study is defined as trust in another as experienced through open self-disclosure. In their interviews, the nine students reflected on the importance of friendships in high school. Indeed, one non-group participant stated, "High school isn't just for school, you know? It's important to have friends, too." When

asked to elaborate, she continued, “When you have friends, then you have more experiences—ones you wouldn’t have otherwise. Instead of just going to school and then going home, friends help you experience new things—to try new things.” A student from the activity therapy friendship group also indicated that having friends in high school was important: “I like school—I do. But, part of why I like it is because I get to spend time with my friends. I like going to class because I get to see my friends. To be honest, sometimes the only reason I go to class is so that I can see one of my friends.” According to a student in the talk therapy group, “Friends make school fun. Also, they help me out. Like when I have a question in class, I can just ask one of my friends to help me.”

When asked what they wanted high school to be like, all of the students commented that they wanted it to be “fun,” and six students also stated that they wanted to “make friends.” The nine students interviewed all discussed the social aspect of school, but only four students commented on the academic focus. Even when discussing academic success, these four students highlighted friendships. A non-group participant stated that the characteristic of focusing on grades and academic success was a priority to him in selecting friends. “When my friends are motivated to do well in school, then I am also motivated,” he stated. Three group members also stated that they thought it was important to have friends in class because then they knew someone they could ask for help. For example, one of the activity therapy group members said, “It is so much easier to ask my friends when I have a question than to ask the teacher. Sometimes, teachers don’t explain things really well, and asking a friend can help.” A talk therapy group member commented, “I am so relieved when I have a friend in class because I know that I have someone that I can call when I’m doing my homework. They know what we did in

class, so it is easy to ask for help.” According to another talk therapy group member, “Friends make class so much funner, but it’s more than that, you know? Like, I can work with them on projects and homework, too.”

The students interviewed did not find friendships alone sufficient for enjoying high school. Rather, they discussed the importance of intimacy in those friendships. Seven of the students commented that they had a lot of friends, but “just a few close ones.” When asked what it meant for a friend to be close, one student replied, “Someone I can talk to. I can just be myself around them, and they can be themselves around me.” Another student defined close as “I can trust those friends not to tell everyone what I’ve said. I can share things with them, and I know its safe—unlike the rumors that get spread around usually in high school.” In talking about intimacy, a third student commented, “You know, we can talk to our counselors and stuff, but sometimes you just want to talk to someone your own age. That’s why it’s important to have friends, because they will listen and help you out, and they just get it better than adults sometimes.”

The second theme constructed from the interviews was influence, which indicates the degree to which someone accepts information and feedback from another. When asked about selecting friends, the students interviewed listed characteristics such as “someone who cares about school,” “makes good decisions,” and “doesn’t do bad things.” The students clarified these comments by stating that they wanted friends who earned good grades, and who did not do drugs, smoke, or drink alcohol. One student commented that she was “lucky” this year because she had found friends that were “good.” She stated that she had been friends with students who did “bad things” before, and she easily fell under the pressure to do the same behaviors. This year, however, was

different for her, as she surrounded herself with friends who made more constructive decisions in terms of delinquent behaviors.

In their interviews, the nine students indicated that friends influenced them more than adults. Only two students stated that they had cared about connecting to adults at school at the beginning of the year. When they did care, it was usually so that they could feel comfortable in asking questions: “I wanted to be able to ask my teachers for help.” When asked what they wanted high school to give them in terms of connection to adults, seven students indicated that they were not concerned at the beginning of the year about connecting to adults. Indeed, a talk therapy group member stated, “I didn’t really think about it. I don’t think I really cared.” When asked to reflect on her experience, one of the activity therapy group members reported that she did not focus on connecting to adults at the beginning of the year, but “Now I feel closer to my teachers. I have this one teacher who really motivated me because she got me to see how I was messing up. I wasn’t turning in my homework, and she started talking about the economy and how people don’t have jobs, and how a high school diploma is really important. She told me that I needed to pass her class so that I can graduate and get a good job. What she said really got me thinking, and I have started to work harder.”

Although only three students mentioned their connection to adults, all of the students mentioned that they wanted to connect to their peers. One activity therapy group member commented, “I wanted to meet new people,” and another stated, “I wanted to make friends.” A talk therapy group member reported, “I wanted to see people I know and get to know more people.” The nine students sought to meet new people, and they generally wanted these people to become friends who they could “talk to,” “do things

outside of school with,” and “hang out with.” In addition, five students reported that how their friends behaved motivated them to behave in a similar manner. For example, one of the talk therapy group members stated, “In middle school I hung out with bad people, and I did bad things, too. But, this year is better. I am hanging out with better people, and I’m getting in less trouble, too.” In addition, a non-group participant commented, “I am friends with people who care about school. I want to do well, and it helps when my friends are doing well, too.” Furthermore, eight of the students interviewed reported that they wanted friends who “don’t drink,” “don’t smoke,” “don’t do drugs,” and “don’t do bad things.”

In the interviews, students were also asked to discuss their connection to extracurricular activities. All nine of the students stated that they had planned to participate in a sport, club, drama, or music program, or they were already participating in something. Both of the non-group participants interviewed stated that they chose not to join the friendship groups because they already had a group of friends from the activities they participated in. This reflection indicated that these two students had found intimacy through extracurricular involvement. For example, one of the non-group students explained, “I didn’t join [the friendship group] because I already had a lot of friends from football. We spent all summer together during practice, and we really got to know each other. I didn’t think I needed another group.” Showing her excitement for the opportunities available in high school, one of the non-group participants stated, “[At the beginning of the year], I wanted to be involved. I wanted to be in volleyball and softball, and I wanted to join clubs, and go to the dances. I wanted to do it all!” In contrast, one of the activity therapy group members stated, “At first I wanted to do a lot of things, but

then I decided that I wanted to wait until next year. It is too hard to do things this year and keep my grades up. I think it will be easier next year.” However, another activity therapy group member commented on her participation in orchestra, “It has been really fun. I am really busy, but I like it.” Another orchestra member in the talk therapy group stated, “I get to hang out with some cool people.”

Unlike the students who had formed bonds through extracurricular activities, six of the group participants stated that they had chosen to join the friendship groups because they had recently moved, and they did not know anyone yet. One student in the activity therapy group stated, “I was totally lost the first few days of school. I didn’t know anyone, and I felt like a loser. Finally, someone let me join her and another girl for lunch, so then I had someone to hang out with.” A talk therapy group member connected moving to a lack of extracurricular involvement: “I really wanted to play football, but I came too late in the summer. I didn’t know what else to join, so I didn’t do anything in the fall.” This student did join track once the season started, however. He became one of three of the students who had moved that participated in an extracurricular activity. The other two participated in choir and baseball.

The three students that did not participate in an extracurricular activity indicated a weaker connection to school. For example, a talk therapy group member said, “I don’t really have a group that I belong to besides this one. I’m not really sure what I would like.” An activity therapy group member also stated, “I kind of don’t fit in anywhere. I don’t play sports, and I’m not in leadership or anything like that.” These comments demonstrated that extracurricular activities provided students with a pre-formulated

group of people to spend time with, as well as a group that promoted a sense of belonging and connection that was lacking in students who did not participate in an activity.

The interviews with these nine students provided information that supplemented the data received from the Freshman Orientation Survey. For instance, 94.9% of students responded that they had friends in their classes. The interviews presented evidence that the students not only had friends in classes, but that it was something they considered important. In their interviews, the students explained that having friends in their classes made school more enjoyable, as well as provided them with assistance on homework. In addition, 90.8% of students reported that they had met new friends in ninth grade. The students demonstrated that this was something that they wanted when starting high school through their responses in the interviews. The interviews also provided information about connection to adults and extracurricular activities. Although the majority of students responding to the survey indicated that they were familiar with their teachers and counselor, the interview data provided evidence that this was not particularly important to the students at the beginning of the year. However, one student provided an example of how connecting to adults had become more important to her.

Extracurricular involvement among group members did not coincide with data collected from the Freshman Orientation Survey. Although the majority of survey respondents indicated participation in sports, only two of the group members (one in the activity therapy group and one in the talk therapy group) were involved with a sport. However, both non-group participants were athletes. Moreover, aside from the African American group, the median response on the Freshman Orientation Survey for music and drama programs indicated a lack of participation, yet four of the group participants (two

in each group, and all from ethnic groups other than African American) participated in these programs. Regardless of these differences, the interviews did provide information about the importance of extracurricular involvement. The non-group participants demonstrated that extracurricular activities provided them with a group to belong to; whereas, group participants presented examples for how a lack of involvement could be detrimental to their feelings of connection to peers and school.

Hypothesis Two

The second research question asked: How does a friendship group increase ninth grade students' social connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities as measured by the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale, Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale, observations, and interviews? The research hypothesis stated: Participation in a friendship group will increase ninth grade students' social connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities as measured by the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale, Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale, observations, and interviews. The Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale served as inferential measures of this hypothesis. Qualitative measures of Hypothesis Two included observations, artifacts, and interviews.

Inferential measures. The Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale (MAFF) measures individuals' sociability and interpersonal comfort (Mehrabian, 1994b). Affiliative tendency is the expectation of positive interpersonal interactions (Mehrabian, 1994a). A high positive score on the MAFF indicates that an individual has a high affiliative tendency (Mehrabian, 1994b). Participants in both the activity therapy and talk therapy groups completed the MAFF as a pre and posttest measure. A Wilcoxon Matched

Pairs Signed Ranks Test was calculated for both groups to determine if students' affiliative tendency had changed as a result of participation in a friendship group.

In the activity therapy friendship group, students' scores on the MAFF ranged from 8 to 60 on the pretest and from 10 to 42 on the posttest. Although one student increased his affiliative tendency score from pretest to posttest, the remaining three group members decreased in affiliative tendency from pretest to posttest. The z test of the obtained Wilcoxon $T(1)$ yielded a z score of 1.46. Thus, there was no significant difference in pretest and posttest scores. Table 6 displays the results of this test.

Table 6

Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Ranks Test on MAFF for Activity Therapy Group

	<i>N</i>	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Negative ranks	3 ^a	3.00	9.00
Positive ranks	1 ^b	1.00	1.00
Ties	0 ^c		
Total	4		

^aPost < Pre. ^bPost > Pre. ^cPost = Pre.

In the talk therapy friendship group, students' scores on the MAFF ranged from -7 to 44 on the pretest and from 2 to 51 on the posttest. Four students increased their affiliative tendency score from pretest to posttest, and one student decreased in affiliative tendency. The z test of the obtained Wilcoxon $T(2)$ yielded a z score of 1.48. Therefore, there was no significant difference in pretest and posttest scores. Table 7 displays the results of this test.

Table 7

Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Ranks Test on MAFF for Talk Therapy Group

	<i>N</i>	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Negative ranks	1 ^a	2.00	2.00
Positive ranks	4 ^b	3.25	13.00
Ties	0 ^c		
Total	5		

^aPost < Pre. ^bPost > Pre. ^cPost = Pre.

The Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale (MSR) measures the expectation of negative interpersonal interactions (Mehrabian, 1994a). A negative score on the MSR indicates that an individual is less sensitive to rejection (Mehrabian, 1994c). Sensitivity to rejection is demonstrated in behaviors such as conflict avoidance and hesitancy in receiving negative feedback (Mehrabian, 1994c). The MSR was administered to participants in both the activity therapy and talk therapy groups as a pre and posttest measure. A Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Ranks Test was calculated for both groups to investigate a change in students' sensitivity to rejection as a result of participation in a friendship group.

Pretest scores on the MSR in the activity therapy group ranged from -9 to 31, and posttest scores ranged from 0 to 39. Two students decreased their sensitivity to rejection from pre to posttest, and two students demonstrated an increase in sensitivity to rejection. The *z* test of the obtained Wilcoxon *T* (4.5) yielded a *z* score of 0.184. Therefore, there

was no significant difference in pretest and posttest scores. Table 8 presents the results from this test.

Table 8

Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Ranks Test on MSR for Activity Therapy Group

	<i>N</i>	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Negative ranks	2 ^a	2.25	4.50
Positive ranks	2 ^b	2.75	5.50
Ties	0 ^c		
Total	4		

^aPost < Pre. ^bPost > Pre. ^cPost = Pre.

In the talk therapy group, pretest scores on the MSR ranged from -23 to 31, and posttest scores ranged from -8 to 11. Three students decreased their sensitivity to rejection from pre to posttest, and two students increased in sensitivity to rejection. The z test of the obtained Wilcoxon $T(7)$ yielded a z score of 0.135. Therefore, there was no significant difference in pretest and posttest scores. Table 9 presents the results from this test.

Table 9

Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Ranks Test on MSR for Talk Therapy Group

	<i>N</i>	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Negative Ranks	3 ^a	2.67	8.00
Positive Ranks	2 ^b	3.50	7.00
Ties	0 ^c		
Total	5		

^aPost < Pre. ^bPost > Pre. ^cPost = Pre.

Students' scores on both the MAFF and MSR were examined and compared to attendance of group sessions in order to determine if the number of sessions a student attended had an impact on his or her affiliative tendency and sensitivity to rejection. Attendance did not appear to influence students' differential scores on the pre and posttest measures. In the activity therapy group, student attendance ranged from 5 to 8 sessions (56% to 89%, respectively). The student with the lowest attendance rate in this group is also the only student in the activity therapy group who increased his affiliative tendency score. He was also the student with the smallest difference between pre and posttest on the MAFF. The two students with both the lowest and highest attendance rates both became less sensitive to rejection, and they also had the smallest and largest differences, respectively, between pre and posttest on the MSR.

Attendance also did not appear to influence scores in the talk therapy group. Attendance in the talk therapy group ranged from 5 to 9 sessions (56% to 100%, respectively). The two students with 100% attendance both increased their affiliative

tendency, but one became more sensitive to rejection. These two students also demonstrated the greatest and smallest difference in pre and posttest scores on the MAFF. The student with the lowest attendance rate increased both her affiliative tendency and sensitivity to rejection, and she produced the greatest difference in pre and posttest scores on the MSR. Furthermore, the student in the talk therapy group with the smallest difference in pre and posttest scores on the MSR had one of the highest attendance rates at 89%.

Qualitative measures. Although the quantitative measures did not support Hypothesis Two, the qualitative measures provided a comprehensive examination about the influence a friendship group had on students' connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities. Through observations, artifacts, and interviews with the students in both the activity therapy and talk therapy friendship groups, the researcher collected evidence of overall themes. Since Hypothesis Two focused on examining the experience of participating in a friendship group, data from the non-group participants was not included in this analysis. All students in both the activity therapy and talk therapy groups presented data that supported the construction of the theme of trust as related to self-expression and respect. Although not present in the talk therapy group, the five students (which later became four due to attrition) in the activity therapy group also provided data supporting the theme of cooperation.

It is logical that the theme of trust as related to self-expression and respect occurred in both friendship groups. This is because trust in interpersonal relationships tends to develop over time, and both groups engaged in frequent acts of self-disclosure. The difference in the presence of cooperation as a theme only in the activity therapy

group is likely due to the experience of participating in activities designed to promote teamwork. The talk therapy group was provided with time to discuss topics of interest to them, but no direct effort was made in enhancing cooperation skills. Whereas the activity therapy group members' teamwork abilities were directly measured through activities, the talk therapy group students never presented a topic that required cooperation among members.

Trust as related to self-expression and respect. Throughout their sessions, both friendship groups provided evidence supporting the theme of trust. In creating group norms, both the activity therapy and talk therapy groups listed "We agree to keep each other's privacy" as their first norm. Immediately, students demonstrated that they required a sense of security in order to feel comfortable sharing things about themselves with the group. Six students commented that they would not be as willing to share their opinions and experiences if they felt that other students were going to talk about them outside of the group. For instance, one student in the activity therapy group commented during her interview, "The group was a safe place to talk about stuff. I didn't have to worry that what I said was going to get spread all around school." When creating the norm about confidentiality, a talk therapy group member said, "I like knowing that what I say in here stays in here." All of the students agreed that they needed to rely on one another to keep what was disclosed in the group confidential in order for anyone to feel secure enough to share. Indeed, one talk therapy member joked, "It's like Vegas: What happens in the group stays in the group!"

Trust continued to build from session to session throughout both groups. In the talk therapy group, students were given the opportunity to talk about whatever topics they

chose. Oftentimes, these discussions involved sharing large amounts of personal information. For example, one student shared about her fights with her siblings: “My brothers are always ganging up on me. I feel like I have to act like one of the guys and not let them know it upsets me, or they’ll just make fun of me even more.” Another student discussed how much she missed her friends since moving: “I wish I was there still. I don’t really have anyone to talk to or hang out with here.” In these conversations, the two students displayed the ability to share information while trusting the other group members to respect their feelings. This demonstrated that trust was established through experiencing respectful feedback from the other group members. As the sessions continued, the group members continued to listen to each other and validate one another’s feelings. As such, students began sharing more personal information than at the beginning of the group. This display of self-expression promoted intimacy among group members, which encouraged a sense of connection to their peers.

Early in the group sessions, two students in the talk therapy group tended to share more information than the other group members. For instance, in the second session, one of the students stated, “We live with our mom, but we see our dad sometimes. He has like five other kids at his house.” This statement involved personal self-disclosure that other group members had not yet engaged in. This level of self-disclosure was probably because these two students were siblings, and they already had an established level of trust between themselves. This trust was demonstrated through the following conversation: “Please don’t tell that story!” the sister sibling asked her brother, who had started to share something about his sister with the group. He replied, “Okay, we can talk about something else.” Since her brother willingly stopped telling the story, the sister

experienced evidence that she could trust him to honor her request and not share things she did not want shared.

As the sessions continued, however, the other three students in the talk therapy group transitioned from a listening role to a talking one, and they also began to share more information and engage in conversation. For instance, one student shared, “I have another sister, but she doesn’t live with us. My mom gave her to my aunt because she [her aunt] couldn’t have kids. So, we only see my sister every two weeks. It’s kind of weird.” This disclosure was personal, and the student trusted the group members not to share it outside of the group. Another student shared, “We went movie hopping.” This disclosure was one that could get the student in trouble, yet he trusted the group members to maintain confidentiality. This change in behavior as more students engaged in self-disclosure illustrated that the students had learned to trust the other group members with information about themselves.

The activity therapy group also built trust as the sessions continued. This was partially due to the use of activities that promoted self-expression and respect for one another. In the third group session, students participated in an activity called “Label Me” (Jones, 1996, pp. 74-75). Students were given a label to wear that identified a stereotypical group (i.e., nerd, jock, popular, etc.), but they did not know what their label was. While playing a card game, students were told to treat each other in a manner according to the labels they were wearing. For example, if a student was wearing the label “I am a nerd,” the other students might ask him or her about stereotyped nerd behaviors (e.g., “Did you do all of your homework already?”).

Students displayed trust in two ways during the “Label Me” activity (Jones, 1996, pp. 74-75). First, they willingly wore the labels, understanding that the other students might treat them in an undesirable manner. This demonstrated trust because the group facilitator always gave students the option to not participate in all or part of an activity, so they could have elected to not wear the label if they were worried about how they would be treated. Second, students freely treated each other according to the stereotypes associated with different labels, trusting that they would not become personally offended. For example, one student was labeled “I don’t speak English,” and every time the other students addressed her, they raised their voices and began to speak slower. When she said something, another student stated, “What? You aren’t making any sense!” While processing this activity, the student wearing the label “I don’t speak English” stated, “I was so frustrated! I felt like everyone was being really mean, but I reminded myself that it was just a game. I knew that no one here would really treat me that way.” This comment provided evidence of the theme of trust because she continued to participate in the activity, even while experiencing feelings of discomfort, because she trusted that the other group members were not intentionally trying to hurt her feelings. Perhaps these feelings of trust were facilitated through one of the group norms: “We agree to respect each other.”

The “Label Me” activity (Jones, 1996, pp. 74-75) facilitated trust in one’s self worth, as well. During the process discussion, one student remarked, “I think that we all label each other, but we have to remember that those labels don’t matter if they aren’t true.” Another student added, “If people don’t want to get to know me before giving me a label, then that is their problem. I don’t care what they think.” This led a third student to

comment, “Maybe we should consider how we label other people, then. If we know things aren’t true about us, then we should think about how they might not be true about other people, too.” These statements indicated that the students were in the process of developing an internal self-value that did not depend on how others viewed them, as well as understanding that they sometimes also misjudge others. (See Appendix I for the “Label Me” activity lesson plan.)

In both the second and sixth group sessions, students engaged in consensus activities (see Appendices H and L). The first consensus activity involved agreeing how to spend one million dollars as a group (J. Packman, personal communication, September 14, 2006). Only two students were present during this session, but they still could not come to a consensus. Indeed, they had no qualms about telling the other group member how wrong he or she was. In their disagreement, one student stated, “That just doesn’t make any sense to me. I’m not giving in.” This same sense of tenacity occurred again during the second consensus activity when all four group members were present. In this activity, students were given a list of seven patients, and they were told they must all agree on which patient would receive a heart transplant (MAGIC, n.d., pp. 23-24). This consensus activity involved higher stakes than the first activity because it became a choice not about money, but about life or death.

Since the heart transplant consensus activity (MAGIC, n.d., pp. 23-24) encompasses risky topics, including the potential for prejudice, students were given the entire session to come to a consensus. After debating their opinions, and attempting to persuade other group members into agreement for almost 40 minutes, the group failed to come to a consensus. However, they did so in a manner that conveyed respect for

different perspectives. For example, after one student gave her reasoning behind her choice, another student replied, “That makes sense. Now I’m torn again.” Through the discussion, another student commented, “I’m not going to change my mind. You have good points, but so do I.” This respect for differing viewpoints supported the existence of trust within the group because they were willing to share their opinions, trusting that they would be respected and their opinions would be validated.

The fact that the students did not feel obligated to agree during the heart transplant activity (MAGIC, n.d., pp. 23-24) demonstrated immense trust in themselves and each other. The students did not feel required to conform to group pressure, and they trusted in their own opinions and insight. By holding firm to their opinions, the group members demonstrated that they trusted each other to respect them. Rather than feeling forced to concede, students displayed the belief that they could engage in a disagreement with the other group members and still maintain a safe environment characterized by respect and understanding for differing views of opinion.

Trust was also established during the heart transplant activity (MAGIC, n.d., pp. 23-24) through self-expression. During this activity, three students shared personal information about their lives, which provided evidence that they trusted the group members to maintain confidentiality, as well as honor their experiences. For example, one patient on the heart transplant activity is a pregnant 15-year-old woman, which led to two students sharing that their own moms had given birth to their older siblings as teenagers. One student stated, “My mom had my sister when she was 16, which is only one year older than this girl [the patient], and she turned out. I mean, she has a good job, and we can buy things we want. So, we can’t not choose [the patient] just because you

think she won't do anything in her life." In arguing against choosing this patient, another student said, "I'm sure your mom loves your sister, but wouldn't you agree that she didn't live her dreams because she got pregnant? I mean, she probably had to give up something." Rather than becoming angry about this statement, the other student replied, "Yeah, she probably did." These two students were able to share information about themselves and their opinions, while also respecting each other's viewpoints. The trust that had been established in the group allowed students to freely self-disclose personal information during the heart transplant activity, knowing that what they shared would be valued. When processing the activity, all of the students agreed that they felt listened to and respected by the other group members. This experience promoted trust, which was reflected in later sessions as students continued to disclose more personal information.

When individuals trust those around them, then they are more likely to share personal things about themselves. This self-expression serves the purposes of developing greater personal insight, as well as connecting oneself to others through forming intimate relationships. Both the activity therapy and talk therapy friendship groups demonstrated connection to their peers through open self-disclosure. For example, the talk therapy group created the following group norms: "We agree to try to be open" and "We agree to let people choose what they want to talk about." The latter norm became particularly important as group members became friends outside of the group. As they were spending more time together and sharing outside experiences, many students wanted to talk about these experiences inside of the group. Although this was not inherently problematic, the trouble occurred when two students disagreed about sharing their experiences with the rest of the group. One student began to tell a story involving another group member, and

the other member did not want this information shared. In this incident, the group relied on their norms to establish that the information would not be disclosed without mutual consent from those involved. This situation established that students would have control over their own self-expression, and they could trust one another to respect their decisions about what they wanted to share with the rest of the group.

The talk therapy group engaged in self-expression throughout their discussions. They shared their feelings, beliefs, and experiences with each other, and they provided feedback for one another. As the weeks passed, the group members became more open with one another. At first, the conversations tended to remain at the superficial level (i.e., “What are you guys all doing this weekend?”), but they often became more self-revealing in later sessions, as demonstrated by the student who shared about her aunt adopting her sister. Students shared information about themselves, their friends, and their families. The more they learned to trust each other, and as time passed without a breach in confidentiality, students became more willing to participate in intimate self-disclosure. For example, one student who had not shared personal information beyond stating her hobbies and interests until the fifth session, told the group, “I miss [where she moved from] so much! I hate it here. I can’t wait to go visit my sisters.”

One of the goals the talk therapy group members established for their group was “To learn from other people’s experiences.” Indeed, they began to connect to one another through disclosure, as well as use this connection to create greater personal insight. For instance, in his interview, one student stated, “It was nice hearing about how much the other students don’t like some of their teachers because it made me realize that I should be more appreciative. I mean, I have really great teachers, and I often complain about

school. Maybe I shouldn't complain as much. I guess I'm kind of lucky." In their interviews, two students also stated that they enjoyed the group because they "liked learning about other people," and one student reported, "I liked hearing different ideas and ways that people live. It made me think about my own family and life."

Students in the activity therapy group also engaged in increased self-expression as the sessions continued. One activity involved sharing aspects about oneself using symbols and words drawn on a paper t-shirt (see Appendix G for the activity lesson plan; Gibbs, 1987, pp. 151-152). After drawing, students shared their shirts with one another. The first student who volunteered chose to share only one thing from her t-shirt: "The person who is closest to me is my mom." The next student shared everything that she had included on her shirt. For example, she shared, "My favorite place is California," "A word that I want people to use to describe me is unique," and "When I am older, I want to do something that makes a difference in people's lives." After the second student shared, the first student decided to share more from her t-shirt, as well. She added, "My favorite place is my room" and "I am good at cooking." This incident demonstrated that the first student was unsure about what she wanted to share with the group until she observed someone else exhibiting a greater deal of self-expression. This student's level of trust for the group increased once she witnessed the other student sharing, and she felt more comfortable revealing more about herself. This incident was an example of how self-expression can create greater self-awareness, as well as connect an individual to others.

This connection to one's peers became evident during the seventh session, when students completed the "Rosebush Identification" activity (Oaklander, 1978, pp. 32-37; Oaklander, 1997, pp. 11-13; Stevens, 1971, pp. 38-39). In this activity, students imagined

then drew themselves as a rosebush. Afterward, students shared with each other about what they had drawn. One student drew her rosebush in the middle of the page with her roots stretching all the way down to the bottom. She had drawn a park around her rosebush with many people standing around it. When asked to describe what she had drawn, the student stated, "I drew my rosebush in a park, and the park is in California. The people aren't anyone in particular; they are just all of California." The student had recently moved from California, and her roots were still clearly there. Although this was our seventh meeting, the student had rarely talked about what moving before starting high school had meant for her. However, in drawing her rosebush, she was able to talk freely about the experience.

The group facilitator had intentionally waited until the seventh session to use the "Rosebush Identification" activity (Oaklander, 1978, pp. 32-37; Oaklander, 1997, pp. 11-13; Stevens, 1971, pp. 38-39) because it encourages self-expression, and the facilitator wanted to wait until students had previously engaged in self-disclosure and demonstrated trust for one another so that they would be comfortable sharing their rosebush drawings with each other. In this situation, the activity did encourage the student's self-expression. Since this was the first time she had discussed moving, this incident demonstrated that trust had been established in the group. If it had not been established, then the student may not have chosen to share as much as she did. The student's self-disclosure not only exhibited trust for the other group members, but it also connected her to the other students as they shared their own prior experiences with having to move and meet new people. Two of the other students provided her with comfort and advice, and she no longer felt alone in her experience: "It helps to know that you got through it. When I first

moved, I felt like I wasn't ever going to make friends. I still miss California, but hearing that you have learned to like it here helps me think I might be able to, too." (See Appendix M for the activity lesson plan.)

It was also during the seventh session when the activity therapy group members decided to remove the following group goal: "To Meet New People." Their reasoning behind removing this goal was that they had already accomplished it, demonstrating that they had developed a sense of connection to one another. This incident provided support for Hypothesis Two, demonstrating that a friendship group promoted connection to peers.

Both the activity therapy and talk therapy groups also provided evidence supporting Hypothesis Two in terms of connection to extracurricular activities. Through their discussions about extracurricular activities, students in both groups identified extracurricular involvement in relationship to self-expression. One student in the talk therapy group was unable to play basketball this year due to an injury, and she often discussed how it inhibited her connection to school and other students. She stated, "Basketball is a way to meet new people. Also, I have to do well in school in order to play." In this conversation, the student also indicated that by not playing basketball, she was unable to express part of who she is, "Basketball is a part of me. It sucks not being able to play this year. I feel like part of me is missing." Similarly, a choir student in the activity therapy group stated, "When I'm singing, I'm sharing how I feel." She also called choir her "extended family." During their interviews, four students (two from each group) stated that listening to other people discuss their involvement in extracurricular activities motivated them to want to find something to join. One student stated, "It sounds like a great way to meet more people and to have fun doing something you like."

In their interviews, students also associated trust and self-expression with their connection to adults at school. One student from the activity therapy group stated, “I have learned to ask more questions. I used to worry about asking teachers for help, but now I feel more comfortable going up to them or raising my hand in class.” When asked about her connection to adults at school, a talk therapy group member replied, “I know that I can come see you [the counselor] if I’m having a problem or need to talk about something.” This comment provided evidence that the group counseling experience of the friendship group not only promoted this student’s trust with her peers, but it also established a trusting adult relationship at school.

As the friendship groups progressed, students in both groups began to engage in more open self-disclosure. This was a result of learning to trust the other group members more as their feelings and opinions were validated and respected. The trust students experienced and demonstrated through self-expression and respect substantiated Hypothesis Two, which stated that participation in a friendship group would increase ninth grade students’ social connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities. Through trust, students experienced increased levels of intimacy among their peers, which also translated in their desire to participate in extracurricular activities. Furthermore, students also exhibited trust as related to their connection to adults at school.

Cooperation. Although not present in the talk therapy group, cooperation was the second theme constructed from data produced in the activity therapy group. The presence of this theme in the activity therapy group occurred through the use of four teambuilding activities designed to enhance cooperation skills (see Appendices H, J, L, and N for

lesson plans). The lack of presence of this theme in the talk therapy group may be due to the fact that they were never directly presented with a task that required cooperation.

“Root Beer Float Lifeboat” (Jones, 1996, pp. 30-31) was one teambuilding activity presented to the activity therapy group (see Appendix J for the lesson plan for this activity). The three students present on the day of this activity were given the task of making root beer floats with their wrists tied together. Without direction, the students self-delegated tasks so that everyone in the group had a responsibility. First, the students worked together in tying themselves together, then they cooperatively made the root beer floats as one student held the cups, one student scooped the ice cream, and one student poured the root beer. In processing the activity, the students stated that none of them felt left out since they all had a role. One student commented, “It helped to divide the tasks because then we weren’t all grabbing for the ice cream at the same time, and, instead, we could help each other out.” Another student added, “We finished a lot faster, too, so then we got to make two floats each!”

Students in the activity therapy group also demonstrated cooperation during the eighth session, when they participated in the “Paper Tower” activity (Jones, 1998, pp. 64-65). Only two students were present during this session, but they quickly brainstormed ideas for how to build the tallest tower using only paper. Indeed, they built a tower so tall that soon one group member had to stand on the table to reach the top. Eventually, she handed the other group member her pieces of paper to add to the tower. When processing the activity, the student stated, “We had to work together, or else I would have had to give up. He’s taller, so his tower would have been much taller than mine. This way, we created a really tall tower together.” In his interview, the other student also commented

on the teamwork he learned in this activity: “I didn’t use to like working with other people, but now I am much more willing to listen to other people and use their ideas. I can see how it helps to work together sometimes.” (Appendix N provides the lesson plan for this activity.)

Cooperation was a skill that generalized from the activities to other situations in the activity therapy group, as well. For instance, students in the activity therapy group demonstrated cooperation when one student shared, “I’m failing biology...I hate my teacher.” The other students in the group provided her with suggestions for how she could solve this problem, including: “Maybe you can ask for a teacher change,” “You could get a tutor,” and “Have you tried to get help during LLT [the school’s study hall period]?” In this situation, the students were demonstrating cooperation through offering and accepting help, which also involved students connecting to one another.

Hypothesis Three

The third research question asked in this study was: What is the differential effect of a ninth grade friendship group emphasizing activities and one emphasizing verbal processing on connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities? Hypothesis Three addressed this question by stating: A ninth grade activity friendship group will increase students’ connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities at a higher rate than a ninth grade friendship group emphasizing verbal processing. This hypothesis was tested using both inferential (i.e., Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale) and qualitative measures (i.e., observations, artifacts, and interviews).

Inferential measures. In order to examine whether an activity therapy group or a talk therapy group had a greater impact on ninth grade students' social connection, posttest scores on the MAFF and MSR from both groups were compared using a Mann-Whitney U Test. In comparing posttest scores on the MAFF, the obtained U was 8.00, which was not found to be significant ($z = 0.490$; $p = 0.624$). Therefore, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis that there would be no difference in the median scores of the two groups. The results of this comparison are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Mann-Whitney U Test on MAFF

Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Activity Therapy	4	5.50	22.00
Talk Therapy	5	4.60	23.00
Total	9		

A Mann-Whitney U Test was also calculated to compare the posttest scores of the activity therapy and talk therapy groups on the MSR. In this analysis, the obtained U was 4.00, which was not found to be significant ($z = 1.476$; $p = 0.140$). Therefore, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis that there would be no difference in the median scores of the two groups. Table 11 presents the results of this comparison.

Table 11

Mann-Whitney U Test on MSR

Group	<i>N</i>	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Activity Therapy	4	6.50	26.00
Talk Therapy	5	3.80	19.00
Total	9		

The results of the Mann-Whitney *U* Test for both the MAFF and MSR comparisons revealed that there was no significant difference in the impact the type of friendship group had on social connection. However, qualitative measures provided data that demonstrated noteworthy differences between the activity therapy and talk therapy groups.

Qualitative measures. Observations of the activity therapy and talk therapy groups provided data that revealed differences in how the two groups promoted connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities. The five students in the talk therapy group highlighted a desire to become what they called “real friends” outside of the group. After adding the goal of talking to one another outside of the group, they often discussed concrete strategies for how they could achieve this goal. For example, in the seventh session, one student suggested that they all go see a movie on the weekend. Although the students did not follow through with this plan, they did talk frequently about their engagement with each other outside of group sessions. Two students began to spend time with each other frequently at lunch, and other students mentioned that they

talked when they saw each other in the school halls. For example, one student said, “I saw Mr. Blue [the student’s chosen pseudonym] in the hall, and we stopped to talk about French.” Another student reported, “I say hello to Boots [the student’s chosen pseudonym] when I see her in the hall, and I talked to Sexy Blue Eyes [the student’s chosen pseudonym] about group the other day when I saw him.”

In the activity therapy group, students never overtly discussed a desire to talk with each other outside of the group. Two of the group members were friends prior to beginning the group, and they were the only two who regularly spent time together. However, near the ninth session, another group member mentioned that she was talking to the other female group members outside of group sessions: “I saw [them] at lunch the other day, and I stopped to ask them if they were going to the game. Charlotte [pseudonym] is in my world geography class now, too. We talk in class sometimes.” The male group member did not indicate that he was engaging with the other students except for during group sessions and occasionally during class, “I only see [them] in world geography, and I will talk to them if we have the chance. But, I don’t really talk to them otherwise.”

Although the talk therapy group demonstrated a connection to their peers in terms of developing friendships with each other outside of the group, they did not develop these friendships on an intimate level by the end of the study. Their goal of talking to each other outside of the group highlighted their results: They were involved in more talk than action. This was demonstrated when the group session began with a round asking students to share something they remembered about another group member. The group sat in silence for over five minutes, as they attempted to remember something about

someone else. Finally, one group member pointed to another, stating, “He likes basketball.” At first, the other student was pleased that he was remembered for liking basketball, but then he glanced down at his sweatshirt, which advertised a popular basketball team. His expression changed from delight to disappointment, as he realized that the other student didn’t really remember anything about him. The group processed this experience, and they agreed that listening is a desired quality in a friend. Indeed, several students stated during their interviews that they measured intimacy in friendship through listening and sharing. The students in the talk therapy group had engaged in intimate self-disclosures, but this incident showed that they were not actively listening to each other. This data provided evidence that the talk therapy group was not effective in promoting authentic intimacy in connection to peers, although they did form friendships outside of the group sessions and disclose personal information.

At the end of the study, the activity therapy group was not engaging in friendship outside of the group to the same extent as the talk therapy group, but they were participating in more intimate exchanges during group sessions. For example, when completing the same round as the talk therapy group, students in the activity therapy group did not pause in supplying information they remembered about each other: “I remember that [her] younger brother was in the hospital a few weeks ago,” “I remember that [she] wants to be famous,” “I remember that [he] wants to play professional baseball,” and “I remember that she wants to own her own restaurant.” This incident demonstrated that the students in the activity therapy group were not only sharing personal information, but they were also actively listening when other students self-disclosed.

Intimacy was also displayed in the activity therapy group during the ninth session, when students participated in the activity “If I were a Flower” (Jones, 1996, pp. 122-123). In this activity, one group member guesses which of the other group members is being described through asking the group a series of questions. In order to guess correctly, as well as to describe someone accurately, the group members need to know each other well. This appeared to be the case with the activity therapy group. For example, when asked what type of flower this person would be, a group member stated, “A lily.” Later, the person being described stated that she had immediately thought to describe herself as a lily. Frequently, students explained why they chose a particular object to describe someone, and the person described made comments such as “Yeah, that really is me” and “You totally got me!” However, deeper intimacy was displayed through one student’s statement, “I really didn’t understand why you chose a rose to describe me, but when you explained why, I was really impressed. I felt like you really know me.” Another student reported, “I honestly wouldn’t have known what color to choose to describe myself, but when you explained why you chose red, I was like, ‘Wow, that makes sense.’” Through these exchanges, the students displayed a deep sense of connection to one another, which provided evidence that the activity therapy group was more effective in promoting intimate connection to peers than the talk therapy group.

Aside from differences in the level of intimacy students experienced in connection to peers, there appeared to be no difference in how students in either group connected to adults and extracurricular activities. Members in both groups stated that they felt more connected to school overall, including their interactions with adults and extracurricular activities. During their interviews, one student in the talk therapy group

stated, “I want to know what clubs there are to join,” and an activity therapy group member stated, “I’m going to play baseball in the spring.” All of the students who were interviewed also commented that they felt more comfortable in approaching adults than they did at the beginning of the school year. For example, one activity therapy group member stated, “I used to be really shy in talking to teachers, but now I can ask them questions.” A talk therapy group member also reported, “I like my teachers. I feel like I can ask them for help if I need it.”

Hypothesis Four

The final hypothesis for this study further addressed the second research question: How does a friendship group increase ninth grade students’ social connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities as measured by the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale, Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale, observations, and interviews?

Hypothesis Four stated: A ninth grade activity friendship group will generalize skills and increase friendship formation outside of the group at a higher rate than a ninth grade friendship group emphasizing verbal processing.

This hypothesis was tested using data from observations, artifacts, and interviews.

Similarities occurred in the generalization of skills to situations outside of the group in both the activity therapy and talk therapy groups. The activity therapy group highlighted skill formation through activities, such as cooperation, listening, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. Through participation in activities, these students enhanced their skills in these areas, and they provided evidence of using the skills outside of the group. In the talk therapy group, students engaged in skills involving self-expression, which they generalized to friendship formation outside of the group.

The activity therapy group members provided evidence supporting that they were generalizing the skills they learned in the group to other situations. When asked in his interview what he had learned in the group, one student responded, “Nothing.” However, he then discussed learning teamwork during the “Paper Tower” activity (Jones, 1998, pp. 64-65), and he provided information about how he was using this skill outside of the group: “It really helps in baseball. I mean, you have to play as a team, so you have to listen to other people’s ideas. I use [teamwork] on class projects, too. When we have to work in groups, I used to just do my own thing, but now I see how it is sometimes easier to work together.”

Another student in the activity therapy group responded to the same interview question with, “I learned confidence.” She described how she felt more comfortable sharing things about herself with other people, and that she was more willing to take risks in class: “I used to wait until after class to ask a teacher a question, but now I’ll just raise my hand. I don’t worry what other people will think.” This student’s comment about self-disclosure was validated during the seventh session when she shared her rosebush with the rest of the group, talking with unconcealed emotion about moving when she had not previously discussed it. This incident demonstrated that the student was accurate in her self-assessment that she had learned to be more comfortable with self-disclosure.

One student in the activity therapy group talked in great detail during her interview about how the group had helped her overcome some of her shyness. She stated that she is “much more open” now with other people, and she is “more willing to approach other people.” Observations supported her comments in that she had frequently self-disclosed information about herself in the group, and she did not shy away from

speaking her opinion during the consensus activities. She was one of the students who had shared that her mother had given birth to her sister when she was a teenager. This student was also one of the first students to share information during rounds at the beginning of sessions.

All of the students in the activity therapy group demonstrated that they were generalizing the listening skills they learned in the group. One example of this was during the round when asked to share something they remembered about someone else. In two activities, students discussed the importance of listening (see Appendices K and L for lesson plans), and they all identified important listening situations as involving school, parents, and friends. For example, one student stated, "It is important to listen to your teachers when they give directions about homework." Another student had added, "It's important to listen to your friends when they tell you things." The three students in the activity therapy group who were interviewed all commented about using listening skills outside of the group, substantiating that they not only knew when it was important to listen, but they were also using their listening skills in these situations. For instance, one student commented, "I pay more attention in class. I actually listen to my teachers when they're explaining something, and I'm understanding things better this semester."

Students in the talk therapy friendship group also generalized skills that they learned in the group. In their interviews, students were asked what they learned in the friendship group this year, and one student stated, "I learned to listen to different ideas." Another student responded, "I didn't use to talk to people I didn't know, but now I'm always talking to strangers in class." These students provided evidence that they had learned how to value other people's opinions, as well as how to more willingly approach

people they do not know. Another student stated that she learned to “talk about myself more. I am more comfortable with sharing things with other people.” This statement demonstrated that the student had increased her tolerance for self-disclosure.

Students in the talk therapy group also generalized skills in terms of friendship formation outside of the group. For example, students in the talk therapy group began hanging out with each other outside of the group, and three of them began calling each other “real friends.” This data was substantiated by the group facilitator’s observations. She saw two group members talking and walking to classes together on four separate occasions, and she saw three group members hanging out together after school on two occasions. Also, during sessions, students began talking about spending time with each other outside of the group in terms of activities they were doing together (i.e., attending athletic games, going to the movies, and eating lunch).

In addition to becoming friends with each other outside of the group, all of the students interviewed from the talk therapy group stated that they had met new friends this year at school. One student reported, “I didn’t know anybody at first because I had just moved here, but now I have a lot of friends. They aren’t all really close friends, but I have two or three that I can talk to about anything.” Another student also stated, “I don’t really have a lot of the same friends from middle school, but I have a lot of friends that I met this year.” These comments provided evidence that the students were forming friends with students not involved in the friendship group.

In their interviews, students from both groups were asked what advice they would give to an incoming ninth grade student. The answers did not differ between groups, and they reflected the skills that students had generalized from the groups. Students stated

that they would tell the student to “do your homework,” “don’t be afraid to be yourself,” “surround yourself with good friends who don’t do bad things,” and “ask questions.”

These statements indicated that students had generalized skills involving responsibility, self-expression, decision-making, and confidence. In addition, all of the students reported that they would recommend that the student join the friendship group. Indeed, even the two students interviewed who did not participate in the friendship groups recommended joining it, and one of them stated, “I think it would help that person meet new people and make friends.” Data from both groups corroborated this comment, as the students did form connections to their peers through participating in the friendship groups.

Chapter Five – Discussion

Statement of Problem

This study addressed the problem of the transition to high school from a social perspective. Ninth grade students are often overwhelmed by the transition to high school, which includes adjusting to a larger school building with more students, new teachers, harder coursework, more homework, and greater freedom. The challenge of transitioning to high school has produced a large failure rate, increasing the number of students who are forced to repeat ninth grade (Johnston & Johnston, 2003; Haney et al., 2004). Individuals who repeat their freshman year are not only at a greater risk for not graduating, but they also have more discipline referrals and lower attendance rates than their peers (Haney, 2001; Trejos, 2004).

In an attempt to assist students with the transition to high school, many schools have developed programs that include mentors, core teams, tutoring, strengths development, and freshman orientations (Austin, 2006; Hertzog & Morgan, 1999; Jackson, 2007; McIntosh & White, 2006; Messer, 2007; Walsh-Sarnecki, 2007). Most of these interventions address the academic transition to high school, but few programs exist that provide social interventions (“Raising the Bar,” 2005; Trejos, 2004). By not addressing students’ social needs, schools are ignoring a crucial piece of the high school transition.

Results

Hypothesis one. The first hypothesis of the study stated: At the beginning of the school year, ninth grade high school students will state that they want time with friends, emotional connection to adults at school, and a variety of extracurricular activities that

meet their diverse interests and abilities. Results from the Freshman Orientation Survey (Appendix A) and interviews with nine ninth-grade students supported this hypothesis, excluding a desire for emotional connection to adults at school.

According to the Freshman Orientation Survey, 66.7% of ninth grade students planned to participate in a sport, 28.5% planned to join a club, 32.4% planned to participate in a music or drama program, and 18.3% planned to participate in an unspecified activity. These results are significant in predicting students' success, as extracurricular involvement has been shown to provide confidence in the transition to high school, as well as to correlate to later educational achievement (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005; Carter Harley; 2006; Kinney, 1993; Lleras, 2008). Although there were no differences found among age and gender for extracurricular involvement, students certified in special education were the only students that did not indicate a plan to participate in sports. A likely explanation is that several of these students may be certified as Other Health Impaired, and they may not be physically able to play a sport. There was no evidence supporting that these students were less interested than other groups in being involved in school because they shared the same median reports as the other students in all other areas. However, extracurricular involvement in areas other than sports was low for all groups. Indeed, only students categorized as African American or American Indian/Eskimo indicated a median interest in clubs and drama/music programs. It is possible that students were more likely to indicate a plan to participate in sports because they were more familiar with the opportunities available. In contrast, many students indicated on the survey that they did not know what clubs were offered at school, which may be a reason why they did not state that they planned to participate in a club.

The Freshman Orientation Survey also addressed issues of connection to peers and adults through a series of ten statements. Students largely indicated that they were not connected to the school principal, which is likely because they tend to interact with him on a less frequent basis than with their teachers and counselor. In addition, the youngest (12-years-old) and oldest (16 and 17-years-old) students indicated the most disagreement with the statements. Students from these groups tended to not know where to find assistance with tutoring or bullying, and they also had not maintained friendships from middle school. These groups of students contained the smallest number of students (i.e., the majority of students were 14-years-old), so it is possible that they experienced a greater degree of disconnect to school because they were either younger or older than most students.

Students reported strong agreement with having friends in class, having a regular group of people to hang out with at lunch, and maintaining friendships from middle school. Most students also indicated that they had met new friends at school this year (51.9% agreed and 38.9% strongly agreed). These results are significant for several reasons. First, Butts and Cruzeiro (2005) found that 89% of ninth grade students reported that having friends in class was helpful in transitioning to high school, 85% stated that hanging out with the “right people” helped, and 80% stated that making new friends helped. The results from the Freshman Orientation Survey are also promising because research has shown that friendships have a positive influence on adolescents. For example, Cook et al. (2007) found that positive friendships result in higher grades, attendance rates, and extracurricular involvement. In addition, constructive friendships also limit the potential that adolescents will use drugs and engage in delinquent behaviors

(Cook et al., 2007; Crosnoe & Needham, 2004). The role friendships play in adolescence is especially significant at school, where students spend a lot of time together (Henrich et al., 2000).

Interviews with students elaborated on information provided from the Freshman Orientation Survey. Data from the interviews resulted in the themes of intimacy and influence. According to Berndt (1999), intimate peer relationships enhance identity formation and self-esteem. This was demonstrated in the comments from students that defined close friendships as those that allowed them to be themselves. These results supported the first hypothesis in that students expressed a desire for connecting to their peers.

The desire for peer connection also occurred in the students' interviews when they discussed wanting school to be "fun" and a place where they could "make friends." Additionally, students demonstrated in their interviews that their friends play a major role in their interest in attending school. One student stated, "I like going to class because I get to see my friends." These statements substantiated research that has identified adolescence as a period of time when individuals desire intimacy and loyalty (Furman & Bierman, 1984; Sullivan, 1953). Indeed, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Standards address this desire, stating that students will "Learn how to make and keep friends" (Campbell & Dahir, 1997, PS:A2:8). The results from these interviews supported the first hypothesis, as they demonstrated that students did, in fact, desire time with friends.

In discussing intimacy, one student explained, "Sometimes you just want to talk to someone your own age. That's why it's important to have friends, because they will

listen and help you out, and they just get it better than adults sometimes.” This comment is supported by research that explains the rationale for providing students with mentors: students frequently seek help from their peers before approaching adults (Galloway & Gallenberger, 1999). Indeed, the students who were interviewed commented on the influence of peers versus adults. Although Crosnoe and Needham (2004) found that adolescents benefit from intergenerational bonds, and adolescents with close relationships to adults experience fewer discipline problems, only two students stated in their interviews that they cared about connecting to adults at school. However, one student reported, “I have this one teacher who really motivated me because she got me to see how I was messing up. I wasn’t turning in my homework, and she started talking about the economy and how people don’t have jobs, and how a high school diploma is really important. She told me that I needed to pass her class so that I can graduate and get a good job. What she said really got me thinking, and I have started to work harder.” This statement highlights research that states that students with positive relationships with their teachers tend to remain on track for graduating (Miller, 2000).

Students in the study consistently commented on the influence of their peers. They listed constructive behaviors as characteristics they look for when selecting friends. Indeed, all of the students preferred friends who don’t drink, smoke, do drugs, or behave inappropriately. This phenomenon is consistent with findings that demonstrate that students with constructive friendships also exhibit positive behaviors (Cook et al., 2007; Crosnoe & Needham, 2004). According to Cook et al. (2007), students with friends who display positive behaviors tend to have higher grades. This was supported through

interviews with students, who agreed that they performed better in school when their friends were also successful.

In addition to connection to peers and adults, students also provided evidence of connection to extracurricular activities. All of the students stated that they had started high school wanting to become involved in a sport, club, drama, or music program. Indeed, many of them were involved in an extracurricular program when the friendship groups began, or they had plans of starting something. The students who did not participate in an extracurricular activity indicated that they were not as connected to school as those that did participate. However, four students reported that listening to other students talk about their extracurricular involvement influenced them to also want to participate in an activity. Véronneau and Vitaro (2007) substantiate these results by suggesting that pairing adolescents with students who participate in extracurricular activities may increase their own participation.

Hypothesis two. The study's second hypothesis stated: Participation in a friendship group will increase ninth grade students' social connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities. Results from the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale (MAFF) and Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale (MSR) did not support the research hypothesis. However, observations and interviews did provide supporting data that students' social connection increased after participation in a friendship group. There are several possible explanations for the discrepancies of these two results. First, students may not have been cognitively prepared to reflect on their experiences through the MAFF and MSR. This possibility is supported because several students asked for clarification on the test items, demonstrating a general lack of understanding of terminology. Another

explanation could be that there was not enough time between the pretest and posttest for a real difference to occur. Furthermore, the small sample size of the study was vulnerable to low power, and so students may have experienced changes that the statistical analysis could not detect.

In the activity therapy friendship group, three students decreased in affiliative tendency from pretest to posttest and one student increased his affiliative tendency. The student who increased his affiliative tendency score also explained in an interview that he had increased his cooperative skills, and that he valued teamwork to a greater extent than prior to participating in the friendship group. This result is supported by Ginott (1961), who found that children are able to assess and modify their behavior through group experiences. The students who decreased their affiliative tendency scores demonstrated that this was also a positive change for them. Although a decrease would typically indicate less interpersonal comfort, the three students whose scores decreased continued to engage in enhanced self-disclosure and intimacy in the group. Furthermore, these students demonstrated that they were not likely to give into peer pressure through participation in the consensus activities, when they remained strong in their beliefs and opinions. Perhaps these students became less affiliative, but stronger in their own sense of identity, which allowed them to continue to engage in intimate peer connections. For the students in the activity therapy friendship group, the changes they experienced (either increasing or decreasing their affiliative tendency scores) were beneficial.

The opposite result occurred in the talk therapy friendship group. In this group, the majority of students increased their affiliative tendency scores, and only one student decreased. One of the students moved from a negative score to a positive score,

indicating that she had experienced a valuable change in terms of increasing her interpersonal comfort. She was one of the students who had engaged in personal disclosure immediately, and her posttest score on the MAFF indicates that the feedback and acceptance she received from other group members was positive in terms of encouraging her to continue self-disclosing. The student with the greatest difference from pretest to posttest was one of the students who did not share personal information until later in the study. Her results demonstrate that once she built trust with the other group members, she became more willing to engage in self-expression. It is also likely that she became more comfortable as she observed others disclose personal information. This behavior is supported by Landreth (2002), who found that children feel secure in trying things after observing others. The student in this group who decreased her MAFF score did so by six points, which may be due to normal score fluctuation since she continued to increase the amount of self-disclosure she participated in as the group progressed.

Results from the MSR produced a split in the activity therapy friendship group, as two students increased their sensitivity to rejection, and two students decreased. The student with the greatest decrease in sensitivity to rejection was the self-proclaimed shy student. Her results demonstrate that the friendship group provided her with a positive experience as she engaged in self-disclosure and began to open up to the other students. Through experiencing respectful feedback to her self-expression, this student decreased her expectation for negative interpersonal interactions. The other student who decreased his score was also the student in this group who increased his affiliative tendency, which indicates that the two experiences coincided. As this student experienced more positive interactions, he expected to experience negative interactions to a lesser extent. Johnson's

(1988) research supports these findings, as group play therapy allows children to engage in peer contact, receive feedback, and attempt new social behaviors.

The two students who increased their sensitivity to rejection were the students who were friends prior to beginning the activity therapy friendship group. Perhaps these students started with lower scores because they felt more comfortable in the group, having a friend they trusted there. After participating in the group and allowing the other students to influence them, it is possible that these students increased their scores because they began to care more about what the other students thought about them as they started to become familiar with them. This possibility finds support from Ginott (1961), who stated that adolescents seek group acceptance and belonging. Therefore, the students whose scores increased may have also increased their desire for group acceptance as they started to get to know the other students better.

In the talk therapy friendship group, three students decreased their sensitivity to rejection from pretest to posttest, and two students increased in sensitivity to rejection. One of the students whose scores increased may have been similar to the students in the activity group whose scores also increased. She started the group with her brother, and so she may not have been as concerned with what other people thought about her until she began to separate more from him and started to become friends with the other group members. The other student whose score increased suggested twice that the group members do something together outside of the group. When this suggestion was never followed through with, she may have increased her expectation of negative interpersonal interactions. The three students who decreased in sensitivity to rejection all increased in their personal disclosures as the group progressed, indicating that they experienced

positive feedback from the other group members, which encouraged them to continue to share personal information.

Although there were mixed results from the MAFF and the MSR, qualitative data provided evidence that both the activity therapy and the talk therapy friendship groups increased social connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities. Students in both groups demonstrated the theme of trust as related to self-expression and respect. Students in the activity therapy friendship group also supported the theme of cooperation.

According to the ASCA National Standards, trust and cooperation are both essential components of the social/personal domain of skills that students should possess when they graduate (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). Students display trust through deciding when and how to express their emotions, creating personal boundaries, and developing an internal assessment of self-worth and trust in oneself (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). When students develop trust with others, then they also engage in enhanced self-expression (Hartup, 1993). Students are able to embrace intimate relationships and participate in open self-disclosure when they experience a trusting relationship (Hartup, 1993).

Cooperation is a skill aligned with trust through learning to work with others, respecting different views of opinion, delegating tasks, showing dependability in accomplishing one's own responsibilities in a team project, and relying on others to complete their tasks (Connecticut School Counselor Association & The Connecticut Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, 2000). In addition, cooperation involves teamwork and learning to help others, as well as learning how to accept assistance and influence from others (Jones, 1996).

According to Badini and Bean (1997), a friendship group allows children to support one another and share common experiences. Additionally, Keat et al. (1985) found that increased cohesion, feelings of trust, and willingness to self-disclose occurred when conducting a friendship group. These same experiences occurred in this study, as students in both the activity therapy group and talk therapy group engaged in enhanced self-disclosure as they built trust with one another. Through sharing their experiences, feelings, and thoughts, students increased their peer connection. This was demonstrated when a student in the activity therapy group shared her feelings about moving from California, and the other group members connected to her through sharing their own experiences. This incident corroborates findings that group activity therapy facilitates social connectedness (MacLennan, 1977). It also supports research that demonstrates that activities encourage self-expression and catharsis (Bratton & Ferebee, 1999; Oaklander, 1988), as it was not until engaging in the activity that this student shared about her experience.

In both friendship groups, students displayed trust in a manner that promoted freedom of expression in the groups. As students shared information and experienced validation for their opinions, thoughts, and feelings, they began to engage more deeply in self-expression (Bratton & Ferebee, 1999). This involved trust in knowing that the other students were respecting and actively listening to their comments. Just as friends build trust through reciprocal attentiveness and understanding, the students in the groups began experiencing closer relationships as the weeks passed. Building trust was also important because it helped students to form relationships with the other students that allowed them

to respect each other's opinions, which related to their ability to influence one another positively (Cook et al., 2007).

Students in the activity therapy friendship group also demonstrated connection to peers through the theme of cooperation. The ASCA National Standards promote methods of developing friendships that include enhancing communication skills, learning to welcome diversity, and exhibiting group cooperation skills (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). Elements of these standards appeared throughout the activity therapy group. For example, in several activities, the students learned that cooperation was essential for completing a task. As students collaborated, they also began to appreciate diversity of ideas. During the "Root Beer Float Lifeboat" activity (Jones, 1996, pp. 30-31) and the "Paper Tower" activity (Jones, 1998, pp. 64-65), students learned that working together and appreciating each other's creativity could help solve a problem. In these activities, students learned the benefits of helping each other and learning to accept help from others, as different students provided various solutions to accomplishing the tasks.

In addition to connection to peers, the activity therapy and talk therapy friendship groups also demonstrated an increase in connection to extracurricular activities. When the groups began, five students were already involved in a sport, club, music program, or drama program. These students described their involvement as an extension of their identity and self-expression. One student also connected extracurricular involvement to academic success when talking about basketball, "I have to do well in school in order to play." Through their interaction with these students, the other four group members discussed in interviews that listening to their peers discuss their extracurricular involvement motivated them to find something to participate in, which was a suggested

effect found by Véronneau and Vitaro (2007). Indeed, at the conclusion of the study, one student who had not previously been involved in an extracurricular activity had joined the track team.

Data from both friendship groups also provided evidence of increased connection to adults at school. Students described feeling comfortable asking their teachers for help, and one student also stated that she could talk to her counselor if she was having a problem. These results demonstrated that students had established trusting relationships with adults at school, which have been shown to have beneficial effects on students' success (Crosnoe and Needham, 2004).

In comparing the experiences of students who participated in a friendship group to students who did not participate, few differences were noted. The non-group participants expressed a desire for connection to peers to the same extent as the group participants. However, these students provided examples of extracurricular involvement that gave them this desired level of peer connection; whereas, many of the group participants were not involved in an extracurricular activity when they joined the groups, and several of those that were indicated that they still did not feel connected to school.

Perhaps the greatest difference between the non-group participants and the group participants, however, was that many of the group participants had recently moved and were new not only to high school, but also to the area. This presented an added challenge for these students as they transitioned to ninth grade because they were adjusting to high school at the same time they were adjusting to a new city. In addition, these students may have maintained friendships from middle school, but they were now long-distance

relationships. Both of the non-group participants had not recently moved, and they discussed having started school with friends.

Hypothesis three. The third hypothesis for this study stated: A ninth grade activity friendship group will increase students' connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities at a higher rate than a ninth grade friendship group emphasizing verbal processing. The MAFF and the MSR did not support the research hypothesis. Although observations and interviews did not demonstrate that students in the activity therapy group had a greater connection to adults and extracurricular activities than students in the talk therapy group, they did provide evidence that the activity therapy group resulted in more intimate connections to peers.

The students in the talk therapy friendship group discussed the desire to become "real friends," and two of them began spending a substantial amount of time together outside of the group. However, there was little follow through in the entire group becoming "real friends." In addition, the students engaged in intimate self-disclosures, but they did not exercise active listening skills when other students shared personal information. These results provided evidence that the students had connected to their peers on a superficial level, but not on the intimate level that they attributed to close friendship. This phenomenon could be the result of the students guiding their own topics of discussion. Since students were given the freedom to discuss whatever they wanted to in the group sessions, they were not guided in learning specific skills for developing close friendships. For instance, students were not taught active listening skills or provided with activities intended to promote teamwork.

In contrast to the talk therapy friendship group, the students in the activity therapy friendship group were presented with activities that encouraged specific skills. In this group, the students did not discuss becoming “real friends,” and it was not until almost the last session when students discussed interacting with one another outside of the group. However, these students did engage on an intimate level inside of the group. The difference in these results compared to the talk therapy friendship group could be associated with the specific activities the students participated in. Through these activities, students learned skills such as listening, acceptance of others, teamwork, appropriate self-expression, and problem-solving (Bratton & Ferebee, 1999; Jones, 1996; Oaklander, 1988). Furthermore, through processing activities, group members also enhanced their self-reflective abilities and interpersonal skills (D. M. Smith & Smith, 1999). These enhanced interpersonal skills were demonstrated when students were asked to state something they remembered about another group member, and the students in the activity therapy friendship group had no hesitation in sharing. However, the talk therapy friendship group members were at a loss in remembering. This incident provided evidence that the activity therapy friendship group was more effective in promoting intimate connection to peers than the talk therapy friendship group. The fact that the students in the activity therapy friendship group were not concerned with spending time together outside of the group, yet they experienced closeness inside the group, demonstrated that the activities encouraged intimacy in the present, regardless of the students’ level of connection outside of the group.

The use of activities in the activity therapy friendship group may have attributed to intimate peer connection, but they did not translate into greater connection to adults or

extracurricular activities. Rather, there were similarities across groups in terms of students' connection to adults and their extracurricular participation. The lack of difference may be due to the fact that there were students in both groups who were already participating in extracurricular activities, which may have motivated other students to also become more involved (Véronneau and Vitaro, 2007). Also, students in both friendship groups emphasized a desire for peer connection to a greater extent than adult connection, which substantiates research finding that students are mostly concerned with issues of friendship when transitioning to secondary school (Pratt & George, 2005).

Hypothesis four. The following stated the fourth hypothesis for this study: A ninth grade activity friendship group will generalize skills and increase friendship formation outside of the group at a higher rate than a ninth grade friendship group emphasizing verbal processing. Results from observations and interviews demonstrated that the activity therapy and talk therapy groups were similar in their tendency to generalize skills to situations outside of the groups.

Students in the activity therapy friendship group participated in activities that promoted cooperation, listening, problem-solving, and decision-making skills (Jones, 1996; Jones, 1998). Students in this group generalized the skills they learned to situations involving school and extracurricular involvement. For example, one student discussed how he was using teamwork in group projects at school, as well as in baseball. Another student stated that she was using better listening skills in class. These skills generalized from the group to external situations because the group experience was a smaller version of the real world (Johnson, 1988).

Students in the talk therapy friendship group also generalized the skills they learned in the group, which supported findings by Contessa and Paccione-Dyszlewski (1981) that showed that students participating in a supportive group experience developed a cohesive bond that extended beyond the group sessions. Indeed, students in the talk therapy friendship group began spending time together outside of group sessions on a regular basis. Students in this group also demonstrated that they were engaging in appropriate self-disclosure in situations external to the group experience, and they were beginning to initiate relationships with students they did not already know. Doing so translated into friendship formations with non-group participants. This phenomenon supported the suggestion that counselors design friendship groups so that children generalize the skills they learn in developing relationships in other contexts (Keat et al., 1985).

Students in both the activity therapy and talk therapy friendship groups demonstrated that they were generalizing the skills they learned when responding about the advice they would give to an incoming ninth grade student. Students' responses provided evidence that they were connecting the skills they had learned in group sessions to success in transitioning to high school. For example, their advice involved self-expression and confidence. Additionally, students recommended choosing friends who engaged in positive behaviors. This suggestion indicated that the students recognized the influence that their friends exerted on them (Aseltine, 1995; Cook et al., 2007; Crosnoe & Needham, 2004; Haynie, 2001; Matsueda & Anderson, 1998; Urberg et al., 1997).

Limitations

This study involved four major limitations. The first limitation was due to the method used for participant selection. Since students self-referred themselves for the groups, they were students who already expressed a desire to meet new people and improve their social skills. This limited the study from studying the experiences of students who were less motivated to develop friendships and become more involved in extracurricular activities. Therefore, the study could only determine the efficacy of a friendship group when used with students who are already motivated to form friendships. To help account for this limitation, the school counselors at the research site presented the opportunity to join the friendship groups when meeting with students individually the first few weeks of school. This assisted in encouraging students to join the groups who may not have self-selected their participation during freshman orientation.

An additional limitation of the study was thought to be group attendance requirements. Students were given the choice to attend group sessions each week, and attendance for some students was as low as 56% due to classroom obligations. The fluctuation in attendance could have delayed students' abilities to build trust with each other, and it could have taken longer for the entire group to experience cohesion. However, results from the MAFF and the MSR revealed that attendance did not impact students' affiliative tendency or sensitivity to rejection. For example, the student in the activity therapy friendship group with the lowest attendance rate was also the only student in the group who increased his affiliative tendency score. Likewise, the student in the talk therapy friendship group with the smallest difference in pre and posttest scores on the MSR had an attendance rate of 89%. Therefore, attendance did not appear to be an actual limitation.

Sample size was a third limitation of the study. The sample size for the friendship groups was small since students self-referred themselves, which limited participation to volunteers. A larger sample size would have increased power, providing the potential for significant results, as well as allowed for increased generalizability of results. However, a review of play therapy research indicates that sample sizes are frequently small in such studies (Bratton & Ray, 2000). For example, Hannah (1986) found that play therapy resulted in positive behavior changes in a study with 10 participants. Additionally, Crow (1994) demonstrated that play therapy benefited self-concept in 22 first-grade students with reading difficulties. More recently, Baggerly and Parker (2005) found evidence of play therapy as not only developmentally effective, but also culturally appropriate for use with African American boys in a study including 22 participants. In addition to the common occurrence of small sample sizes in play therapy research, the limitation of sample size for the friendship groups was partially remedied by increasing the total sample size of the study through surveying 438 ninth grade students in order to answer the first research question.

The final limitation of this study was the potential for researcher bias since the researcher served as the facilitator for both the treatment and comparison groups. The researcher controlled for this limitation through regular supervision and consultation about group sessions with an expert in the field. In addition, the Freshman Orientation Survey was not at risk for researcher bias due to the anonymous nature of the survey, as well as the administration of the survey by several school counselors.

Implications

Research demonstrates that adolescents desire to experience group approval and belonging (Ginott, 1961). Understanding this, as well as recognizing the significant role that friendships play in adolescence (Sullivan, 1953), indicates the need to consider using friendship groups as an intervention for high school students. It is well accepted that many freshmen students struggle with transitioning to high school (Johnston & Johnston, 2003; Trejos, 2004; Wheelock & Miao, 2005). To date, schools have attempted numerous academically focused programs to assist students with the challenging experience of starting high school (Austin, 2006; Galloway & Gallenberger, 1999; Jackson, 2007; Johnston & Johnson, 2003; McIntosh & White, 2006; Messer, 2007; Walsh-Sarnecki, 2007). However, there are still students failing their freshman year of high school. Therefore, along with academic support, Johnston and Johnston (2003) also suggest presenting ninth grade students with social interventions. This is consistent with the ASCA (2003) National Model, which suggests that school counselors must meet not only the academic needs of students, but also their social needs.

Social connection is a crucial aspect in determining the success students experience in high school. Students with positive peer connections produce higher grades, attendance rates, and extracurricular involvement (Cook et al., 2007). Additionally, constructive friendships increase feelings of self-worth and likelihood of graduation (Bagwell, Newcomb, & Bukowski, 1998; Tarrant, MacKenzie, & Hewitt, 2006; Véronneau & Vitaro, 2007). The positive effects of social connection are gleaned from areas other than friendship, as well. For instance, freshmen who participate in extracurricular activities feel more self-assurance in the transition to high school (Kinney,

1993). Additionally, students with positive relationships with their teachers are more likely to graduate (Miller, 2000).

The experiences of students in this study demonstrate the possibility of using friendship groups to assist high school students with social development. Students who participated in the activity therapy and talk therapy friendship groups increased their connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities from the beginning of the year to the conclusion of the study. Although differences in the pretest and posttest scores on the MAFF and MSR were too small to detect with the small sample size used in this study, qualitative measures provided evidence that participation in a friendship group increased students' overall social connection.

School counselors have the responsibility to meet the needs of all students (ASCA, 2003; Myrick, 2002), and providing services in small groups is one method to efficiently work with more students (Kestly, 2001; Zinck & Littrell, 2000). In small groups, school counselors can teach students skills, and provide them with the opportunity to practice those skills in order to experience more school success (Bauer et al., 1999/2000). The influential nature of group dynamics on behavior allows adolescents the ability to assess and modify their behavior through group experiences (Slavson, 1944; Ginott, 1961). This phenomenon also suggests that school counselors can assist students in friendship selection through pairing weaker students with stronger counterparts (Cook et al., 2007).

The results of this study indicate that the type of friendship group the school counselor facilitates is less important than the experience of a friendship group as a whole. Very few differences occurred between the activity therapy group and the talk

therapy friendship group. The major difference that did exist was in the level of intimacy promoted by the activities presented to students in the activity therapy friendship group. However, this difference was offset by the talk therapy friendship group members' engagement with each other outside of the group sessions. These results may provide evidence that both types of groups are effective with high school students.

Although other studies have examined the use of activity therapy with preadolescents and adolescents in schools (Packman & Bratton, 2003; Paone, 2006), this is the first study of its kind to investigate the use of group activity therapy with adolescents in high school designed specifically for development of friendships. Results from this study demonstrated that students benefited from participation in an activity therapy friendship group in terms of social connection at a rate equal to that of students in a talk therapy group. These results provide support for not only using friendship groups in high school, but also for using activity therapy with adolescents in schools as an alternative method to traditional talk therapy.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

The results from this study were limited due to the small sample size. Therefore, it is recommended that a similar study be conducted using a larger sample to increase power. Examining the effects of a friendship group on students' social connection with a larger sample size would also provide the opportunity for greater generalizability. By increasing sample size, it is possible that differences in pretest and posttest scores on the MAFF and MSR would be large enough to detect.

As explained in the limitations for this study, students self-referred themselves to participate in the friendship groups. Therefore, the study was restricted in only drawing

conclusions about students who were already motivated to develop friendships and increase their connection to school. This indicates the need for a further study to determine the efficacy of a friendship group with students who do not self-refer. Results from such a study could provide valuable information about the use of friendship groups for withdrawn students, which has significant implications considering that these students are at greatest risk for depression, substance abuse, and dropping out of school (Hussong, 2000; Nilzon & Palméus, 1998; Parker & Asher, 1987).

An additional study that compares a larger control group to the treatment and comparison groups is also warranted. In the present study, differences between non-group participants and group participants were mainly due to involvement in the friendship groups of students who had recently moved. A larger control group might account for this difference by including non-group participants who had also recently moved, as well as provide information that further establishes the different experiences of students who participate in a friendship group and those who do not.

It is also recommended to conduct a study using the Freshman Orientation Survey as a pre and posttest measure. By doing so, researchers might examine how students' expectations and desires for social connection in high school change from when they begin high school to later in the year. The advantage of such a study would be to determine what interventions are most needed at different points throughout the year as students adjust to the transition to high school. Using the survey as a posttest would also provide another quantitative measure of the efficacy of a friendship group as one possible intervention.

A final recommendation is to conduct a study that examines the influence of social interventions on academic success in high school. It would be suggested that the researcher collect data from students' teachers prior to and at the conclusion of the study to determine if students' classroom behaviors and grades changed as a result of participation in a friendship group. This study has the potential of providing evidence to support the use of social interventions to promote academic success for ninth grade students as they transition to high school. In addition, the study could provide information about the different effects a talk therapy group and an activity therapy group have on academic achievement.

Concluding Remarks

This study examined the potential for providing social interventions to assist students in the transition to high school. After examining what students desire in terms of social connection during their first year in high school, an activity therapy friendship group was compared to a talk therapy friendship group, and results demonstrated that both groups were effective in increasing students' social connection to peers, adults, and extracurricular activities. Students in both groups demonstrated a greater capacity to self-disclose personal information as they built trust with other group members. In addition, students in the activity therapy friendship group provided evidence of cooperation and intimate connection. The talk therapy friendship group members engaged in intimacy to a lesser extent; however, they began spending time together outside of the group much more frequently than activity therapy group members. Students in both groups displayed the capacity to generalize the skills they had learned in the groups to other situations.

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Appendix A

Freshman Orientation Survey – Page One

This survey is anonymous, which means that no one will be able to connect your answers with you. Please take a moment to complete each question.

Age: _____ Ethnicity: _____ Gender: _____

Are you in one of the following programs? (Circle One if Yes)

504 Special Education English as a Second Language Honors

1. I plan to participate in the following sport(s) this year: _____

2. a) I need to know more about the clubs offered at school. (Please Circle) Yes No

b) I plan to participate in the following club(s) this year: _____

3. I plan to participate in the following music and/or drama programs this year: _____

4. Is there anything else you plan to participate in? If so, please write it here. _____

SURVEY CONTINUED ON BACK

Appendix A

Freshman Orientation Survey Continued – Page Two

For the following statements, please circle the answer that best fits your opinion:
SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree

1. I am looking forward to meeting with my mentor this year.

SA A D SD

2. I know all of my teachers' last names.

SA A D SD

3. I know the principal's last name.

SA A D SD

4. I know my counselor's last name.

SA A D SD

5. I have friends in my classes.

SA A D SD

6. I have a regular group of people to hang out with at lunch.

SA A D SD

7. I have met new friends at school this year.

SA A D SD

8. I have maintained friendships with people from middle school.

SA A D SD

9. I know where to get help with tutoring if I need it.

SA A D SD

10. I know where to get help with bullying if I need it.

SA A D SD

Appendix B

Pseudonym High School Groups

**Check any group you would be interested in joining.
A counselor will contact you with more information.**

_____ **Girls Group: For girls who want to feel more power in their life and overcome any personal obstacles.**

_____ **Boys Group: A group for boys to look at ways to handle issues in both school and personal life.**

_____ **Pseudonym Connection Group: Open to any freshman who would like to be more connected with their peers. *This group is part of a research study. If you choose to join, you will be asked to participate in the study.***

_____ **In Memory Of: For anyone who has suffered a significant loss**

_____ **I DO NOT want to participate in a group at this time**

PRINT NAME HERE: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS:

**UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD PARENTAL/GUARDIAN PERMISSION
TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

TITLE OF STUDY: Differential Effect of a Ninth-Grade Activity Friendship Group and a Ninth-Grade Talk Therapy Friendship Group on Connection to Peers, Adults, and Extracurricular Activities

INVESTIGATOR(S): Jill Packman, Ph.D., 775-682-5502; Elisabeth Liles, M.A., 775-746-5880 ext. 32021

PROTOCOL #: SB08/09-026

SPONSOR: N/A

PURPOSE

You are being asked to allow your child to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the importance of providing social interventions to ninth grade students during their transition to high school. In a recent study, 80% of ninth grade students said that making new friends helped them successfully transition to high school. However, most transition programs focus only on academic support, and pay little attention to the social needs of freshmen students, despite the fact that there is a connection between friendship and academics.

The strong association between academic and social success in schools indicates the need for counselors to devote attention to assisting students in the development of close and positive friendships. This seems particularly true with freshmen students, who are struggling with all aspects of the transition to high school. School counselors often meet with students in a group setting, and this study seeks to explore the use of friendship groups with ninth grade students in order to improve their connection to peers, adults at school, and extracurricular activities.

PARTICIPANTS

Your child is being asked to participate because he/she is a first-year ninth grade student transitioning to Robert McQueen High School. During freshman orientation, he/she expressed interest in participating in a friendship group. Up to 24 ninth grade students are expected to participate in the research study.

PROCEDURES

If you give permission for your child's participation in this research study, he or she will be randomly assigned to either an activity friendship group or a talking friendship group. Random assignment means that your child's name will be drawn from a hat, and your child has an equal chance of being chosen for either group. If your child is assigned to the talking friendship group, he or she will participate in group discussions about topics that interest him or her. These types of groups are customarily used in schools. If your child is assigned to the activity friendship group, he or she will participate in an experimental experience. The activity friendship group will present different activities such as drawing

each week to students that do not require them to talk. This type of group has had limited use in schools, but it has demonstrated success. All group sessions will be audio taped.

Your child will participate in the friendship group once a week for one class period for up to 12 weeks. The group will meet during a different class period each week so that your child will only miss the same class once every six weeks. Your child may choose not to attend a group session if he or she feels that it is not a good idea to miss class that week. When your child meets in the group for the first time, he or she will complete two questionnaires called the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale, which identify adolescent social behavior. These questionnaires will ask your child questions about their social habits and interactions with other people. During the last week, your child will take the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale again to see if there has been a change in scores since beginning the friendship group.

Although the research study will end after a maximum of 12 weeks, the friendship group may continue through the end of the school year based on students' desire and needs. If your child misses more than four weeks of the group, then he or she may continue to participate in the friendship group, but his or her scores from the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale will not be used in this research study. At the end of the research study, two students from the activity group and two students from the talking group will be selected for interviews based on scores of interest on the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale. These interviews will take between 20 and 45 minutes to complete, and they will occur at lunch or during one class period. The interviews will be recorded on an audiotape. It is possible that your child will be selected to participate in an interview. Your child has the right to choose not to participate in an interview.

ALTERNATIVES

An alternative to participating in a friendship group is for your child to meet individually with his or her school counselor.

DISCOMFORTS, INCONVENIENCES, AND/OR RISKS

By participating in this research study, your child may experience some discomfort, inconvenience, and risks. Your child will risk stepping outside of his or her comfort level when participating in new activities or discussions. Your child will be allowed to choose not to participate in all or part of an activity. Your child will also experience the inconvenience of missing one class period each week. It will be your child's responsibility to get all missing assignments from the teacher. Your child is also risking his or her privacy by participating in a group. It is possible that confidentiality will be broken when participating in the group; however, all students will be invested in not sharing each other's personal information in order that their own information will not be shared. This risk will also be minimized by making confidentiality a group norm, and reminding students about confidentiality during each group session. Also, your child will have the right to choose what information he/she shares about him/herself with the group.

In addition to the above stated risks, there may be unknown or unforeseen risks associated with participating in this research study. Your child may choose to withdraw from this study at any time without any penalty.

BENEFITS

There may be no direct benefits to your child as a participant in this study. It is possible that your child will benefit by developing friendships, stronger feelings of connection to school, and increased extracurricular involvement. Also, your child may learn cooperation, teambuilding, problem-solving, and decision-making skills through participating in the activities and discussions.

The benefits of this study may extend to all high school counselors and ninth grade students. Through studying the use of activity and talking friendship groups in high school, this research study provides school counselors with additional tools in working with students that maximize their use of time with students. All ninth grade students could potentially benefit from this study's exploration of the importance of developing interventions to assist with the social challenges of transitioning to high school.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your child's identity will be protected to the extent allowed by law. Confidentiality will only be broken as required by law. This includes if your child is going to hurt him/herself, if your child is going to hurt someone else, or if someone else is hurting your child or another child. Your child will not be personally identified in any reports or publications that may result from this study.

The investigators of this study and the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board may inspect your child's study records. Your child's records for this research study, including this permission form and scores from the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale, will be stored in separate locked filing cabinets and destroyed at the end of the school year. Your child's scores on the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale will not be identifiable with him or her by anyone except the investigators. The investigators will use your child's identifying information only for the purpose of selecting students for interviews at the end of the friendship groups. In order to protect your child's identity, he or she will use a code rather than his or her name on the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale. The code will consist of the first letter of your child's first and last class periods of the day (i.e., A for algebra, B for biology, C for computer literacy, E for English, F for foreign language, G for geometry, H for health, P for PE, and X for any elective) combined with his or her number of siblings and the number representing his or her shoe size. The audiotapes and transcriptions from group counseling sessions and interviews will be stored in a separate locked filing cabinet from all other data and forms from this study. The audiotapes will be destroyed once they are transcribed, and the transcriptions will be destroyed at the end of the school year. Since the group counseling sessions and interviews will be audio taped, students will be asked to use pseudonyms, which are fake

names, or avoid using names when speaking to those in the group or when speaking about other people, rather than real names, to avoid having personal identifiers attached to any data.

COSTS/COMPENSATION

There will be no cost to you or your child nor will you or your child be compensated for participating in this research study.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW

You may refuse to allow your child to participate or choose for your child to withdraw from the study at any time, and your child will still receive the care he or she would normally receive if he or she were not in the study. If the study design or use of the data is to be changed, you will be so informed and your permission re-obtained. You will be told of any significant new findings developed during the course of this study, which may relate to your willingness for your child to continue participation.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions about this study, please contact Jill Packman, Ph.D. at (775) 682-5502 or Elisabeth Liles, M.A. at (775) 746-5880 ext. 32021 at any time.

You may ask about your child's rights as a research participant or you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any comments, concern, or complaints to the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board, telephone number (775) 327-2368, or by addressing a letter to the Chair of the Board, c/o UNR Office of Human Research Protection, 205 Ross Hall / 331, University of Nevada, Reno, Reno, Nevada, 89557.

CLOSING STATEMENT

I have read () this permission form or have had it read to me (). [Check one.]

Elisabeth Liles has explained the study to me and all of my questions have been answered. I have been told of the risks or discomforts and possible benefits of the study. I have been told of other choices of counseling available to my child.

If I do not give permission for my child to take part in this study, my refusal for his/her participation will involve no penalty or loss of rights to which he/she is entitled. I may choose for my child to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty [or loss of other benefits to which he/she is entitled].

I have been told my rights and my child's rights as a research participant, and I voluntarily give permission for my child's participation in this study. I have been told what the study is about and how and why it is being done. All my questions have been answered.

I will receive a signed and dated copy of this permission form.

Signature of Parent/Guardian Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Permission Date

Signature of Investigator Date

Appendix D

**UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD STUDENT ASSENT
TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

TITLE OF STUDY: Differential Effect of a Ninth-Grade Activity Friendship Group and a Ninth-Grade Talk Therapy Friendship Group on Connection to Peers, Adults, and Extracurricular Activities

INVESTIGATOR(S): Jill Packman, Ph.D., 775-682-5502; Elisabeth Liles, M.A., 775-746-5880 ext. 32021

PROTOCOL #: SB08/09-026

SPONSOR: N/A

PURPOSE

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to look at how an activity friendship group and a talking friendship group provide ninth grade students with a social support system during their first year in high school.

PARTICIPANTS

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a first-year ninth grade student at Robert McQueen High School. During freshman orientation, you expressed interest in participating in a friendship group. Up to 24 ninth grade students are expected to participate in the research study.

PROCEDURES

After you return both the assent and permission forms, agreeing to be part of the research study, you will be randomly placed into either the activity friendship group or the talking friendship group. Random assignment means that your name will be drawn from a hat, and you have an equal chance of being chosen for either group.

If you are placed in the talking friendship group, you will talk about topics that interest you with other group members. If you are placed in the activity group, you will participate in a different activity each week. All group sessions will be audio taped. Both groups will meet once a week for one class period for up to 12 weeks. You will meet in your assigned group during a different class period each week so that you only miss the same class once every six weeks. You may choose not to attend a group session if you don't think that it is a good idea to miss class that week. You are responsible for making up all work from classes that you miss to attend group sessions

When you meet in your group for the first time, you will complete two questionnaires called the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and the Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale, which will take about 20 minutes to complete. You will answer these

two questionnaires again at the end of the study. You will complete the questionnaires in the counseling office conference room both times. These questionnaires will ask you questions about your social habits and interactions with other people.

Although the research study will end after a maximum of 12 weeks, the friendship group may continue through the end of the school year. If you miss more than four weeks of the group, then you may continue to participate in the friendship group, but your scores from the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and the Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale will not be used in this research study.

At the end of the research study, two students from the activity group and two students from the talking group will be selected for interviews based on scores of interest on the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and the Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale. It is possible that you will be selected to participate in an interview. The interview will take between 20 and 45 minutes to complete, and it will occur at lunch or during one class period. The interview will be recorded on an audiotape. You have the right to choose not to participate in an interview.

ALTERNATIVES

An alternative to participating in a friendship group is for you to meet individually with your school counselor.

DISCOMFORTS, INCONVENIENCES, AND/OR RISKS

By participating in this research study, you may experience some discomfort, inconvenience, and risks. You will risk stepping outside of your comfort level when participating in new activities or discussions. You will be allowed to choose not to participate in all or part of an activity. You will also experience the inconvenience of missing one class period each week. It will be your responsibility to get all missing assignments from the teacher. You are also risking your privacy by participating in a group because you will need to trust the other group members to not share your personal information. It is possible that confidentiality will be broken when participating in the group; however, you and the other students will be invested in not sharing each other's personal information so that your own information will not be shared. This risk will also be minimized by making confidentiality a group norm, and the group leader will remind students about confidentiality during each group session. Also, you will have the right to choose what information you share about yourself with the group. In addition to the above stated risks, there may be unknown or unforeseen risks associated with participating in this research study. You may choose to withdraw from this study at any time with no penalty.

BENEFITS

You may not directly benefit from this study. It is possible that you will benefit by developing friendships, stronger feelings of connection to school, and increased extracurricular involvement. Also, you may learn cooperation, teambuilding, problem-solving, and decision-making skills through participating in the activities and discussions.

The benefits of this study may extend to all high school counselors and ninth grade students. Through studying the use of activity and talking friendship groups in high school, this research study provides school counselors with additional tools in working with students that maximize their use of time with students. All ninth grade students could potentially benefit from this study's exploration of the importance of developing support systems to assist with the social challenges of starting high school.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your identity will be protected to the amount allowed by law. Confidentiality will only be broken as required by the law. This includes if you are going to hurt yourself, if you are going to hurt someone else, or if someone is hurting your or other children. You will not be personally identified in any reports or publications that may come from this study.

The investigators of this study and the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board may have access to your records from this study. Your records for this research study, including this assent form and scores from the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale, will be stored in separate locked filing cabinets and destroyed at the end of the school year. Your scores on the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale will not be identifiable with you by anyone except the investigators. The investigators will use identifying information only for the purpose of selecting students for interviews at the end of the friendship groups. In order to protect your identity, you will use a code rather than your name on the Mehrabian Affiliative Tendency Scale and Mehrabian Sensitivity to Rejection Scale. The code will consist of the first letter of your first and last class periods of the day (i.e., A for algebra, B for biology, C for computer literacy, E for English, F for foreign language, G for geometry, H for health, P for PE, and X for any elective) combined with your number of siblings and the number representing your shoe size. The audiotapes and transcriptions from group counseling sessions and interviews will be stored in a separate locked filing cabinet from all other data and forms from this study. The audiotapes will be destroyed once they are transcribed, and the transcriptions will be destroyed at the end of the school year. Since the group counseling sessions and interviews will be audio taped, you will be asked to use pseudonyms, which are fake names, or avoid using names when speaking to those in the group or when speaking about other people, rather than real names, to avoid having personal identifiers attached to any data.

COSTS/COMPENSATION

There will be no cost to you nor will you be compensated for participating in this research study.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW

You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time and still receive the care you would normally receive if you were not in the study. If the study design or use of the data is to be changed, you will be so informed and your assent re-obtained. You will be told of any significant new findings developed during the course of this study, which may relate to your willingness to continue participation.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions about this study, please contact Jill Packman, Ph.D. at (775) 682-5502 or Elisabeth Liles, M.A. at (775) 746-5880 ext. 32021 at any time.

You may ask about your rights as a research participant or you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any comments, concern, or complaints to the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board, telephone number (775) 327-2368, or by addressing a letter to the Chair of the Board, c/o UNR Office of Human Research Protection, 205 Ross Hall / 331, University of Nevada, Reno, Reno, Nevada, 89557.

CLOSING STATEMENT

I have read () this assent form or have had it read to me (). [Check one.]

Elisabeth Liles has explained the study to me and all of my questions have been answered. I have been told of the risks or discomforts and possible benefits of the study. I have been told of other choices of counseling available to me.

If I do not take part in this study, my refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of rights to which I am entitled. I may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty [or loss of other benefits to which I am entitled].

I have been told my rights as a research participant, and I have decided to volunteer to participate in this study. I have been told what the study is about and how and why it is being done. All my questions have been answered.

I will receive a signed and dated copy of this assent form.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Assent

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix E

**UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD PARENTAL/GUARDIAN PERMISSION
TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY: INTERVIEW ONLY**

TITLE OF STUDY: Differential Effect of a Ninth-Grade Activity Friendship Group and a Ninth-Grade Talk Therapy Friendship Group on Connection to Peers, Adults, and Extracurricular Activities

INVESTIGATOR(S): Jill Packman, Ph.D., 775-682-5502; Elisabeth Liles, M.A., 775-746-5880 ext. 32021

PROTOCOL #: SB08/09-026

SPONSOR: N/A

PURPOSE

You are being asked to allow your child to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the importance of providing social interventions to ninth grade students during their transition to high school. In a recent study, 80% of ninth grade students said that making new friends helped them successfully transition to high school. However, most transition programs focus only on academic support, and pay little attention to the social needs of freshmen students, despite the fact that there is a connection between friendship and academics.

The strong association between academic and social success in schools indicates the need for counselors to devote attention to assisting students in the development of close and positive friendships. This seems particularly true with freshmen students, who are struggling with all aspects of the transition to high school. School counselors often meet with students in a group setting, and this study seeks to explore the use of friendship groups with ninth grade students in order to improve their connection to peers, adults at school, and extracurricular activities.

PARTICIPANTS

Your child is being asked to participate because he/she is a first-year ninth grade student transitioning to Robert McQueen High School. During freshman orientation, your child did not express interest in participating in a friendship group. Six students are being asked to participate in interviews, and your child was randomly selected as one of the participants.

PROCEDURES

If you give permission for your child's participation in this research study, he or she will participate in an interview that asks questions about your child's social experiences in high school. Questions may involve friendships, connection to adults at school, and extracurricular involvement. This interview will take between 20 and 45 minutes to

complete, and it will occur at lunch or during one class period. The interview will be recorded on an audiotape. Your child has the right to choose not to participate in an interview.

DISCOMFORTS, INCONVENIENCES, AND/OR RISKS

By participating in this research study, your child may experience some discomfort, inconvenience, and risks. Your child will risk stepping outside of his or her comfort level when participating in the interview. Your child will be allowed to choose not to answer all or part of the interview questions. Your child will also experience the inconvenience of missing one class period or lunch on the day of the interview. It will be your child's responsibility to get all assignments and notes from the teacher if he or she misses class. In addition to the above stated risks, there may be unknown or unforeseen risks associated with participating in this research study. Your child may choose to withdraw from this study at any time without any penalty.

BENEFITS

There may be no direct benefits to your child as a participant in this study. It is possible that your child will benefit by developing a greater understanding for his or her social needs in terms of connection to friends, adults at school, and extracurricular activities. Your child may also become more aware of opportunities for involvement in school.

The benefits of this study may extend to all high school counselors and ninth grade students. Through studying the use of activity and talking friendship groups in high school, this research study provides school counselors with additional tools in working with students that maximize their use of time with students. All ninth grade students could potentially benefit from this study's exploration of the importance of developing interventions to assist with the social challenges of transitioning to high school.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your child's identity will be protected to the extent allowed by law. Confidentiality will only be broken as required by law. This includes if your child is going to hurt him/herself, if your child is going to hurt someone else, or if someone else is hurting your child or another child. Your child will not be personally identified in any reports or publications that may result from this study.

The investigators of this study, Washoe County School District PPA&A, and the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board may inspect your child's study records. Your child's records for this research study, including this permission form and the interview audiotape and transcription will be stored in a separate locked filing cabinet from all other data and forms from this study. The audiotape will be destroyed once it is transcribed, and the transcription will be destroyed at the end of the school year. Since the interviews will be audio taped, students will be asked to use

pseudonyms, which are fake names, or avoid using names when speaking about other people, rather than real names, to avoid having personal identifiers attached to any data.

COSTS/COMPENSATION

There will be no cost to you or your child nor will you or your child be compensated for participating in this research study.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW

You may refuse to allow your child to participate or choose for your child to withdraw from the study at any time, and your child will still receive the care he or she would normally receive if he or she were not in the study. If the study design or use of the data is to be changed, you will be so informed and your permission re-obtained. You will be told of any significant new findings developed during the course of this study, which may relate to your willingness for your child to continue participation.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions about this study, please contact Jill Packman, Ph.D. at (775) 682-5502 or Elisabeth Liles, M.A. at (775) 746-5880 ext. 32021 at any time.

You may ask about your child's rights as a research participant or you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any comments, concern, or complaints to the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board, telephone number (775) 327-2368, or by addressing a letter to the Chair of the Board, c/o UNR Office of Human Research Protection, 205 Ross Hall / 331, University of Nevada, Reno, Reno, Nevada, 89557.

CLOSING STATEMENT

I have read () this permission form or have had it read to me (). [Check one.]

Elisabeth Liles has explained the study to me and all of my questions have been answered. I have been told of the risks or discomforts and possible benefits of the study. I have been told of other choices of counseling available to my child.

If I do not give permission for my child to take part in this study, my refusal for his/her participation will involve no penalty or loss of rights to which he/she is entitled. I may choose for my child to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty [or loss of other benefits to which he/she is entitled].

I have been told my rights and my child's rights as a research participant, and I voluntarily give permission for my child's participation in this study. I have been told

what the study is about and how and why it is being done. All my questions have been answered.

I will receive a signed and dated copy of this permission form.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Permission

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix F

**UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD STUDENT ASSENT
TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY: INTERVIEW ONLY**

TITLE OF STUDY: Differential Effect of a Ninth-Grade Activity Friendship Group and a Ninth-Grade Talk Therapy Friendship Group on Connection to Peers, Adults, and Extracurricular Activities

INVESTIGATOR(S): Jill Packman, Ph.D., 775-682-5502; Elisabeth Liles, M.A., 775-746-5880 ext. 32021

PROTOCOL #: SB08/09-026

SPONSOR: N/A

PURPOSE

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to look at how an activity friendship group and a talking friendship group provide ninth grade students with a social support system during their first year in high school.

PARTICIPANTS

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a first-year ninth grade student at Robert McQueen High School. During freshman orientation, you did not express interest in participating in a friendship group. Six students are being asked to participate in interviews, and you were randomly selected as one of the participants.

PROCEDURES

After you return both the assent and permission forms, agreeing to be part of the research study, you will participate in an interview that asks questions about your social experiences in high school. Questions may involve friendships, connection to adults at school, and extracurricular involvement. This interview will take between 20 and 45 minutes to complete, and it will occur at lunch or during one class period. The interview will be recorded on an audiotape. You have the right to choose not to participate in an interview.

DISCOMFORTS, INCONVENIENCES, AND/OR RISKS

By participating in this research study, you may experience some discomfort, inconvenience, and risks. You will risk stepping outside of your comfort level when participating in the interview. You will be allowed to choose not to answer all or part of the interview questions. You will also experience the inconvenience of missing one class period or lunch on the day of the interview. It will be your responsibility to get all assignments and notes from the teacher if you miss class. In addition to the above stated risks, there may be unknown or unforeseen risks associated with participating in this

research study. You may choose to withdraw from this study at any time without any penalty.

BENEFITS

You may not directly benefit from this study. It is possible that you will benefit by developing a greater understanding for your social needs in terms of connection to friends, adults at school, and extracurricular activities. You may also become more aware of opportunities for involvement in school.

The benefits of this study may extend to all high school counselors and ninth grade students. Through studying the use of activity and talking friendship groups in high school, this research study provides school counselors with additional tools in working with students that maximize their use of time with students. All ninth grade students could potentially benefit from this study's exploration of the importance of developing support systems to assist with the social challenges of starting high school.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your identity will be protected to the amount allowed by law. Confidentiality will only be broken as required by the law. This includes if you are going to hurt yourself, if you are going to hurt someone else, or if someone is hurting your or other children. You will not be personally identified in any reports or publications that may come from this study.

The investigators of this study, Washoe County School District PPA&A, and the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board may inspect your study records. Your records for this research study, including this assent form and the interview audiotape and transcription will be stored in a separate locked filing cabinet from all other data and forms from this study. The audiotape will be destroyed once it is transcribed, and the transcription will be destroyed at the end of the school year. Since the interviews will be audio taped, you will be asked to use pseudonyms, which are fake names, or avoid using names when speaking about other people, rather than real names, to avoid having personal identifiers attached to any data.

COSTS/COMPENSATION

There will be no cost to you nor will you be compensated for participating in this research study.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW

You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time and still receive the care you would normally receive if you were not in the study. If the study design or use of the data is to be changed, you will be so informed and your assent re-obtained. You

will be told of any significant new findings developed during the course of this study, which may relate to your willingness to continue participation.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions about this study, please contact Jill Packman, Ph.D. at (775) 682-5502 or Elisabeth Liles, M.A. at (775) 746-5880 ext. 32021 at any time.

You may ask about your rights as a research participant or you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any comments, concern, or complaints to the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board, telephone number (775) 327-2368, or by addressing a letter to the Chair of the Board, c/o UNR Office of Human Research Protection, 205 Ross Hall / 331, University of Nevada, Reno, Reno, Nevada, 89557.

CLOSING STATEMENT

I have read () this assent form or have had it read to me (). [Check one.]

Elisabeth Liles has explained the study to me and all of my questions have been answered. I have been told of the risks or discomforts and possible benefits of the study. I have been told of other choices of counseling available to me.

If I do not take part in this study, my refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of rights to which I am entitled. I may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty [or loss of other benefits to which I am entitled].

I have been told my rights as a research participant, and I have decided to volunteer to participate in this study. I have been told what the study is about and how and why it is being done. All my questions have been answered.

I will receive a signed and dated copy of this assent form.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Assent

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix G

Activity Therapy Friendship Group Week One Lesson Plan

- I. **Welcome**
 - A. **Purpose of Group:** This is an activity group designed for you to meet other students in the school. We may work on different skills like problem-solving, decision-making, stress management, and leadership. We will do a different activity each time we meet that has a different purpose. Sometimes it will just be to get to know each other better. Sometimes it will be to work on a skill.
 - B. **Right To Pass:** Everything in this group is voluntary. You may choose at any time to not participate in an activity or part of an activity. You may also choose to stop participating in the group at any time.
 - C. **Confidentiality:** Everything that is shared in the group should be honored and kept confidential by the group members. It is important that you don't share what others have said with anyone outside of the group. There are some things that I have to report: child abuse and harm to self or others. Also, since I am recording all of our sessions, it is important to try and avoid using each other's real names. This is also true for using names when discussing people who are not in the group.
 - D. **Meeting Time:** We will meet once a week during a different period each week.
- II. **Group Norms**
 - A. Every group has norms. Norms are general guidelines that are accepted by everyone that explain how the group should run. We are going to establish a set of norms to follow in our group. I will write them down and later place them on a poster to remind us each week what we decided we want our group to look like. Examples of norms might be that we listen to whoever is talking or we have the right to pass.
 - B. Allow students to brainstorm norms (I will write them down)
- III. **Group Goals**
 - A. Ask students to identify why they wanted to participate in this group and to share what they hope to gain from it
 - B. Write group goals down
- IV. **Questionnaires**
 - A. Administer the MAF and the MSR scales
- V. **Introductions**
 - A. **“Tee-Shirts” Activity (Gibbs, 1987, pp. 151-152)**
 - i. See handout
 - B. **Process Questions**
 - i. See directions
- VI. **Next Week**
 - A. We will meet again next Tuesday

Appendix H

Activity Therapy Friendship Group Week Two Lesson Plan

I. Review

- A. Introductions:** Go around table and ask students to state their pseudonym again to the group, as well as one thing they would like to share about themselves (can be something they shared last week from the Me-Tee Activity, or something new)
- B. Group Norms:** Review group norms with students and show them the poster on display. Ask them if there is anything they want to change or add. Remind students about limits of confidentiality and avoiding using each other's real names.
- C. Group Goals:** Remind students about the goals of the group. Ask them if they want to change or add any goals.

II. Activity

- A. Spending a Million Dollars** (J. Packman, personal communication, September 14, 2006)
 - a. Goals of Activity:**
 - i. **Group Cohesion**
 - ii. **Decision-Making Skills**
 - iii. **Problem-Solving Skills**
 - iv. **Cooperation and Compromise**
 - v. **Dealing with Frustration**
 - vi. **Leadership**
 - b. Distribute Handout with Directions**
 - c. Give students 8 minutes to determine how they will spend the money**
 - d. Process Questions**
 - i. What went through your mind when you first heard the options you had to spend the money? Did any one option sound better than the others? Was there an option that you definitely weren't interested in?
 - ii. What problems came up as you decided how to spend the money?
 - iii. How did you feel when others disagreed with your choice? How did you feel when others agreed with your choice?
 - iv. How did you come to a consensus? If you weren't able to come to a consensus, tell us what you think interfered with being able to do so.
 - v. Did anyone take a leadership role? How did you feel about this? How was the leader determined? If you took on a leadership role, tell us what that was like.
 - vi. Did anyone take a backseat role? How did you feel about this? If you were a backseat participant, tell us what that was like.

III. Connecting to School

A. Clubs/Activities

- a. Distribute handout to students containing clubs and advisors
- b. Explain the clubs and various requirements for membership
- c. Ask students if they are interested or already involved in any of the clubs
- d. Challenge students to attend one club meeting in the next two weeks or to check with the advisor of a club to find out more information and report back to us in two weeks

B. Sports

- a. Explain eligibility and try-out procedure for winter and spring sports. Remind students that it is also fun to attend the games and sporting events: Listen to the announcements each week for a list of sporting events.
- b. Eligibility is important if you are participating in sports. That means that it is important to keep up your grades and seek tutoring before it is too late. Remind students about Edline and tutoring options.

IV. Next Week

- A. We will meet again next Wednesday
- B. Next week we will discuss Edline and freshmen tips in addition to our activity

Appendix I

Activity Therapy Friendship Group Week Three Lesson Plan

I. Review

- A. Introductions:** Go around table and ask students to state their pseudonym again to the group, as well as one thing they would like to share about themselves (can be something they shared last week or from the Me-Tee Activity, or something new)
- B. Group Norms:** Review group norms with students and show them the poster on display. Ask them if there is anything they want to change or add.
- C. Group Goals:** Remind students about the goals of the group. Ask them if they want to change or add any goals.

II. Activity**A. Label Me (Jones, 1996, pp. 74-75)****a. Explain the Game**

- i. **BS Directions:** I am going to deal out two decks of cards until they are gone. Going around the table, you will place as many cards down as you want in order. That means that the first person must put facedown at least one Ace, the second person will put down at least one 2, then 3, then 4, through Jack, Queen, and King. After a King is placed on the pile, then we begin again with Ace. The object of the game is to maintain the exact order and to get rid of all of your cards first. You may not pass. This is why the game is called BS. Sometimes, it will be your turn and you won't have the next card. You have to convince us that you are putting down the correct card anyway. If someone calls you out, we turn over the cards, and we see you were "BS-ing," then you take all of the cards in the pile. If you were not "BS-ing," then the person who called you out takes all of the cards. You may also attempt to slip in cards when it is your turn. This means that if it is your turn to put down a 3, you could put down a 3 and another card (say a Jack) and say "Two Threes." You must always state what you are adding to the pile. For example, "One 10, two fours, etc." If any of the cards you put down are out of order, and someone calls you on it, then you are "BS-ing" and must take the pile of cards.

b. The Challenge

- i. See Handout for "Label Me" directions

c. Process Questions

- i. See Handout

III. Connecting to School**A. Clubs/Activities**

- a.** Review clubs and various requirements for membership
- b.** Ask students if they are interested or already involved in any of the clubs

- c. Remind students about the challenge to attend one club meeting in the next week or to check with the advisor of a club to find out more information and report back to us next week

B. Edline

- a. Remind students to check Edline weekly in order to monitor their progress
 - i. Also, some teachers include extra credit opportunities available only on Edline
- b. Remind students that they are able to email their teachers from Edline

C. Freshmen Tips

- a. Distribute handout from www.mcqueencounseling.com
 - i. Homework, studying, organization, advocating, grading procedures, tutoring, social network

IV. Next Week

- C. We will meet again next Tuesday

Appendix J

Activity Therapy Friendship Group Week Four Lesson Plan

I. Review

- A. Introductions:** Go around table and ask students to state their pseudonym again to the group, as well as one thing they would like to share about themselves (can be something they shared last week or from the Me-Tee Activity, or something new)
- B. Group Norms:** Review group norms with students and show them the poster on display. Ask them if there is anything they want to change or add.
- C. Group Goals:** Remind students about the goals of the group. Ask them if they want to change or add any goals.

II. Activity

- A. Root Beer Float Lifeboat (Jones, 1996, pp. 30-31)**
 - a. Explain the Rationale**
 - ii. See Handout
 - b. Directions**
 - iii. See Handout
 - c. Process Questions**
 - iv. See Handout

III. Connecting to School

- A. Clubs/Activities**
 - a.** Review clubs and various requirements for membership
 - b.** Ask students if they are interested or already involved in any of the clubs
 - c.** Check in with challenge: has anyone attended a new club meeting or asked an advisor for more information?

IV. Freshmen Tips

- A. Edline**
 - a.** How many of you are checking Edline on a regular basis? Why is this important?
- B. Tutoring**
 - a.** Math Lab is available Monday-Thursday from 2:40-3:40 in Room 202
 - b.** www.smarthinking.com

IV. Next Meeting

- A.** We will meet again Thursday after break.

Appendix K

Activity Therapy Friendship Group Week Five Lesson Plan

I. Review

- A. Introductions:** Go around table and ask students to state their pseudonym and something they remember about someone else in the group.
- B. Group Norms:** Review group norms with students and show them the poster on display. Ask them if there is anything they want to change or add.
- C. Group Goals:** Remind students about the goals of the group. Ask them if they want to change or add any goals.

II. Activity I

- A. 20 Step Directions (Jones, 1996, pp. 176-177)**
 - a. Explain the Rationale**
 - i. See Handout
 - b. Directions**
 - i. See Handout
 - c. Follow Directions on Handout**
 - d. Process Questions**
 - i. See Handout

III. Activity II

- A. Squirt Gun (J. Packman, personal communication, March 5, 2005)**
 - a.** Ask students to sit in a circle. Tell them: I have an imaginary squirt gun. It sprays everyone, but only one person ever gets wet. Your task is to figure out who is wet each time. Only one person can guess at a time, and you may not guess yourself. When you think you have the pattern figured out, rather than blurting it out, ask for the squirt gun.
 - b. Process Questions**
 - i.** Did you experience frustration at any point during the activity? If so, how did you handle it?
 - ii.** How did you feel when you guessed the right person, but you didn't know why? How did you feel when you found out the pattern?
 - iii.** Did anyone want to help others figure out the pattern? Was it hard not just telling them the answer?
 - iv.** Did anyone enjoy knowing the answer when others still didn't? What feelings did you have about this?

IV. Activity III (if time) (J. Packman, personal communication, March 5, 2005)

- A. "Going to the Moon"**
 - a.** Tell students, "We're going to the moon, and we all get to bring things. We will go around the table stating what we want to bring, and I'll let you know if you may or may not. It is your job to figure out why you can bring some things and not others. We'll go around the table a few times until you start to figure it out. Once you have it

solved, don't blurt it out. Instead, help others figure it out through giving good examples."

b. Process Questions

- i.** How did it feel when you were told you couldn't bring something?
- ii.** What was it like when you were told you could bring something, but you didn't know why?
- iii.** Did you experience frustration at any point during the activity? If so, how did you handle it?
- iv.** Did anyone want to help others figure out the pattern? Was it hard not just telling them the answer?
- v.** Did anyone enjoy knowing the answer when others still didn't? What feelings did you have about this?

V. Round

- A.** Go around the table and state one word that describes an emotion you felt in today's session. If you would like, you may elaborate on the emotion, but it is not necessary.

VI. Next Week

- A.** We will meet again next Thursday.

Appendix L

Activity Therapy Friendship Group Week Six Lesson Plan

I. Review

- A. Introductions:** Go around table and ask students to state their pseudonym and something they remember about someone else in the group.
- B. Group Norms:** Review group norms with students and show them the poster on display. Ask them if there is anything they want to change or add.
- C. Group Goals:** Remind students about the goals of the group. Ask them if they want to change or add any goals.

II. Activity**A. Heart Surgery Activity (MAGIC, n.d., pp. 23-24)****a. Directions**

- i. Distribute handout with directions

b. Process Questions

- i. How did you come to a consensus? If the group did not reach a consensus, what prevented you from doing so? How do you feel about this? How do you feel about your final decision?
- ii. Did you experience frustration at anytime during the discussion? How did you handle this? What other emotions did you feel?
- iii. Did you feel that people were listening to you? If not, how did you feel about this? How could you have solved this problem? If so, what helped people to listen to each other?
- iv. Were there any options that you were immediately drawn to? What do you think was the reason?
- v. Were there any options you immediately discarded? What do you think was the reason?
- vi. How was this activity different than the one with a million dollars? Was it easier or more difficult to come to a consensus this time? What do you think caused this?
- vii. Did anyone take on a leadership position? Did anyone take a backseat? What was it like to be a leader? What was your experience in the backseat?

III. Group Check-In

- A.** Go around the table and state one sentence about something you did or did not like about today's session.
- B.** In what ways does the group meet your expectations? In what ways does it not?
- C. Final Exams**
 - a. What are you concerned about?
 - b. How do you plan to study?
 - c. What do you feel most confident about?

IV. Next Week

- A.** We will meet again next Wednesday.

Appendix M

Activity Therapy Friendship Group Week Seven Lesson Plan

I. Review

- A. Introductions:** Go around table and ask students to state their pseudonym and a goal they have for themselves this semester, as well as how they plan to accomplish that goal.
- B. Group Norms:** Review group norms with students and show them the poster on display. Ask them if there is anything they want to change or add.
- C. Group Goals:** Remind students about the goals of the group. Ask them if they want to change or add any goals. How do we assess when we have accomplished our group goals?

II. Group Check-In

- A.** How did final exams go? What were students' reactions? What did they learn from the experience? What might they do differently next semester?

III. Activity

- A. "Rosebush Identification" (Oaklander, 1978, pp. 32-37; Oaklander, 1997, pp. 11-13; Stevens, 1971, pp. 38-39)**
 - a. Directions**
 - i. See Handout
 - b. Process Questions**
 - i. See Handout

IV. Group Check-In

- A.** Go around the table and ask students to state one sentence about today's session (it could be a feeling, something they liked, something they didn't like, etc.)
- B.** In what ways does the group meet your expectations? In what ways does it not?

IV. Next Week

- A.** We will meet again next Friday.
- B.** We have two meetings left. Our last meeting will be when you will take the questionnaires again.

Appendix N

Activity Therapy Friendship Group Week Eight Lesson Plan

I. Review

- A. Introductions:** Go around table and ask students to state their pseudonym and one word that describes how they are feeling today
- B. Group Norms:** Review group norms with students and show them the poster on display. Ask them if there is anything they want to change or add.
- C. Group Goals:** Remind students about the goals of the group. Ask them if they want to change or add any goals.

II. Activity I

- A. Paper Tower (Jones, 1998, pp. 64-65)**
 - a. Directions**
 - i. See Handout
- B. Process Questions**
 - a. See Handout

III. Group Check-In

- A.** Go around the table and ask students to state one sentence about this school year so far (something they have liked, something they haven't liked, something they have learned, something they still want to learn, etc.)

V. Next Week

- A.** We will meet again next Monday. This will be our last meeting, and you will take the questionnaires again.

Appendix O

Activity Therapy Friendship Group Week Nine Lesson Plan

I. Review

- A. **Introductions:** Go around table and ask students to state their pseudonym and one word that they would use to describe the group
- B. **Group Norms:** Review group norms with students and show them the poster on display. Ask them if there is anything they want to change or add.
- C. **Group Goals:** Remind students about the goals of the group. Ask them if they want to change or add any goals.

II. Activity

- A. **If I Were a Flower (Jones, 1996, pp. 122-123)**
 - a. **Directions**
 - i. See Handout
 - b. **Process Questions**
 - i. See Handout

III. Group Checkout

- A. Go around the table and state how you have personally met the goals of the group. If you don't feel you have met the goals, what do you think prevented you from meeting them? How could you work on meeting them outside of the group?

IV. Questionnaires

- A. Administer the MAF and the MSR scales

V. Termination

- A. Remind students that our last session is today, but that they are always welcome to come see me if they have anything they want to talk about.

Appendix P

Talk Therapy Friendship Group Sample Lesson Plan

- I. Review**
 - A. Introductions:** Go around table and ask students to state their pseudonym again to the group, as well as one thing they would like to share about themselves.
 - B. Group Norms:** Review group norms with students and show them the poster on display. Ask them if there is anything they want to change or add. Remind students about limits of confidentiality and avoiding using each other's real names.
 - C. Group Goals:** Remind students about the goals of the group. Ask them if they want to change or add any goals.
- II. Discussion**
 - A.** Allow students to brainstorm topic ideas. Discussion will proceed from students' interest.
- III. Next Week**
 - A.** We will meet again next Thursday.

Appendix Q

Interview Questions for Friendship Group Members

1. In the beginning of the year, what did you expect high school to be like?
2. In the beginning of the year, what did you want high school to be like?
3. What were you looking for high school to give you in terms of friends?
4. What were you looking for high school to give you in terms of connection to adults?
5. What were you looking for high school to give you in terms of extracurricular activities?
6. How has your experience been with having a mentor this year? How often do you see or talk to your mentor? What does your mentor help you with?
7. At the beginning of the year, you completed a survey that asked you questions about your high school experience so far. At that time, did it matter to you if you had friends in your classes? Does it matter to you now? Had you met new friends at first? How about now; have you met new friends? Do you have the same friends as in the beginning of the year? Do you have the same friends from middle school?
8. How would you describe your friendships this year? Would you say you have a lot of friends? Close friends? A few friends? What is important to you when you are making friends?
9. Have you experienced bullying at all this year? If so, how have you handled it? How did it affect your schoolwork? How did it affect your friendships?
10. What would you say is the single most important reason to have friends?
11. Why did you want to join the friendship group when you first heard about it?
12. What were you hoping to gain from the group?
13. What did you want the group to be like?
14. What kept you coming to the group?
15. What do you think you learned in the group? Have you seen yourself using these skills outside of the group?
16. How has the group helped you make friends or become more connected to other students at school?
17. How has the group helped you become more connected to adults at school?
18. Has the group helped you to become more involved in school? If so, how? If not, what do you think the group could have done to help you become more involved?
19. What did you like best about the group? What did you like least about the group? What would you have changed in the group?
20. If you were talking to an incoming ninth grade student next year, what advice would you give him/her? Would you recommend joining the friendship group?

Appendix R

Interview Questions for Non-Friendship Group Members

1. In the beginning of the year, what did you expect high school to be like?
2. In the beginning of the year, what did you want high school to be like?
3. What were you looking for high school to give you in terms of friends?
4. What were you looking for high school to give you in terms of connection to adults?
5. What were you looking for high school to give you in terms of extracurricular activities?
6. How has your experience been with having a mentor this year? How often do you see or talk to your mentor? What does your mentor help you with?
7. At the beginning of the year, you completed a survey that asked you questions about your high school experience so far. At that time, did it matter to you if you had friends in your classes? Does it matter to you now? Had you met new friends at first? How about now; have you met new friends? Do you have the same friends as in the beginning of the year? Do you have the same friends from middle school?
8. How would you describe your friendships this year? Would you say you have a lot of friends? Close friends? A few friends? What is important to you when you are making friends?
9. Have you experienced bullying at all this year? If so, how have you handled it? How did it affect your schoolwork? How did it affect your friendships?
10. What would you say is the single most important reason to have friends?
11. When you first heard about the friendship group, why did you decide not to join?
12. If you were talking to an incoming ninth grade student next year, what advice would you give him/her? Would you recommend joining the friendship group?