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A Correlational Study of Student Self-Image, Academic Performance, School Involvement and Seeking Help in a Crisis

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A CORRELATIONAL STUDY OF STUDENT SELF-IMAGE,

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT

AND SEEKING HELP IN A CRISIS

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Abstract

This research examined the relationship between students' self-image, academic

performance, involvement in school activities to their willingness to seek help for crisis

counseling. Questionnaire data were collected from eighty-seven students in a Council

Bluffs, Iowa school. The research null hypotheses suggest that; 1) There is no correlation

between high school students' self-image and seeking crisis counseling, 2) There is no

correlation between academic performance and seeking crisis counseling, and 3) There is

no correlation between high school student involvement and seeking crisis counseling.

Although there was no support for the original hypotheses, a significant correlation

between seeking help and gender prompted additional analysis moderated by gender.

Additional analyses also examined inter-correlations between types of help seeking and

age, also moderated by gender. The results of these analyses suggest that younger girls

are more willing than older girls to seek help from counselors and others. In contrast to

girls, older boys are more willing to seek help less from others than younger boys. For

boys, there was no relationship between seeking help from a counselor and age. A

relationship between being involved in school activities and seeking help from a

counselor was found, but the relationship was opposite for girls and boys. Girls who are more involved in school activities appeared seek help from counselors more than girls who are less involved, whereas boys that are less involved seek more help from counselors than boys who are more involved boys. Other relationships were also examined, including the relationship between students' self-image, academic performance, school activity involvement, and students' age.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1

<u>Introduction</u>

This study investigated the relationship between student self-image, academic performance, school involvement, and seeking help in a crisis. The following introduction briefly highlights barriers faced by students in public schools and their impact on students' decision to seek out help when faced with a crisis. Also provided is the purpose of study, problem statement, hypotheses, and any limitations to the study.

With the increase of media exposure of violence in our schools, it appears that there has been a rise in the number of tragic and horrific incidences of students carrying out acts of violence and aggressions. Some examples of acts of violence include vandalism, physical and sexual assault, rape, bodily injury, and homicide (Shafii & Shafii, 2001). The increase in violent and antisocial behavior of students within the public schools demonstrates a need to identify students who are at risk for antisocial behaviors and explore the factors that may prevent them from seeking help from a counselor as a preventive measure. Despite current research, the need still exists to help schools administration and counselors recognize what these factors are and how they may influence students' desire in seeking crisis counseling.

Several factors have already been examined as predictive characteristics of behaviors. According to a study by Ellickson and McGuigan (2000) some predictors of violence among high school seniors and dropouts are early deviant behavior, poor grades, and having a poor social environment. In addition, adolescents who acted out by stealing or getting in trouble at school in grade 7 were significantly more likely to be violent five

years later than those who did not (Ellickson & McGuigan, 2000). Additionally, adolescents who attended several elementary schools and had not developed strong bonds at any of the schools were more likely to engage in violent behavior several years later. That is, adolescents who attended more than one elementary school and had not been able to develop strong bonds with their peers were more likely to engage in increased levels of predatory violence (i.e. more likely to act out by hitting others) and overall relational violence as older teenagers (Rule & Gandy, 1994). Boys, in particular, seem to be particularly vulnerable to repeated moves that involve attending different elementary schools and exposure to social drug influences (Rule & Gandy, 1994).

Gender may also be predictive of violence in adolescence. Boys and girls appear to be differentially susceptible to certain individual or environmental characteristics. For example, girls who exhibit low self-esteem in early years are more likely to engage in relational violence later on; conversely, this does not seem to be a significant predictor for boys (Rule & Gandy, 1994). Age may be a predictive factor for boys when considering the need to conform to masculine stereotype sex roles that generally begins around age 12 to 14 years (Galambos, Almeida & Petersen, 1990).

Poor grades are also useful warnings for violence later on. Signs of academic unrest present grave concerns not only because of their implications for students' immediate adjustment but also the behaviors associated with poor grades (Murdock, Anderman, & Hodge, 2000. It would seem reasonable to suggest that violence prevention programs aimed at younger adolescents could include efforts to prevent or

reduce troublesome behavior in school and poor academic performance beginning in elementary school.

Finally, reported records of high school students across the United States have shown that those students who become actively involved in extracurricular activities tend to be model students and seldom get involved in crime (Cassel, Chow, Demoulin, & Reiger, 2000). Getting students involved in extracurricular activities may be essential to preventing acting out behaviors. However, according to Cassel, et al. 2001, a challenge faced by many school counselors is that few students get involved in extracurricular activities and those that do get involved tend to monopolize activities.

Our schools' tradition of help seeking has been based on survival of the "healthiest," those most in need of assistance are not accustomed to seeking out and receiving help in times of crisis (Cassel, et al. 2001). Thus, it appears that when students experience a time of crisis, there are many factors involved that may determine their attitude towards seeking help as well as from whom the student looks to for help. Three areas that were addressed in this research as possible factors that influences students' desire in seeking help from counselors are: the students' perceived self-image, academic performance (measured by their cumulative academic performance), and their involvement in school clubs and organizations.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years our schools have been plagued with increasing violent and aggressive behaviors from students (Murdock et al., 2000). This increase in violent and aggressive behaviors is a focus of concern for many. One area to consider when

addressing school violence is the personality of the student who may be more prone to acting out behaviors and the barriers that prevent those students from seeking counseling. For many young people, adolescence may be a highly emotional period with increasing pressure to master scholastics and extracurricular activities. As students' attitudes towards school become more negative, self-ratings of their overall academic ability declined. As a consequence they assign reduced importance to academic endeavors (Murdock et al., 2000). These may lead to adolescence seeking relief through the use of marijuana, alcohol, and other drugs rather than talking to a counselor about their issues. Being personally involved with a counselor seems to reduce the immediate and urgent desire to escape through the use of drugs and alcohol (Cassel et al., 2000).

The role of counseling in schools today is not only as an advocate promoting student success, but also to define, monitor, and nurture students' aspirations. Identifying barriers that impede relationships between counselors and students may only be part of the problem. Counselors must work as change agents for the elimination of systemic barriers that impede academic success for all students (House & Martin, 1998). For counselors to be effective, they must be able to recognize the student at risk and foster relationships with these students that will help to promote a willingness to seek help.

<u>Purpose of the Study</u>

Given that violent behavior may be predicted by students' self-image, academic performance, and school involvement, will these characteristics also be related to students' willingness to seek help when faced with a crisis? These three factors will be explored for a possible relationship to students' willingness to seek help.

Hypothesis 1

Null: There is no correlation between high school students' self-image and seeking crisis counseling.

Alternative: There is a relationship between high school students' self-image and seeking crisis counseling.

Hypothesis 2

Null: There is no correlation between academic performance and seeking crisis counseling.

Alternative: Academic performance is related to seeking help in a crisis.

Hypothesis 3

Null: There is no correlation between high school student involvement and seeking crisis counseling.

Alternative: High school students' involvement in school activities is related to students' willingness to seek help in a crisis.

Importance and Scope of the Study

This study will examine the possible relationship of students' perceived self-image, academic performance, and involvement in extracurricular activities to students' willingness to seek help when faced with a crisis. Should this relationship exist, counselors may be able to identify students who need assistance but are less willing to seek crisis counseling. The results from this study may be used to create and establish relationships with a counselor that the student will be willing to utilize.

Organization of Report

Chapter one serves to introduce the reader to certain background characteristic of students and how they relate to acting out behaviors and some issues that public schools face. The importance of research in the area of student willingness to seek help from a counselor when faced with a crisis is also addressed. Chapter one also includes the following topics: introduction, problem statement, purpose of the study, hypothesis, and importance of the study.

Chapter two focuses on the literature review. This chapter addresses the relationship between students' positive self-beliefs and a relationship to higher academic performance. Characteristic, such as gender, were also examined as factors that may influences a students' attitude and inhibit them from seeking help from a counselor. The relationship between a sense of school connectedness or belonging and risk behaviors in adolescents, as well as some essential interventions that improved school bonding and commitment from students are examined. The topics in the literature review that were examined and reviewed help to establish the importance of further research in this area.

Chapter three describes the methods that were used in this study. The main topics that are covered in chapter three are the participants, procedure, data collection, data processing analysis, methodological assumptions, limitations and conceptual hypotheses. Chapter four describes the results of this study. Chapter five provides a review of the study, limitations of the study, as well as recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

<u>Review of the Literature</u>

 <u>Self-Belief as Predictor of Academic Issues</u>

Enhancing a students' positive self-belief may help to reinforce positive

achievements from students. One area that is predictive of students' achievement is self-

efficacy, which emphasizes students' beliefs in their own ability to complete academic

task (House, 1999). For instance, students' self-ratings of their mathematical ability,

overall academic ability, and self-confidence in their intellectual ability were

significantly correlated with academic performance (House, 2000).

Another area is the teacher-student relationship and peer relationships that involve

evaluative feedback in relationship to an individuals' self-concept. Positive teacher-

student relationships as well as supportive peer relationships have also been identified as

predictive factors of motivation and achievement among early adolescents (Murdock et

al., 2000). Positive feedback is considered pleasing and credible while negative feedback

is considered unpleasant, regardless of whether the feedback is congruent with one's self-

concept. This feedback can stimulate a variety of reactions, including formal reactions

(e.g. examination grade, job performance evaluation), or informal reactions (e.g. a spouse

or friends passing comments about an individuals' abilities) (Woo & Frank, 2000).

Additionally there is a relationship between self-talk and self-esteem. Positive

self-talk elicits positive self-esteem (Burnett & McCrindle, 1999). Individuals tend to

show greater receptivity to the feedback that reinforces their self-evaluation; that is to

say, feedback that is conducive to their self-verification. Feedback that is incongruent

with the self-concept is less frequently attributed to the self, is perceived as less credible, and may produce negative affect in the recipient. Then, individuals with high self-esteem would find negative feedback unbelievable and unpleasant, and those with low self-esteem would invalidate positive feedback (Burnett & McCrindle, 1999).

Academic Performance

Results have clearly shown that the most important predictor of academic performance is student past academic performance, implying that students with prior indications of low academic performances should be encouraged to seek assistance from others (Borde, 1998). Two factors that appear to be related to academic performance and withdrawal from school are students' academic self-concept and their achievement expectancies. Academic self-concept refers to a student's attitudes and motivation towards achievement. Achievement expectancies are self-ratings as measured by the probability of graduating with honors, making at least a B average, getting a bachelor's degree, and transformed ratings of failing one or more courses in college, needing extra time to graduate, and getting tutoring assistance (House, 2000). Numerous studies have found a significant relationship between adolescent students' academic self-concept and their subsequent academic performance. The results from these studies suggest that higher levels of academic self-concept are associated with higher levels of academic achievement (House, 2000).

School Connectedness

Another area of concern is a students' need to belong, or to feel a sense of significance and importance. A students' pride and personal feelings of gratification that

are derived largely from group membership, is a basic need for all individuals (Edwards, 1995). When students, regardless of age, feel as though they do not have a place in school, will also feel as though they do not have a place in society (Edwards, 1995).

It is believed that there is a strong inverse relationship between school connectedness and at risk behaviors in adolescents. Low levels of acceptance by peers, high levels of conflict with peers, and aggression from peers are associated with delinquent and violent behavior (Shafii & Shafii, 2001). Not only is a lack of connectedness associated with violent behavior, it is also associated with academic performance. That is, students who feel a sense of belonging have higher expectations of academic success (Edwards, 1995). In one study, Bonny, Britto, Klostermann, Hornung, & Slap, (2000) found that several modifiable factors had a significant association with school connectedness. Specifically, students with higher school connectedness reported better academic performance, more extracurricular involvement, better physical health and better psychological well-being.

Students who become heavily involved in extracurricular activities tend to be model students and seldom get involved in delinquency and crime. Becoming part of a larger whole as in a team activity gives the student a personal feeling of belongingness, pride, and bonding that offers a substitute for escaping into a world of drug and alcohol use (Cassel et al., 2000). Interventions designed to increase school bonding and school commitment for students, were effective for reducing violent behaviors from students at age 18 (Bonny et al., 2000).

Barriers to Seeking Help

Key questions that must be asked are, when faced with a crisis, are students who have a positive view of mental illness more willing to seek help? And are those having a negative view of mental illness less willing to seek help? Leong (1999) believes people with positive attitudes about help seeking are more likely to perceive the counselor as trustworthy, expert, empathetic, and genuine in the relationship. Socially restricted opinions about mental illness suggest that there is something wrong with people who have psychological problems. One barrier to this seeking help was the masculine view to be independent and conceal vulnerability (Davies, McCrae, Frank, Dochnahl, Pickering, Harrison, Zakrzewski, & Wilson, 2000). People who hold restrictive attitudes are likely to believe that there is something wrong with them if they themselves need to seek help, creating a great deal of defensiveness about counseling and psychotherapy (Leong, 1999).

Studies have revealed that students perceive barriers when giving consideration to seeking help for either physical health needs or emotional health concerns. One important area appears to involve issues associated with gender, such as adhering to gender roles or having gender stereotype beliefs. These stereotype beliefs and behaviors, observed in adults, can be shown to exist for children and adolescents ranging in age from 10 years to 19 years (Leong, 1999). Traditional male stereotypes portray men as strong, self-reliant and aggressive, which may indicate that men are more likely to perpetuate violence than are woman (Shafii & Shafii, 2001). Leongs' (1999) research also suggests that individuals who adopt stereotypically masculine attitudes are less

willing to seek help. These stereotypes, including males as stoic, appear to restrict the males' openness and willingness to seek help. From an early age, boys are discouraged from seeking help by peers, parents, and other adults (Leong, 1999). According to Davies et al. (2000), peer approval is so important that it may also pressure young men to engage in risk-seeking behavior, such as alcohol and drug abuse, to prove their manhood and acceptance by others. Despite the awareness of health concerns, most males identified substantial barriers that limit their taking action. With males, the primary barrier appears to be a need to be independent and conceal their vulnerability. Males feel pressure from peers and society in general to reflect command over their environment (Davies et al., 2000). Females, on the other hand, are more open to seeking help because they have a more positive attitude toward seeking psychological help (Davies et al., 2000). Moreover, other research shows that female students have more positive attitudes towards seeking help than do male students (Rule & Gandy, 1994). Adherence to gender stereotype behaviors and beliefs may be particularly important in early adolescence. According to the gender intensification hypothesis, (Hill & Lynch, 1983) as puberty begins, the secondary sexual characteristics become evident to social agents (teachers, parents, and other adults). These agents, in turn, put pressure on the developing adolescent to engage in more adult-like behaviors, including emphasis on gender stereotypical behaviors. In research by Galambos, Almeida & Petersen (1990) these gender stereotypical differences between boys and girls begin to surface around 12 to 14 years and increase with age. There have been numerous studies done to investigate for possible barriers to seeking help, but the direct influence of a students' perceived self-

image, school activity involvement and academic performance to their willingness to

seek help may have relevant importance and will be the focus of this research.

Chapter 3

Method

Participants

This was a non-experimental, exploratory study that involved a convenience

sample of 87 primarily Caucasian students (45 males, 42 females). These students were

enrolled in a public school system in the community of Council Bluffs, IA. Census

records from 2001 suggest that households of this school had an average income of

$23,187 per year. This suggests that the sample was largely working class. Participants'

ages ranged from 14 to 19 years ($\underline{M}$ age = 15.5 years).

Procedure

Prior to soliciting individuals to participate in this study, the researcher submitted

an IRB application for Non-Therapeutic Research and received approval number 384-01-

EP from the University of Nebraska Medical Center (see Appendix A). Permission from

the administration of the school was received and prior to meeting with the students the

researcher met with the instructors from each class to explain the nature and purpose of

the study, as well as the procedures involved. Interested students were given Parent

Consent forms for their parents to complete prior to testing day.

At the beginning of each class, the researcher gave instructions for proper

procedures for the participants to follow. Those who volunteered to participate in the

study were given a Youth Consent Form (for those ages 14 to 17) or an Adult Consent

Form (for those participants 18 years and older). All consent forms contained

information about the research design and a phone number for the researcher if the

participants had any questions or concerns regarding their participation. All participants were informed that they may withdraw from the study at any time and their decision would not affect their relationship with the investigator or the administration and faculty of the school they presently attended.

Data were collected using a 33-item questionnaire designed by the researcher specifically for this study. Participants were given a brief explanation of the purpose of the study prior to answering any questions. They were then instructed to read each question carefully and to circle the appropriate response that best represented their feelings about themselves and their relationship with others. When the questionnaires were complete, they were collected. Participants then had the opportunity to address any questions or concerns regarding the study with the researcher

The use of a numerical identification system on each questionnaire, rather than participants' names, allowed for identification while ensuring confidentiality. After all questionnaires were collected, the research data were kept in the possession of the researcher and were not accessible to anyone outside of the research committee. Once the data were collected and analyzed, a closing letter was given to all instructors to read to their students expressing gratitude for their participation. The letter also explained that the results of the study were to be available to anyone interested by contacting the researcher at the university directly. Participants were given extra credit from their instructor whether they participated or not (this was determined on the basis of which students returned their parental and adult consent forms to the investigator).

Measures

The questionnaire items were first grouped according to expert judgment into categories representing the dependent and independent variables. Next, the items for each construct were examined using Cronbach's alpha, which is a measure of internal consistency. From these analyses, the following scales were created.

Students' willingness to seek help. A total of eleven items were used to assess students' willingness to seek help from others in general (e.g., a friend or teacher) or from a counselor in particular (see Appendix B). The participants were asked to indicate their willingness to seek help by answering *Yes* (coded as 2) or *No* (coded as 1) to the items (sample item: You feel that the school counselor can help you if you have a problem in a class; Refer to Appendix A for all items). Initial analyses indicated that one of five items from willingness to seek help from others needed to be dropped and two of six items from willingness to seek help from a counselor needed to be dropped. Final analyses indicated that the Cronbach alphas for this sample were .60 and .83 (respectively). Scales were then created using the sum of the four remaining items for each scale. Higher scores indicated more willingness to seek help from others in general or from a counselor.

An additional categorical item was used to determine from whom individuals prefer to seek help concerning academic issues, with the possible responses of *a friend, a teacher, a family member, a school counselor, or none of the above.*

Students' self-image. Fourteen items were created to assess individuals' perceived self-image (see Appendix B). These items tapped participants' perceptions of

control (e.g., "You feel as though you control your successes and failures"), competence (e.g., "You are proud of your successes"), well-being (e.g., "Most of the time you feel good about yourself"), and being accepted by others (e.g., "When you are with others in a group you are a leader of the group"). The participants responded using the same *Yes/No* format. Of the original fourteen items, three were dropped for low item-total correlations, with a resulting Cronbach alpha of .62. A scale was created by summing the remaining eleven items, with higher scores indicating higher self-image.

Student's academic performance. One item on the Student High School Experience Questionnaire was used to measure student academic performance (see Appendix B). This item was a self-report of students' academic performance, asking students to indicate their current cumulative academic performance using the following categories: *A* (4), *B* (3), *C* (2), or *D or below* (1) (coding is reported in parenthesis). The mean academic performance for this sample was a low B.

Students' involvement in school activities. Six items, assessing involvement in school activities (see Appendix B), asked participants to indicate whether or not they were involved in a variety of school activities (i.e., using the *Yes/No* response format to items such as "You are currently involved in school activities such as clubs or sports"). On the basis of the internal consistency analyses, three items were dropped, with a final Cronbach alpha of .49 for this sample. Although this alpha is considered marginal, a decision was made to retain the scale for exploratory analysis. Summing the remaining three items, higher scores indicate more involvement in school activities.

Chapter 4

Results

The primary goal of this study was to investigate the relationship between students' willingness to seek help and their self-image, academic performance, and school involvement.

Descriptive analyses

Initial descriptive analyses were conducted to determine the amount of variability among the study's variables and the average (Table 1). The descriptive statistics indicate that for seeking help from counselor and for academic performance, there was sufficient variability. In addition, examining the histograms indicated that only academic performance approximated a normal distribution. Three variables, seeking help from others, self-image, and school involvement, are negatively skewed, meaning that most students had higher scores on these variables.

Inter-correlations between the dependent variables

The correlation between seeking help from others in general and seeking help from a counselor (Table 2) in particular was not significant, $r = .12$, $p > .10$. This suggests that these two types of help seeking are largely independent.

Inter-correlations between the independent variables

The inter-correlations between students' self image, academic performance, and school involvement were calculated. The results are reported in Table 2. Significant correlations were found between students' self-image and academic performance ($r = .51$, $p < .01$), school involvement ($r = .29$, $p < .01$), and students' age ($r = .25$, $p < .05$).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for study variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Possible Range
Seek help from others	7.3	1.0	1 to 8
Seek help counselor	5.7	1.6	1 to 8
Whom to seek[a]	Friend		
Self image	19.2	2.1	1 to 22
School involvement	5.3	0.9	1 to 6
Academic performance	2.7	0.9	1 to 4

[a]Modal response is provided for categorical variables.

Table 2

Construct inter-correlations.

Variables	Help from others	Help from counselor	Student self-image	Student academic performance	Involved in activities	Age
Help from others						
Help from counselor	.12					
Student self-image	.17	-.04				
Student academic performance	.11	-.14	.51**			
Involved in activities	.10	-.05	.29**	.25**		
Age	.17	-.14	.25*	-.06	-.13	
Gender	.36**	.15	.17	.17	.12	-.06

Note. N = 87

*p<.05. **p<.01.

That is, having a better self-image was associated with having a higher academic performance and more school involvement. In addition, older students had better self-image than younger students. Gender and willingness to seek help from someone other than a counselor was also significantly correlated ($r = .36$, $p < .01$), suggesting that females were more willing to seek help from a counselor than were males. Involvement in school activities and students' academic performance was also significantly correlated, ($r = .25$, $p < .01$). This suggests that students who are more involved in school also have higher academic performances than students who are less involved in school.

Hypotheses 1: The relationship between student self-image and seeking crisis counseling

Pearson product moment correlations were calculated between the two help-seeking variables and self-image. There was a non-significant correlation between students' self-image and seeking help from others, $r = .17$, $p > .10$, where students with better self-images more often sought help from others than students with poorer self images. The lack of significance may have been due to a lack of power ($n = 87$). In addition, there was not a significant correlation between student self-image and seeking help from a counselor, $r = -.04$, $p > .10$. Thus, there was no support for the alternative hypothesis that a relationship would be found between students' self-image and help seeking.

Hypothesis 2: The relationship between cumulative academic performance and seeking crisis counseling

Students' academic performance correlated negatively, but not significantly, with willingness to seek help from a counselor, $r = -.14$, $p > .10$, nor was the correlation

between academic performance and seeking help from someone other than a counselor significant, $r = .11$, $p > .10$. These results do not support the alternative hypothesis that states that there is a correlation between students' academic performance and their willingness to seek help from a counselor or from someone other than a counselor.

Hypothesis 3: Relationship between student school involvement to willingness to seek crisis counseling

Students' involvement in school activities were not correlated with seeking help from a counselor $r = -.05$, $p > .10$, nor correlated with seeking help from someone other than a counselor $r = .10$, $p > .10$. These results suggest that there is no correlation between students' involvement in school activities and their willingness to seek crisis counseling. These results do not support the third alternative hypothesis that there is a relationship between students' involvement in school activities and seeking help from a counselor or from someone other than a counselor.

Additional analyses

Given that there is prior research suggesting that there are gender differences in help-seeking and these gender differences may be consistent with the results of this study (i.e., a significant correlation between gender and seeking help from others), additional analyses were conducted exploring the possibility that the relationships between self-image, academic performance, school involvement, and help-seeking may be dependent on gender. In other words, gender would act as a moderator for these relationships, modifying the nature of the association between help-seeking and the other variables

(Baron & Kenny, 1986). The correlations were calculated again, after splitting the

sample by gender. Results are reported in Table 3.

The relationship between student self-image and seeking crisis counseling, moderated by

gender.

When split by gender, there is a correlation between seeking help to self-image. For

boys, there was a weak negative correlation between self-image to seeking help from a

counselor r = -.13, p > .10, and for seeking help from others, a weak positive correlation

is present r = .14, p > .10. For girls, there is no correlation between self-image and

seeking help from a counselor r = -.02, p > .10, with a weak correlation between self-

image and seeking help from someone other than a counselor r = .13, p > .10. Because

power is reduced in these analyses, these findings can only be considered preliminary and

must interpreted with caution. These correlations suggest that lower self-image for boys

and higher self-image for girls are related to more help seeking from a counselor. In

contrast, both boys and girls seek help from others when they have better self-image.

Although these correlations were not significant, it is intriguing that they were in opposite

directions for the two genders.

The relationship between cumulative academic performance and seeking crisis

counseling, moderated by gender.

When split by gender, there is a weak negative correlation between seeking help

from a counselor to academic performance for boys r =-.17, p > .10,

Table 3

Inter-correlations split by gender

Variables	Help from others	Help from counselor	Student self-image	Student academic performance	Involved in activities	Age
Help from others		-.00	.14	.07	.02	.39**
Help from counselor	.22$^+$		-.13	-.17	-.30*	.08
Student self-image	.13	-.02		.31*	.11	.25$^+$
Student academic performance	.02	-.17	.67**		.06	.01
Involved in activities	.13	.14	.41**	.40**		.18$^+$
Age	-.20$^+$	-.38*	.30$^+$	-.06	-.13	

Note. Top half of matrix are the correlations for boys, bottom half for girls. $\underline{N}$ = 45 boys, and ranges from 41 to 42 for girls.

$^+$p<.10. *p<.05. **p<.01.

and no correlation between seeking help from someone other than a counselor to academic performance $r =.07$, $p > .10$. For girls, the correlation was weak and negative between academic performance and seeking help from a counselor $r = -.17$, $p > .10$, and no correlation between to seeking help from someone other than a counselor $r = .02$, $p > .10$. Because the magnitude and direction of the correlations are so similar, gender probably did not act as a moderator for the relationships.

The relationship between student school involvement to willingness to seek crisis counseling, moderated by gender.

When split by gender, there is a weak negative correlation between seeking help from a counselor to school activity involvement for boys $r =-.30$, $p < .05$, and no correlation between seeking help from someone other than a counselor to school activity involvement $r = .02$, $p > .10$. For girls, there was no correlation between school activity involvement and seeking help from a counselor $r = .14$, $p > .10$, and seek help from someone other than a counselor $r = .13$, $p > .10$.

Additional correlations split by gender

Willingness to seek help from a counselor has a significant correlation to students' age. For girls, there is a significant negative correlation $r = -.38$, $p < .05$, with no significant correlation for boys $r = .08$, $p > .10$. Willingness to seek help from someone other than a counselor had a significant correlation to students' age for boys and girls, $r = .39$, $p < .01$, and $r = -.20$, $p < .10$ respectfully.

Other differences by gender included the relationship of students' school activity involvement and academic performance, as well as willingness to seek help. In addition,

the correlations between willingness to seek help from others to willingness to seek help from a counselor differed for boys and girls. Specifically, for girls there was a significant relationship between school involvement and academic performance, $r = .40$, $p < .01$; whereas there was no significant relationship for boys, $r = .06$, $p > .10$, suggesting that girls who are more involved in school (compared to girls who are less involved) have higher academic performance. Whereas no significant correlation was found between school involvement and willingness to seek help from a counselor for girls, $r = .14$, $p > .10$; for boys, there is a significant negative correlation, $r = -.30$, $p < .05$. This suggests that there may be no relationship for girls, but boys who are less involved in school seek help from counselors more than boys who are more involved in school. For girls, there was also a significant relationship between seeking help from others and seeking help from a counselor, $r = .22$ $p < .10$, whereas there was no significant association for boys, $r = -.00$, $p > .10$. For girls only then, those who seek help from others tend to seek help from counselors.

Tests of Significance between Differing Correlations

Although some of the correlations evinced differences based on gender, it is not clear that these differences are significant. A full test of the gender as a moderator requires a significance test, therefore Fischer's z tests were conducted (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). This test entails first transforming the correlation coefficients and then testing the difference between the correlations using the following formula.

$$z = \frac{rz_1 - rz_2}{\sqrt{1/(n_1 - 3) + 1/(n_2 - 3)}}$$

Specifically, the difference of the transformed correlation coefficients is divided by the square root of summed reciprocals of each sample minus the degrees of freedom. The z value is then compared against the critical value from a Student's t table (using infinity as the degrees of freedom). Accordingly, the critical values for two-tailed z tests at the $\underline{p} < .10$ is 1.645, for $\underline{p} < .05$ is 1.960, and for $\underline{p} < .01$ is 2.326. The results of four Fischer's z tests are provided in Table 4. The results suggest that the gender differences between the correlations for age and seeking help (from others and from counselors) are significantly different, as are the gender differences between the correlations for school involvement and seeking help from counselors.

Gender and help-seeking

Given that gender differences were found between boys and girls willingness to seek help, one final analysis was conducted to determine from whom boys and girls sought help. Using the categorical variable of help seeking, a chi-square analysis with gender was conducted. The results suggested that boys are not significantly different in whom they turn to in general, χ^2 (4, 87) = .359, $\underline{p} < .10$. That is, students were asked to identify their first choice concerning academic issues, data showed that the most frequently identified group was a friend. Other groups identified by order of frequency were family member, teacher, and school counselor.

Table 4

Fischer's z values for correlations split by gender

	Males		Females		
Variables	Correlation	Z transformation	Correlation	Z transformation	Z value
Help from others & help from counselor	-.00	-.000	.22	.224	-1.01
Help from others & age	.39	.412	-.20	-.203	2.77**
Help from counselor & school involvement	-.30	-.310	.14	.141	-2.03*
Help from counselor & age	.08	.080	-.38	-.400	2.16*

*p<.05. **p<.01.

Chapter 5

<u>Discussion</u>

Regarding the original hypotheses, testing the relationship of help seeking to self-image, academic performance, and school involvement, no support was found. Because a relationship emerged between gender and help seeking, the same hypotheses, moderated by gender, were examined.

Regarding gender, analyses suggest younger girls, in contrast to older girls, seek help from both counselors and others in general. This could be because girls tend to be more communally oriented than boys and girls may have a larger support network than boys (Leong, 1999). In contrast, younger boys seek help less from others. Also there was no relationship between age and seeking help from counselor for boys. This may be explained by the gender intensification hypothesis that suggest with younger adolescents, increased socialization pressure to conform to traditional masculine and feminine roles increases with age. This may suggest that as boys grow older, seeking help may be viewed as socially less acceptable. In addition, girls who are more involved in school seek help from counselors more than girls who are less involved. For boys however, the relationship is reversed: less involved boys seek more help from counselors than more involved boys. Taken together, these results suggest crisis counseling may need to be tailored to boys and girls differentially.

In considering whom adolescents are likely to turn to, based on the replies from question 13 on the High School Experience Questionnaire (If you were to share how you felt about receiving a poor test grade with just one person, that person would be), results

suggest that a first choice would be a friend, second choice is a family member, and third choice is a teacher. From the total number of responses, only one reply out of 87 selected the counselor as their preference. This suggest that when the students in this sample want help with academic concerns, the person they would most likely turn to would be a friend, family member, and then teacher. Interpretation of this statement needs to be handled cautiously as to why students may not consider a counselor for help with course work concerns. For example, a student may not consider course work concerns a responsibility of the school counselor. Further investigation may be needed to determine if the school counselor would be the students' preference regarding issues involving personal or emotional needs.

Although the results did not show a relationship between student's self-image, academic performance, and activity involvement to willingness to seek help, a number of issues make it important to interpret the null findings with caution. One factor to consider is the participants of the study. The sample size of 87 was relatively small and may lack power to have the weakest relationship be significant. Additionally, overall variability in general may have been low and there may have been ceiling effects for some of the variables such as the self-reported academic performance and involvement in activities. The fact that all participants are from the same public school in the community of Council Bluffs, Iowa may have contributed to the lack of variability and skewed results. Results may vary if tested against other students in other schools within the community.

Another limiting factor that may have contributed to the findings of this study is the self-reported academic performance. Because it was self-reported and not supported by school records, there may be some inaccuracies regarding the academic performance information. Students with lower academic performance may not be willing to disclose information accurately for a number of reasons; for example, it may also be possible that some students are not aware of their actual academic performance and have either under or over estimated their true grade point average. These possible inaccuracies (measurement error) could weaken the statistical relationships.

A final limitation may include the validity and reliability of the 33-point questionnaire designed by the researcher for use in this study. Items for each construct were examined using Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency, which produced marginal alpha levels. Additional factor analysis refinement may help to improve reliability of construct. More studies effectively utilizing and improving this questionnaire may help to refine and establish test validity and reliability.

Results of this study suggest that self-image and student school involvement in activities may be significant factors involved in a students' willingness to seek help, but that this depends on the gender of the adolescent. That is, stereotypical expectations may be placed on students to act and behave in ways that would discourage them from seeking help. Another implication may be that students are not comfortable sharing their personal issues with the school counselor. Students may view their school counselors as someone with whom they may turn to for advice in non-crisis issues (i.e. academic and career

planning), and because of these responsibilities, students may not view school counselors as someone to turn to for issues that involve personal and emotions concerns.

Considering prior research suggest that patterns of behaviors of students in early years may predict behaviors later on (Rule & Gandy, 1994), other sources of information outside the school environment could prove useful. Networking between community counselors, who work with the youth population, and school counselors may prove beneficial in the development and implementation of programs to encourage positive working relationships between students and school counselors.

A final consideration that needs to be addressed is the causal direstion of the effects examined. Students who may be struggling with poor academic performance may not be able to turn to others for help because of a poor social network. This poor social network may contribute to a low level of self-esteem in which they believe that they cannot succeed academically. This pattern of self-defeating beliefs and behaviors may become a repeating cycle that may prevent the student from seeking help.

Continued study in students' willingness to seek help during a crisis is important. Additionally, research examining the inter-correlations that developed as a result of this study, (i.e. possible correlation between student self-image and age) are also areas that need to be explored. Of special importance is the research that helps to develop and promote programs that will define the barriers that prevent students from seeking help from a counselor and help to establish rapport building relationships that will improve the image that students have towards counseling.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

University
of Nebraska
Medical Center

Nebraska's Health Science Center

A Partner with Nebraska Health System

October 12, 2001

Ralph Orsi
Kayser Hall 421- Counselor Education
UNO - VIA COURIER

IRB # 384-01-EP

TITLE OF PROPOSAL: A Correlational Study Of Student Self-Image, Academic Performance, and School Involvement to Seeking School Crisis Counseling

SECONDARY INVESTIGATORS:

DATE OF FULL BOARD REVIEW _____   DATE OF EXPEDITED REVIEW 09-19-01

DATE OF FINAL APPROVAL   10-12-01   VALID UNTIL 09-19-02

EXPEDITED CATEGORY OF REVIEW: 45CFR46.110; 21CFR56.110, Category 7

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects has completed its review of the above-titled protocol and informed consent document(s), including any revised material submitted in response to the IRB's review. The Board has expressed it as their opinion that you are in compliance with HHS Regulations (45 CFR 46) and applicable FDA Regulations (21 CFR 50.56) and you have provided adequate safeguards for protecting the rights and welfare of the subjects to be involved in this study. The IRB has, therefore, granted unconditional approval of your research project. This letter constitutes official notification of the final approval and release of your project by the IRB, and you are authorized to implement this study as of the above date of final approval.

Please be advised that only the IRB approved and stamped consent/assent form can be used to make copies to enroll subjects. Also, at the time of consent all subjects/representatives must be given a copy of the rights of research participants. The IRB wishes to remind you that the PI or Co-PI, is responsible for ensuring that ethically and legally effective informed consent has been obtained from all research subjects.

Finally, under the provisions of this institution's Multiple Project Assurance (MPA #1509), the PI/Co-PI is directly responsible for submitting to the IRB any proposed change in the research or the consent document(s). In addition, any unanticipated adverse events involving risk to the subject or others must be promptly reported to the IRB. This project is subject to periodic review and surveillance by the IRB and, as part of their surveillance, the IRB may request periodic reports of progress and results. For projects which continue beyond one year, it is the responsibility of the principal investigator to initiate a request to the IRB for continuing review and update of the research project.

Sincerely,

Ernest D. Prentice by AE

Ernest D. Prentice, Ph.D.
Co-Chair, IRB

EDP/kje

Appendix B

Student High School Experience Questionnaire Scales

Willingness to Seek Help (General)

14. You feel that you can benefit by talking to others about your issues.
    o Yes
    o No
15. You feel that talking to someone else about your issues is important
    o Yes
    o No
21. You believe that when something is bothering you should share it with someone you trust.
    o Yes
    o No
27. When making an important decision you feel comfortable seeking the opinion of other's before making the decision.
    o Yes
    o No

Willingness to Seek Help (Counselor)

16. You feel that the school counselor can help you if you have a problem in a class.
    o Yes
    o No
20. You feel comfortable talking to your school counselor about your problems.
    o Yes
    o No
29. You would be comfortable talking to your counselor about your problems.
    o Yes
    o No
32. If you answered yes to question 31, would you feel comfortable talking about your concerns to your college counselor?
    o Yes
    o No

Individuals' preference to seek help from

13. If you were to share how you felt about receiving a poor test grade with just one person, that person would be
    o Friend
    o Teacher
    o Family
    o School counselor
    o None of the above

Students' self-image

1.   Most of the time you feel good about yourself.
      o   Yes
      o   No

3.   You are a self-directed individual who finishes most tasks on your own.
      o   Yes
      o   No

4.   You feel as though you control your successes and failures.
      o   Yes
      o   No

5.   When you are with others in a group you are a leader of the group.
      o   Yes
      o   No

6.   The goals you set for yourself are ones that you accomplish successfully.
      o   Yes
      o   No

8.   When you work at a task, you follow through with it until it is complete.
      o   Yes
      o   No

12.   If you received a poor grade on a test that you felt you did not deserved, you would keep to yourself.
      o   Yes
      o   No

22.   You get good grades on test because you study and earned it.
      o   Yes
      o   No

25.   You adapt to changes easily.
      o   Yes
      o   No

26.   Things happen to you as a result of luck, good or bad.
      o   Yes
      o   No

28.   You are proud of your successes.
      o   Yes
      o   No

Students' involvement in school activities

2. When in a group of your friends you feel as though you are included in the group.
   - o Yes
   - o No
9. When working on school assignments you prefer working on your own.
   - o Yes
   - o No
17. You are currently involved in school activities such as clubs or sports.
   - o Yes
   - o No
18. Being involved in school related activities, such as sports or clubs is just as important as getting good grades.
   - o Yes
   - o No
19. You know your school counselor personally.
   - o Yes
   - o No
30. You were involved in clubs, sports or organizations in high school while you were a: (check all that Apply)
   - A. __Freshman
   - B. __Sophomore
   - C. __Junior
   - D. __Senior

Student's academic performance.

11. Your high school cumulative academic performance is
   - o A
   - o B
   - o C
   - o D or below