

**VALHALLA WILDERNESS PROGRAM: A MODEL FOR ALTERNATIVE
EDUCATION AND ITS EFFECT ON GIRLS' SELF-ESTEEM**

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Dedication

This degree is dedicated to my husband, Dale. Without your love, support, assistance and the hours of proofreading throughout this long process, I would not have accomplished my goal. This degree is as much mine as it is yours.

This degree is also dedicated to my late mother. My mother instilled in me the love and excitement of learning. She showed me how education, books and learning can transcend time, dismantle barriers and overcome distance. She taught me the value of education and why women especially need it. Thank-you for the lessons. I love and miss you dearly.

Lastly, this degree is dedicated to the nine wonderful young women I got to know through this project. I was honored that you let me in on your thoughts personally and the wonderful program you participated in this year. I wish each of you good luck on all your future endeavors and I am sure the lessons you learned this year will last you a life time. Thank-you for helping me finish this program. Best wishes.

Abstract

The Valhalla Wilderness Program: A Model for Alternative Education and Its Effect on Girls' Self-Esteem, is a two credit project designed to measure the impact the program had on self-esteem in females aged 14 to 15 years of age, at WE Graham School in Slocan British Columbia during the 2000 - 2001 school year. The rationale for this study is to explain how the girls in the program, view themselves and their sense of self-efficacy before and after the grade 9 program at WE Graham School. This will be accomplished by examining pre and post data using standardized, norm referenced self-esteem inventories as well as a Focus Group Interview. Administration of the pre and post assessment tools will take place in December 2000 and the post-assessment will take place six months later in June 2001. The standardized assessment tools are the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and the Student Self Concept Scale. The Focus Group Interview will consist of six questions about the Wilderness Program and how it affects the way the girls view themselves and their abilities over the course of six months in the program.

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Chapter 1: The Valhalla Wilderness Program

Introduction

During the summer of 2000, I accepted a Teaching contract at WE Graham School in Slocan City, British Columbia. During my interview, the principal, Marion Hunter described to me the school's Wilderness Program. In describing the program to me, she mentioned that it had been recognized and awarded on a national level. Ever since our first conversation about this unique program, I was very intrigued to say the least. I distinctly remember how the research question popped right into my head during a District Wide Steven Covey workshop in Nelson, BC, early in September 2000. I remember trying to find the Wilderness Teacher during that workshop to ask him if I could research his female students. My research into this fascinating program began this way. The following information was taken from the WE Graham: Wilderness School's Handbook.

The Slocan Valley has a unique population with varied beliefs, talents, values and lifestyles. The physical landscape surrounding this community offers a multitude of opportunities for wilderness travel and exploration of the natural world. The Valhalla Wilderness School provides an opportunity for students in grade 9 or 10 to integrate their academic studies with experiential activities in the outdoors.

Mission Statement

Valhalla Wilderness School follows curriculum guidelines for grade 9 and 10 and integrates classroom studies with self-propelled wilderness activities to provide opportunities to learn skills, attitudes and knowledge which:

- (1) enable students to gain self-confidence in their ability to face challenges in various aspects of their lives;
- (2) enhance interest in learning and desire to pursue further education;
- (3) help students to make decisions and evaluations which increase their ability to travel safely in the wilderness;
- (4) develop an appreciation for the natural world.

Program Structure

Valhalla Wilderness School (VWS) provides different challenges for students who

have a keen interest in the outdoors and are capable of achieving academic standards. Academic curriculum is integrated with wilderness studies as much as possible. Subjects which cannot be integrated are taught as discrete units. Classroom studies involve students in a variety of experiences that range from cooperative, higher order thinking, hands-on projects to textbook questions and answers. Outdoor activities include backpacking, mountain biking, canoeing and kayaking, ski touring, winter camping and rock climbing. The VWS curriculum which students are evaluated on includes:

Math 9A, 9, 10	Leadership and Group Skills
Social Studies 9, 10	Safety
Science 9, 10	Cooking
English 9, 10	Minimum Impact
French 9, 10	Technical Skills
CAPP 9, 10	

Students spend approximately 60% of school time in classrooms and 40% of the time is spent in the field. This amounts to an average schedule of one day per week on a day trip and seven 4-5 day trips during the year.

French is taught by one of the teachers at W.E. Graham main school.

Aims and Objectives

Valhalla Wilderness School combines experiences (adventure education) with classroom studies to involve students actively in meaningful learning. By integrating the curriculum, students can see the connections between different subjects and the relevance to their own lives. The requirement to complete assignments and achieve passing grades before participation on trips develops self-discipline and responsibility towards learning. VWS introduces students to the technical skills, safety and decision making, and knowledge of the natural world which can provide the basic skills from which interested individuals may pursue further education and potentially a career in the rapidly expanding field of wilderness management and outdoor recreation. The physical challenges of adventure activities, along with meal planning, preparation and discussions about nutrition all help students earn a respect for awareness of health and

physical fitness. Students gain leadership and group skills as they work together, problem solve and communicate effectively to safely confront physical challenges and potentially adverse conditions.

Goals

1. To provide an academic program which meets all the requirements for grade 9 or 10.
2. To provide an opportunity for students to develop an increased safety consciousness and to consistently demonstrate this commitment to safe practices through sound judgment and decision making.
3. To provide an opportunity for students to learn wilderness travel (self-propelled), safety, outdoor living and survival skills and minimum impact through outdoor education experiences.
4. To create an educational opportunity for students who are seeking different challenges at the grade 9 or 10 level.
5. To use provincially recommended curriculum and outdoor education activities to create an integrated program that is relevant, interesting and meaningful for students.
6. To provide an opportunity for students to benefit from the unique learning experiences available in the wilderness thereby enhancing personal growth. These include:
 - a respect for and awareness of health and physical fitness
 - growth in interpersonal skills including communication, listening, trust building, group decision making
 - responsible and positive attitude towards learning (self-discipline, study skills, academic accountability)
 - leadership skills
 - an understanding and appreciation of the natural world (wilderness ethic)
 - a safety consciousness in all aspects of living
7. To increase the variety of education services that Kootenay Lake School District #8 provides to students.

Program Limitations

Valhalla Wilderness Program School is not an outreach, drop-in, or rehabilitation

program. It is not designed for students with severe learning or behavior problems. It is not the place to quit smoking, or deal with drug and alcohol dependencies. Students are expected to have passed all of their grade 8 academic courses prior to entry into VWS. They must demonstrate the ability to succeed academically and socially through school records and references from a previous teacher and one other adult. VWS teaches basic outdoor skills and as such is not designed for students wanting to learn advanced technical skills. Such students may apply if they are able to demonstrate a commitment and desire to learn leadership, safety and decision-making skills as their main non-academic goal in the program.

Outdoor Curriculum

Students will have the opportunity to learn a variety of wilderness living, safety and travel skills. Their competencies in these areas will be assessed throughout the year and a written report will be given at the end of the program. Valhalla Wilderness School outdoor curriculum includes the following:

Outdoor Living Skills. The outdoor living skills taught are: care and use of equipment; thermal balance, clothing, care and selection; shelter building; nutrition, meal planning and preparation; stove use and repair; fitness; survival techniques and weather knowledge.

Minimum Impact/No Trace Techniques. The rationale, theory, ethics of wilderness travel will be investigated as well as campsite selection; fire building; sanitation and waste disposal; consideration for different environments and travel.

Wilderness Travel (self-propelled) Wilderness travel includes packing; energy conservation; trail techniques; navigation and route finding; map reading; compass use and route plans.

Safety. Safety training includes wilderness first aid, CPR, and AR certification; hazard evaluation and risk analysis; weather considerations; survival; avalanche awareness; bear awareness; search and rescue and use of safety equipment.

Technical Skills. Technical skills include rock climbing (toproping, rappelling, ascending ropes, communication and belaying); mountain biking (trail techniques, pacing and cadence); ski touring (basic, intermediate, advanced telemark turns,

climbing); backpacking; canoeing/kayaking (strokes, steering, capsized recovery, survival swim.)

Integrated Curriculum

Certain portions of the grade 9 and 10 curriculum can be integrated, both between subject areas and with wilderness education. Sample integrated themes are as follows. In Social Studies, the role of waterways in development of Canada to 1914, review of the BC economic activities (dams, exportation of water), how to map the waterways and investigate the Columbia river system and traditional native travel will be covered. Students will also learn about local history of travel, exploration of mountain ranges and impact of mountains on economic development. In Science, students will gain knowledge in water testing, macroinvertebrates, simple reactions, and atomic structure. Students will also learn how mountains were formed in different regions (earth forces); about fossils and geology. In Math, students will learn how to measure volume, timing, flow and graphing skills. Wilderness Education will cover canoeing, kayaking, water purification and snow crystal analysis avalanches. Students will also learn how to measure slopes; apply Pythagorean theory and graph elevations of mountains. In English, students will read mountaineering literature; use of mountains as metaphor in literature; mountain poetry and journal as record of own experiences in the mountains. Wilderness Education will expose students to the skills of backpacking; mountain biking; trail building and impact of human use in mountains.

Application Process

Students who have completed all grade 8 academic courses and who have a strong interest in the outdoors may apply to VWS. There are a total of 24 spaces within the program, however, some of these may be filled by second year students. A complete application package must be provided to the school by June 1 of the previous school year to be guaranteed consideration. (Late applications may be considered but priority will be given to those accepted on time.) This package includes;

1. 250-500 word essay describing students' background, why he/she is interested in the program, outdoor experiences and interests, what he/she expects from a year with VWS and what he/she will contribute.

2. A completed Teacher Questionnaire from previous school year.
3. A copy of most recent report card.
4. One reference letter from coach, employer or teacher (Forms available from VWS)
5. All applicants may also be expected to attend an interview.

Upon preliminary acceptance into the program, students will be required to supply all previous school records, medical forms and first installment of fees by the end of the first week of classes. Final acceptance will occur once these conditions have been met.

Attendance

Students must attend classes and trips regularly. Critical planning, skill development and safety instruction occur on an ongoing basis which are prerequisites before trips. Every absence will be accompanied by a note from a parent or doctor, otherwise students will be expected to make up all time missed. Students who miss more than one long trip or two day trips will be put on probation and may face expulsion from the program.

Academic Standards

Students must complete all assignments and achieve a passing grade for academic courses. Detentions and make-up work may be assigned if these criteria are not met. If these actions do not remedy a problem situation, students will not be allowed to participate on trips. If students miss more than one long trip, the attendance policy is enforced as above. While the integrated nature of the academic courses allows for more efficiency in assignments such as a science report may also be marked for English skills, there are times when students have more homework than in regular school. Students must be self-disciplined and prepared to put the extra time in at home, so that the class can spend the time out of the classroom learning wilderness skills and enjoying the trips.

Fees

The nature of this program requires more financial support to work. Students are expected to pay base fees and course fees as per the rest of WE Graham at the beginning of each school year. In addition to this, VWS students must pay the first installment of program fees by the end of the first week of school in September. The

second installment is due on or before February 1 of that same school year. Our program cannot function without these fees being paid by each student enrolled. If fees are not paid on time, students will be discharged from the program.

Fee Breakdown

Approximately 75% of student fees are devoted to operating expenses. This involves food for breakfasts and dinners on trips, hut or cabin fees, and transportation costs. This money contributes directly to the students' experience in the program. The other 25% of fees are spent on capital expenditures. This involves the purchase, repair, and maintenance of equipment and supplies which are available for use by the students but which stay with the program. Acquiring an adequate supply of high quality, well-functioning equipment allows the students to participate in the outdoor activities. Students are entitled to borrow this equipment for all trips during the year and where VWS does not own the needed supplies, program fees will cover the expense of renting from other sources.

Equipment

Students enrolled in VWS are entitled to borrow equipment from the program. VWS will provide group, safety and some personal gear including the following: pots, stove, fuel bottles; stove repair kit; tent; avalanche transceivers, probes and shovels; snow observation equipment; compasses; sleeping pads; day packs; rock climbing harnesses, ropes, helmets and belay devices.

There are limited supplies of the following items: sleeping bags; telemark skis, boots and poles; climbing skins; overnight packs; fleece clothing and outerwear.

Students must supply the following: hiking boots; sleeping bag lining; mountain bike and helmet; inner clothing layer; mitts; gloves; toque; water bottle; cup; bowl; knife; fork and spoon; flashlight; toiletries; lightweight camp shoes and personal first aid kit.

Detailed equipment lists are supplied prior to each trip. Students are responsible for ensuring that they have all necessary gear for each trip and that it is in proper functioning condition. Under no circumstances are students permitted to bring drugs, alcohol, weapons, radios, walkmans or discmans.

All equipment use, either for school trips or personal trips must be recorded in rental book. All gear must be returned promptly after trips, cleaned and repaired if necessary. Individuals are responsible for the cost of replacement or repair of damaged equipment. Equipment may be used by instructors of the program, and it may be rented to people from the community, if not needed by students. Rental charges may apply. People under 16 years of age must supply a note from parent/guardian indicating permission to borrow equipment. Restrictions apply to the borrowing of safety and rock climbing gear and may also apply to any other equipment.

Parental Responsibilities

Valhalla Wilderness School demands more of parents than most school programs because of the involved nature of the activities which students engage in. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child is well-prepared for participation in all aspects of the program. In addition to this, we expect that each parent will be responsible for the following: paying for all school fees on time; purchasing or borrowing the necessary equipment for trips; participating in meetings and conferences; communicating with teachers on a regular basis; informing teachers of all of their child's absences from school; supplying medical form completed by doctor within the first week of school; providing all information needed for teachers to provide adequate care to their child during trips and reading newsletters and all communications from VWS.

Parents of VWS students often have unique concerns regarding their child's safety and participation in the program. For this reason, in addition to the need to raise extra funds for the program, we ask parents to involve themselves in a Parent Support Group. This group can be a representative body which communicates back to other parents regarding upcoming trip plans, arranging transportation, and fundraising efforts.

Permission. When each student enrolls in the program, it is assumed that parents have given permission for their child's complete participation in all program activities. VWS does not provide permission forms before each trip for parents to sign as in regular school procedures. It is the student's and parents' responsibility to stay

informed about all trip plans and activities. If there are questions about what the class has planned, or if the parent does not want their child to participate in a particular activity, then the parent must contact the teacher and initiate communication. Teachers will send newsletters home which outline upcoming events. All concerns must be discussed with the teachers well in advance of activities.

Accident Prevention

All students must wear appropriate safety equipment during any activity. Teachers will instruct students regarding safety procedures and students are expected to follow these directions. In class sessions on first aid, accident prevention, search and rescue simulations are necessary prerequisites for all trips. Students who miss these classes may forfeit their participation on a trip. Activities are designed in a progression so that prerequisite skills are learned in safe and nonthreatening environments. Different challenges may be offered to more skilled students, as the group is as strong as the weakest individual. Instructors will take cautious approaches and ensure that activities are within the capability of the group. Emergency situations may place exceptional demands on the class, however, so following directions, being prepared and working on personal fitness outside of class are important.

Health and Fitness

All students upon acceptance into the program are required to arrange a visit to a medical physician (MD) to have a complete physical and fill in the VWS questionnaire. Students who have any conditions requiring medicine must supply their own medication as well as a second supply which will be kept in the instructor's first aid kit during all trips. We expect families to be open and honest about informing the program teachers of all conditions/events which may influence our ability to care for each student during trips. This includes allergies, sprains, cuts/infections, tendency toward illnesses, headaches and other medical conditions. Trips are physically demanding. Students must strive to be healthy and fit throughout the program which requires regular exercise, sleep and good nutrition.

Trip Preparation

Students are provided with information about what they will need to be ready for

each trip. They are expected to take responsibility for getting the necessary equipment and arriving on-time and fully prepared on departure day. Equipment lists are provided and expected to be followed. Each student will be responsible for carrying their share of their group's gear therefore, extra gear are not allowed. Students will prepare breakfasts and dinners in class but will need to arrange for drinks, lunches and snacks prior to each trip. Bringing lightweight, nutritious food is essential to ensure that each student has adequate energy to deal with the physical activities. Forgetting equipment or not bringing enough food can endanger the entire group.

Volunteers

Any individual who takes part in activities or trips and who is not employed with the Valhalla Wilderness School is a participant and as such is expected to abide by the safety policies and procedures as outlined by the instructors. Individuals volunteering with the program are responsible for their own equipment and are expected to come on trips fully prepared with appropriate skills and gear to participate safely.

Drugs and Alcohol

Students are not permitted to use drugs, including alcohol, during school which includes all day and overnight trips. Any students found using or in the possession of recreational drugs will be expelled from the program. If this occurs during an out trip, the student may be evacuated from the backcountry location and will be responsible for paying any costs associated with this procedure.

Conclusion

The above information provides the context for the kinds of activities and expectations the students will be engaged in during their year in the Valhalla Wilderness School Program. The focus of this research project will be on girls enrolled into the program and more specifically, how the program affects their sense of self-worth and self-esteem. What kind of activities, challenges and situations will have a far reaching effect on their sense of self?

Before discussing the research question and the research results, the concept of self-esteem development needs to be defined. Chapter 2 of this project defines the complex idea self-esteem development from the broader perspective as well as how

self-esteem specifically develops in adolescent females.

Chapter 2: Literature Review of Self-Esteem

Rationale

Based on factual information measuring self-esteem, it is important for the reader to learn how self-esteem is defined and how it develops in human beings. The following discussion reviews the literature from a holistic point of view of self-esteem development to a specific discussion regarding how self-esteem develops in young females.

What is Self-Esteem?

Many different definitions are explored extensively from the literature culminating in a proposed definition for this project. In Braden's (1994) self-esteem research, he explains that self-esteem has two interrelated components. These two components are self-efficacy and self-respect. Self-efficacy refers to the confidence an individual holds for themselves within their mind. This encompasses a person's ability to think, understand, learn, choose and make decisions. Self-efficacy refers to the control a person feels they have within their life and their sense of psychological well being. It is associated with the idea that a person is playing an active role within their life rather than feeling victimized. A lack of self-efficacy refers to a person's anticipation of defeat rather than victory and associated with the inability to cope with life's challenges.

Self-respect on the other hand refers to how a person lives their life in relation to their value system. Self-respect refers to how a person discovers their right to live to be happy; their comfort in appropriately asserting thoughts, their wants and needs. Braden (1994) explains that self-respect is the feeling that joy and fulfillment are natural birthrights. A lack of self-respect refers to a person's rejection of love and friendship. They feel they are worthy of having such relationships. It is the realization as humans, we are not perfect or superior to others. It is the acceptance that individuals make mistakes, but also have the capacity to correct and learn from their errors.

What does Self-Esteem Look Like?

Braden's (1994) research summarizes what self-esteem looks like. The face of self-esteem has many qualities. It is the expression one manifests in a face, manner and way of talking which illustrates the pleasure of being alive. It is the ease a person can

describe accomplishments and shortcomings. It is the comfort one experiences in giving and receiving compliments, appreciation and affection. It is the openness to criticism and comfort about acknowledging mistakes because self-esteem is not associated with perfection. It is the ease and spontaneity reflected in a person's words and movements and is not associated with a person being at war with oneself. Self-esteem is associated with the natural curiosity a person has in regard to new ideas, new experiences and new possibilities in life. It is the lack of intimidation a person feels when feelings of anxiety and insecurity present themselves. It is the ability a person has to laugh at them self and at life in general.

It is the confidence a person has to be flexible when responding to difficult situations. It is the comfort a person feels to be assertive stating needs, but not belligerent in response to situations in life. Self-esteem presents itself as a quality of harmony and dignity in times of stress.

Youngs (1993) states that self-esteem develops overtime and is achieved by actively participating in life in a meaningful way. Youngs has identified six vital ingredients that can promote or undermine healthy self-esteem in adolescents. The first is physical safety. If a teenager does not have to worry about being harmed or hurt, they will develop openness and trusting self-concepts which promotes healthy self-esteem. Next, emotional security is encouraged when adolescent is made to feel worthy and not emotionally beat up by sarcasm and put downs. Being emotionally secure means an adolescent may become a caring and compassionate individual. By being respectful to a teenager, they may be respectful and be considerate to others. The third ingredient Youngs identifies is, identity. An adolescent with self-knowledge tends to develop a healthy sense of individuality. Adolescents with individuality usually believe they are worthy, worthy of praise, can praise themselves and others. They may become more open and caring toward others. Adolescents with identity can take responsibility for their actions.

A sense of belonging is the fourth ingredient on the list. Adolescents who feel accepted and connected to others will likely feel liked and respected themselves. They will likely make and keep friends, cooperate and share on a consistent basis. The most

important belonging messages come from the family. If a family accepts and support their children, they may develop a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Competence means that an individual feels competent and able, they will be able to take risks and try other activities. Not only are competent teenagers aware of their strengths but will develop strategies to overcome difficulties without feeling like a victim. The last key ingredient Young points out is, purpose. Teenagers with a purpose see life filled with meaning and purpose. Values are developed and behavior reflect values. Life is viewed as joyful. Purposeful adolescents generally develop a sense of humor. A healthy self-esteem is the result of all six ingredients and gives teenagers a realistic awareness of her/himself and of their abilities and needs (Youngs, 1993, p. 244). With this sense of respect, an adolescent will not let others devalue their worth, or deprive them of their needs. They will develop talents and areas of strength. Abusive behaviors will not be a focus and a true inner self will be reflected in the kind of behavior an individual engages in.

Bloch (1993) cites essential characteristics of children with high self-esteem. These characteristics include feeling important and that they matter. They are responsible to themselves and others. Like Youngs (1993), Bloch (1993) agrees that these children have a strong sense of self, can act independently and are not easily influenced by others. They are proud of their abilities and talents, have faith in themselves and are able to risk and face their challenges. Expressing emotions and feelings, being tolerant of frustration and exhibiting emotional self-control are common characteristics of children with high self-esteem. They can communicate effectively with others, they know how to make and keep friends and they care about their personal appearance and can take care of their bodies.

Bloch (1993) believes that parental behavior affect the development of their children's self-esteem. Parents themselves must have high levels of self-esteem in order to encourage it and model it for their children. Parents must consistently show respect for their child's rights and opinions. Parents who set clearly defined limits on their child's behavior positively affect the development of their child's self-esteem.

Bloch (1993) identifies factors which can impair the normal development of a

child's self-esteem. One of the biggest enemies of self-esteem is shame. He claims that within the last decade shame has been identified as a major contributor to emotional distress, low self-esteem, low motivation and the development of addictive behavior and personalities. Bloch (1993) identifies two types of shame that affect self-esteem development in children. They are called healthy shame and toxic shame. Healthy shame is characterized by the natural feelings of embarrassment when caught off guard. Embarrassment is a natural response where a guilty child would say to themselves, "I made a mistake." Toxic shame, on the other hand is associated with the guilty child identifying themselves as "I am a mistake." Bloch (1993) claims that affirmations provide a structure for a child to overcome negative self-talk. Just as parental criticism and abuse are often the source of a child's shame, nothing protects a child more against shame than parental love - love that appreciates and respects the child for who s/he is and affirms them as unique, worthy and significant person within their family.

What does the Development of Self-Esteem in Adult Females Look Like?

There is quite a debate in reference to the contrast of self-esteem manifestations between males and females. Enns (1991) discusses how early American Psychologists' beliefs in women's intellectual mediocrity and how rigorous mental activity would diminish reproductive capacities. Later research was based on homogeneous groups of privileged men which generalized to include women and minority groups. Another criticism of earlier psychological research is what Myers et al., (1991) describe as based upon a Eurocentric world view which is not applicable to the group being studied, meaning women as the group.

Pipher (1994) claims the negative view of the familial structure began with Freud. If parents were dysfunctional and pathological, so were their children. Still today, much emphasis in psychological treatment reflects this theory, that is, children need to be saved from their dysfunctional families. Many popular psychological textbooks ignore the crime rate, poverty and the sleazy values of the mass culture in our society can and has destroyed the happiness and self-esteem of many adolescent females.

In more recent times, research developed by Feminist Theorists bring a new perspective to this debate. Gilligan (1982) claim that women define themselves in

relational terms that imply growth in the context of intimate connections whereas men, more frequently define themselves in terms of nonrelationships in competitive achievement situations. Men tend to see more threat in events involving intimacy and affiliation. Gilligan (1982) redefined responsiveness and caring as activities through which individuals can be empowered by participation in the development of others. Gilligan's model is useful in understanding the positive nature of caring for others as well as assisting others in applying the concept of care in a self-nurturing fashion which contribute to the development of self-esteem.

Josselson (1987) found that unlike men, women are discouraged by social and family pressure to assume extended exploratory identities. That is, if identity is not achieved by the end of the university or college years, pressures to return to the safety of childhood experiences are strong. For women, the social expectations, choices, self-reflection, self-esteem, conflict, ambivalence and isolation associated with choosing nontraditional roles are costly. Josselson's (1987) observation was that significant relationships, rather than work, provide the anchor for women's identities. She believes that work is perhaps tangential to self-esteem because although women have historically been exposed to relationship mentors, they are still rarely exposed to significant work and professional mentors. It is very important in Josselson's view that young women find significant mentors who are supportive and develop meaningful relationships with young women in both professional and personal arenas.

Magolda (1989) adds to the debate and believes that women prefer collecting ideas rather than debating opinions and rely on personal interpretation than men do. These connected knowers as Magolda classifies them, experience therapeutic growth, when they receive validation and confirmation as capable, powerful individuals who can act effectively on their own behalf. Most institutions, as Enns (1991) claims, emphasize the importance of separate, objective procedures and knowledge. Those who prefer communal, cooperative learning may experience lowered self-esteem and loss of confidence when they encounter institutions that operate on an objective procedural system.

Belenky (1986) found that Group counselling activities, such as self-esteem, career

exploration, eating problems, parent education, assertiveness and other support groups, provides powerful supports for contextual, interactive knowers. The “telling of one’s own story” in an empathic atmosphere provides the concrete, direct experience and confirmation that Belenky found so important to many women.

By building positive, nurturing relationships, women gain the confidence, insight and the ability to influence. The development of confidence to value themselves and opinions of others is heightened.

Depression is often associated with selfless, sacrificial behavior and expectations that women put others first and discount their own needs. From this perspective, counselling interventions that focus solely on gaining autonomy may risk cutting a woman off from the very relational strengths that contribute to her positive self-concept and thus her self-esteem (Enns, 1991, p. 212).

In conclusion to her article, Enns reports that a source of satisfaction in a woman’s life is centered around her achievements in education and work. Further to that, Barnett & Baruch (1987) report that work for women provides them with a source of well-being that nonwork roles, especially mothering, are high-strain roles and are related to stress-related difficulties.

Surrey (1991) believes that self-esteem in girls and women is directly related to the degree of emotional sharing, openness and shared sense of understanding and regard. This, she claims is difficult in our culture, since strength is associated with separation. The dependency on relationships is viewed as pathological. For women guilt and shame, Surrey (1991) claims may become associated with the failure of significant mutual relationships. Self-worth become intricately involved in “good enough” understanding and caring for the other in a sense of mutual concern for the well being of each other. This, Surrey (1991) states, is a key factor in women’s self-esteem, though sadly, it is often overlooked. Unfortunately that is rarely associated with self-esteem development in males. It is unfortunate also that because clinical studies of the mother-daughter relationship is often clouded as flawed and negative, it is difficult to lift these theories to view the mother-daughter relationship as it truly is and how this relationship can be a source of growth-promoting self-esteem. Surrey (1991) debates that it seems easier to focus on the clinical problems rather than on the growth-

promoting structures of mutual relationships. This theory reflects the self-in-relation model, which is a well accepted theory now, implies that an evolutionary process is in place and that the development of the self and self-esteem in females is developed through relationship structures.

This theory is an attempt to develop a model that better fits our experience and to create more relevant and realistic self-images so that we can be more constructive in developing clinical, educational and social strategies for fostering women's development by focusing and building on women's specific strengths. What this model emphasizes is that the direction of growth is not toward greater degrees of autonomy or individuation and the breaking of early emotional ties, but toward a process of growth within relationship, where both or all people involved are encouraged and challenged to maintain connection and to foster, adapt to and change with the growth of the other (Surrey, 1991, p. 59-60).

Interestingly enough, Surrey postulates that problems adolescent girls develop may be in part due to the parental difficulties in changing with the adolescent herself.

To generally summarize the research by (Magolda, 1989; Enns, 1991; Surrey; 1991) these authors found that if women need emotional support to gain self-esteem through relationship, this is what it means to be female. Females define themselves and their self-esteem with a relationship context. Females find self-worth and self-esteem within a relationship building and sharing, whereas men, tend to find their self-esteem through separation. That is, separating from family and social pressure to seek autonomous personal achievement.

Generally speaking, women should not be viewed as pathological if they need support to develop their identity, self-worth and self-esteem by "relying" on close women around them such as mothers, sisters or other significant other females in their lives. It is this connectedness that women need to maintain and sustain, if not fully heightened self-esteem and self-worth. However, in our culture, mothers give their daughters mixed messages. Pipher (1994) explains,

that mothers are expected to protect their daughters from the culture is a contradictory position. Mothers are expected to protect their daughters from the culture as they help them fit into it. They are devoted to their daughters and yet encourage independence and separation. Mothers are expected to love completely and physically and yet must know exactly when to distance themselves emotionally and physically (p. 103).

As a result of these contradictory messages, daughters can become very confused. Pipher (1994) claims that girls are encouraged to separate from their mothers and to devalue their relationships, because in our culture, a close relationship between mother and daughter is associated with dependence whereas, distance is associated with becoming an adult.

Further to that, if a woman is deficient in self-efficacy and self-respect, a problem is self-esteem would prevail no matter what other positive attributes she maintains. Every individual's self-esteem will fluctuate from time to time within a person's life. Braden (1994) believes that as professionals, we must think in terms of a person's average level of self-esteem. And in the formal definition, self-esteem refers to the disposition one has to experience oneself as competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and worthy of happiness.

To study what self-esteem depends upon and how to nurture it, as professionals we need to know what to aim at.

If our idea of self-esteem is vague, the means we adopt will reflect this vagueness. If our enthusiasm for self-esteem is not matched by appropriate intellectual rigor, we run the risk not only of failing to produce worthwhile results but also of discrediting the field (Braden, 1994, p.28).

What does the Development of Self-Esteem Look Like in Adolescent Females?

The purpose of this research project is to investigate what effect the Valhalla Wilderness Program has on girls during their crucial adolescent years. The program involves girls ages 13 to 14 years of age. This is the age, as stated in Pipher's (1994) work, when girls typically start the decent into depression and low self-esteem. Could a program like the Valhalla Wilderness School rescue and prevent girls from a free fall into depression and chronic beliefs of self-inadequacy?

Historically, the idea that adolescent girls were becoming short changed in school was first noted in the early nineties. This discovery was reflected in studies that compared adolescent girls' achievement with adolescent boys' achievement. The findings indicated that girls' math and science scores were remarkably lower than their male counterparts. (Pipher 1994; Orienstein, 1994) found that girls IQ scores, their

math and science scores plummet in early adolescence. The once optimistic and resilient preteen becomes very self-critical and depressed. Adolescence is a time in a girl's life marked by a loss of confidence and influence. It is a time when girls seem to emphasize their personal inadequacies rather than a time to focus on personal strengths. What happens to our adolescent females during this time in their lives?

In spite of all the growth women have made with role change in society, girls, in Orienstein's (1994) opinion are still falling into a pattern of low self-image, self-doubt and self-censorship of their creative and intellectual potential.

The notion of studying self-esteem is not a new concept. Studying self-esteem from just the feminist perspective is relatively new. Studying self-esteem from just the adolescent female perspective is even a newer area of study focus. Pipher (1994) claims that psychology has had a long history of ignoring girls of this age. From my own review of the literature, I have found few resources focusing specifically on adolescent female psychological development compared to other areas of psychology.

Battle's (1987) definition of self-esteem refers to an individual's perception of his or her own worth. From this statement, he is drawing conclusions and making generalizations about both gender groups. Battle (1987) does not distinguish or mention any difference between girls' and boys' development of self-esteem. McGill and Wilson (1994) describe self-esteem as how people deal with any problem. That is the conclusion we draw when one evaluates themselves. Most self-esteem is based on what individuals think about themselves and not what others think. This view of self-esteem is interesting, however, it is not gender or age specific. The generalization made is that girls, boys, women and men develop their self-esteem in similar ways.

Canfield and Miller (1996) view self-esteem from a spiritual point of view. They claim that self-esteem is nothing more than a report card on how well a person follows their conscience. It is a mirror with which our Creator has installed within us that continuously reflects our moral new worth. However interesting this view of self-esteem is, it does not look at the possibility that females and males may go through several different stages of moral self-worth development. To imply that our Creator or

a Higher Power has programmed us with clearly defined stages and levels of moral self-worth to step through is peculiar and does not fit the theory base described in this project.

Kessler (2000) views developing self-esteem with students as a process of self-definition, where students regularly write or tell stories that relate to content themes to stories from their own lives. This view of developing self-esteem comes from the Narrative Therapy approach. This Narrative approach aligns itself closer to the philosophy of Feminist Theory development of self-esteem. The idea of expressing oneself and the telling of stories is relationship building and centered.

What is the Efficacy of Self-Esteem programs?

Swan (1996) claims that enabling people to overcome their fears does not ensure that they will sustain or maintain new self-views. As long as a person views them self in a negative way, they will give greater weight to evaluations that prove their lower self-views. Insofar as they pay more attention to self-confirming evaluations, remember them better and interpret them selectively, a person's self-view will remain stubbornly resistant to change (Swan, 1996, p.149). The person will create a self-fulfilling prophecy which ever way they choose to view them self. Swan (1996) encourages therapists to focus and place more weight on a client's strengths rather than weaknesses. A restructuring of client interpretations of their presumed deficiencies is what is needed. In Swan's (1996) opinion, the best talk therapies which reduce symptoms of depression are cognitive-behavioral therapy and interpersonal therapies.

In Orienstein's (1994) work, she tells the story of Dashelle's struggle to find her self-esteem through her adolescent years and her challenge with transition into womanhood. Dashelle was unlike the other girls at her school and at times misused her strength. Her physical competence usually associated with girls' sports or self-defence classes (Orienstein, 1994, p.232). Dash is not afraid of anyone and risks pushing her weight around when she feels she needs to, however, she does not associate emotional weakness and sensitivity with her transition into womanhood. However, this type of confidence and risk taking behavior is not typical of adolescent girls. The American Association of American state that Orienstein's stories about eighth graders are works

in progress. Meaning that some girls in the middle of adolescence, free-fall in self-esteem and will never recover. Others, however will emerge strengthened and empowered because of some other significant other. Perhaps a parent, or a teacher will become a mentor for these girls and will help rescue them from their emotional turmoil and despair during adolescence.

Battle (1987) claims that programs and strategies which have proven successful in enhancing self-esteem include: parent training program; youth-tutoring-youth programs; particularly integrated mainstreaming and teacher pupil interactions.

Swan (1996) claims that a major shortcoming of all these is that there is no evidence that any of them, by themselves produce long term improvements in self-esteem. In fact, one of the greatest difficulties in treating depression is the high rate of relapse. When therapists place clients on anti-depression drugs to treat depression, often recommending them remain on the drugs for three years or more, makes sense because the longer the clients receive psychotherapy while using medication, the more likely the external sources of the distress that caused the depression and low self-esteem hopefully have disappeared. Swan (1996) claims of the many sources of distress, the behavior of the client's loved one and close friends may be the most significantly related to speed of recovery.

Mentoring seems to be the one key consistent ingredient to save young girls during their adolescent years. Mentoring, relationship building and connected support seem to be the key ingredient to save girls through their adolescence. Self-esteem programs for young women need to model this theory.

Pipher's (1994) reflections about the work she has completed with adolescent girls and their parents has pushed her to re-examine her practice when working with these clients.

She re-examined the language used in psychology and believes the language is biased and is masculine in nature. Labels such as independence, individuation and autonomy are viewed as positive and healthy. Labels describing closeness and connectedness are viewed as co-dependent and enmeshed. Indeed, psychologists are so prone to pathologize families that one definition of a normal family is a family that has

not been evaluated by a Psychologist (Pipher, 1994, p. 251)

When working with families, Pipher (1994) tries to find what systems are working for a family, their strength and their effective coping systems. This seems to assist families, mothers and daughters the most. This strategy seems to have lasting effects and empowers the families and the girls to be themselves. Working with adolescent girls has allowed Pipher (1994) to discover girls' deepest beliefs and values. Disappointments, betrayal of friends, the discovery that one is not beautiful by cultural standards, the feelings that smartness is a liability and the pressure to be popular are platforms for discussion and therapy sessions.

Teaching adolescent girls new skills to assist in lifting self-esteem is very effective. One successful strategy Pipher teaches girls is called centering. Centering encourages girls to find a quiet place to relax and breathe deeply. Next, the girls are asked to focus on their thoughts and feelings for the day. This is only to observe and respect their thoughts and feelings and not to judge or analyze them. This provides some distance between the person, her thoughts and her feelings. Another skill in an attempt to save adolescent girls from low self-esteem is what Pipher (1994) claims is managing pain. The lesson in teaching girls to sit and feel their pain. To acknowledge and describe it rather than running from it and stuffing it which will result in depression, eating disorders, self mutilation and abusing drugs and alcohol. Opportunities to express pain should be provided through writing, dancing, art and music to positively release pain. Pipher (1994) claims that most adolescent girls need assistance with modulating their emotional reactions.

Time travel is another survival skills taught by Pipher. On down days, it is meaningful and helpful to take girls back to happy times. It reminds them that she is on the right track, moving toward her end goals and that negative experiences will not last forever. This strategy provides perspective.

Altruism is the final lesson which Pipher (1994) has found to be effective and ever lasting with the girls she has worked with. Many teenaged girls are experiencing a self-absorbed developmental stage. Pipher encourages girls to volunteer their time with those who need assistance. This helps girls move into the larger world and context and

lets girls focus on others rather than just themselves. Performing random acts of kindness increases a person's world view and that someone out there is undoubtedly contextually worse off than them self.

How do Beliefs Affect Self-Esteem Development?

Personal beliefs affect feelings and behavior. Behavioral implications need to be examined in order to increase, or at least maintain adequate self-esteem. Braden (1995) indicates that personal beliefs lead toward and can lead away from certain practices. Beliefs in this context are convictions grounded in our being.

They are premises that have the power to evoke emotion and to stimulate and guide behavior. We can think of these ideas as the philosophy of self-esteem - a set of interrelated premises that inspire behavior leading to a strong sense of efficacy and worth (Braden, 1995, p. 160-161).

Braden divides self-esteem self-efficacy and self-worth into two categories. One category is beliefs about self and the second is, beliefs about reality. Braden's point is, as professionals, when working with adolescents, we need to be asking ourselves the question. Does my practice as a professional, be it teacher, counsellor or parent, one that supports and encourages self-esteem or does my practice discourage and undermine the development of self-esteem?

One Last Interesting Thought

In Orienstein's (1994) research of adolescent girls' self-esteem, she interestingly found african-american adolescent girls maintained a higher level of self-esteem and resiliency during the adolescent years than their Caucasian counterparts. Orienstein believes this is due to a historically difference conception of women's roles. The model of European femininity grounded in delicacy, innocence and idealized helplessness has been unavailable for african-american girls. In stead, african-american girls display their worth through strength of character. This is a departure from the traditional white adolescent girls' legacy. Interesting.

Conclusion

Having read much of the Feminist Theory in Counselling during Education 5705: Counselling Theory course, I felt I had an excellent opportunity to test out some of this theory for this project. Could there be a way of saving young adolescent girls from the

possibly dark world of being 13 or 14 years of age, when so many demands and stressors are placed upon these young people all at once? Could a program like the Valhalla Wilderness Program provide a model for educators and parents, to help girls gain the confidence, security and creativity they once had during childhood? Could a program like the Valhalla Wilderness Program provide adolescent girls with a strong support group to assist them in accomplishing some of the grueling physical tasks of the program they thought they could not accomplish? In Chapter 3: Methodological Overview, a description of how these questions were answered, through quantitative and qualitative research methodologies will be provided.

Chapter 3: Methodological Overview

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the rationale behind selecting the research methodologies I chose to study self-esteem development of the Valhalla Wilderness Girls over the course of the 2000-2001 school year.

Rationale for Quantitative Methodology

Upon reflecting and searching for the research tradition, strategies and techniques to use in this research, many issues needed to be considered. The process of selecting the research tradition, its strategies and techniques took many hours of careful planning, deliberation and consideration.

There are two school of thought with regards to research traditions. Quantitative research methods have been the most widely used to date. It has been estimated by Palys (1997) that since the nineteenth century onwards, the traditions and favored approach to analyzing social behavior has been quantitative research methods. Quantitative research is rooted in positivist thinking and the early science paradigm. Social science has historically been described, measured and researched within the walls of this scientific paradigm throughout the nineteenth century. The tradition of this method is based on the belief of universal law, objectivity and theory testing. The attribute of realism lies close to the heart of the positivistic thinker. Realism implies that there are realities within the scientific world waiting to be discovered and to be used to support a better life for the human organism. Positivists aim to uncover and understand the facts, to discover the right theories and develop techniques to precisely measure and test them, Palys (1997.)

Applying these notions to the social sciences is rooted in scientific simplicity. Quantitative research methods within this context is based on what the organism does rather than on their conscious motives. Classic positivists argued that only external, observable forces can be considered real and that only such real variables are worth considering in the science of human behavior (Palys, 1997, p. 14).

Positivists believe that objectivity through distance is vital in obtaining objective, reliable and valid results. The danger in using qualitative methods, from the Positivist

point of view, is the tendency for the observer to over identify with the group being studied. The idea of detachment is aligned with the researchers ability to obtain accurate aggregated data. Aggregated data is the group being studied. Palys (1997) claims the belief in the desirability of aggregation can also be seen in the quantitative attachment to social facts, influential aspects of social life that individuals do not create and that continue to operate no matter how people feel about them.

For the classic positivists, the deductive approach is proof of understanding phenomenon. The use of prediction and assessing outcomes is the basis of all theory development.

Why Standardized Assessments?

The use of quantitative methodology within this research will be used by the administration of two standardized assessments, the SSCI Self-Concept Scale and the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventories.

McLoughlin and Lewis (1990) describe standardized assessment as tasks presented under standard conditions so student performance can be contrasted to the norm group. The resulting data is comparative to other students within the same age and grade level. Student functioning is compared in relation to the average or norm group.

In administering the SSCS Student Self-Concept Scale and the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventories to the sample group, the goal is to compare the Grade 9 Wilderness Girls' Self-Esteem levels over a period of time to their normed age group. Traditional Self-Concept scales can assess a person's self-esteem, sometimes identified as self-worth. The SSCS acknowledges self-esteem within a wide measure of self-concept by including items in the Self-Image domain that looks at a student's level of confidence that she has culturally valued personal attributes (Gresham, Elliot & Evans-Fernandez, 1993, p.4).

Gresham, Elliot & Evans-Fernandez, 1993 describe the Student Self-Concept Scale as a 72 item, multidimensional self-report measure of self-concept and other psychological constructs. The assessment provides norm-referenced measures of self-perceptions of children and adolescents from grades 3 to 12. There are three content domains measured by the SSCS: Self-Image; Academic and Social domains. The SSCS

documents self-perception from the perspective of three rating dimensions which are: Self-Confidence; Importance and Outcome Confidence. The SSCS obtains ratings of student perception of their Self-Confidence in three areas: Self-Image; Academic and Social Self-Confidence. A Self-Confidence Composite is obtained from all three areas.

The SSCS obtains Importance ratings which Gresham, Elliot & Evans-Fernandez, (1993) states, measures the subjective task value that a behavior or a personal attribute holds for a student. The Importance rating scale documents the value students place on being able to perform the task.

The SSCS assessment also obtains an Outcome Confidence score that rates the strength of a student's belief that performing a particular behavior or having a certain attribute will lead to an anticipated and desired outcome (Gresham, Elliot & Evans-Fernandez, 1993, p. 15).

Table 3.1

SSCS Subscale and Composite Scores

<u>Rating Dimensions</u>	<u>Content Domain</u>
Self-Confidence	Self-Image Academic Social Composite Lie
Importance	Self-Image Academic Social Composite

Table 3.2 shows the types of scores available for the Self-Confidence, Importance and Outcome Confidence Subscales and Composites. Raw Scores are computed for the Subscales, the Lie Scale and the Outcome Confidence Composite. The Raw Scores for the Self-Confidence and Importance Subscales are converted to Standard Scores. The mean of the Standard Scores equals 100 with a Standard Deviation of 15. Gresham, Elliot & Evans-Fernandez (1993) convert the Outcome Confidence Subscale to functional categories called Descriptive Behavior Levels. Standard Scores and Percentile Ranking are not available for the Outcome Confidence Subscale. To compute

the Self-Confidence rating dimension, the three Subscale Standard Scores are summed and then used to obtain the Outcome Confidence dimension Subscale Raw Scores are summed and then used to obtain the Outcome Confidence Composite Standard Score. No Composite is generated from the Importance Subscales.

Standard Score Confidence Bands can be determined using a Standard Error of Measurement for the Self-Confidence and Importance Subscales, The Self-Confidence Composite and the Outcome Confidence Composite. Raw Scores are used to determine the Lie Scale. Gresham, Elliot, Evans-Fernandez, 1991, p. 16), provide the following visual table for the types of Normative Scores the SSCS provides.

Table 3.2
Subscale and Composite Score Information

<u>Types of Normative Scores</u>			
Subscale/ Composite	Standard Score	Percentile Rank	Descriptive Behavior Rating
<hr/>			
Self-Confidence			
Self-Image	√	√	√
Academic	√	√	√
Social	√	√	√
Composite	√	√	√
Importance			
Self-Image	√	√	√
Academic	√	√	√
Social	√	√	√
Outcome Confidence			
Self-Image			√
Academic			√
Social			√
Composite	√	√	√

The Descriptive Behavior Levels of the SSCS are High, Average and Low. Raw Scores one Standard Deviation above the mean is considered High whereas, Raw Scores one Standard Deviation below the mean is considered Low. The final goal of most assessment activities is to develop interventions to remedy a student's self-concept problems and to increase perceptions of self-efficacy (Gresham, Elliot & Evans-Fernandez, 1993, p. 25).

According to Gresham, Elliot & Evans-Fernandez, (1993) once a student is found to have a Self-Confidence Subscale Standard Score, Percentile Rank or Descriptive Behavior Level indicating Low functioning, the student's individual rating for both Self-Confidence and Importance is analyzed. Gresham, Elliot & Evans-Fernandez (1993) state that goal of analysis is to identify behaviors the student does not feel confident he/she can perform or attributes the student does not believe he or she possesses.

Gresham, Elliot & Evans-Fernandez (1993) presents a Self-Confidence by Importance Matrix of SSCS ratings that can be used to identify target behaviors that might be the focus of interventions (p.26). For this study however, the change in Scores from December 2000 to June 2001 will be analyzed to determine if any changes in the scores occurred.

Self-Confidence Rating

	<u>Confident</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>	<u>Not Confident</u>
I m p o r t a n c e	C r i t i c a l (2)		
R a t i n g		I m p o r t a n t (1)	
		N o t	
		I m p o r t a n t (0)	

Overall, the SSCS is a multi-purpose assessment tool. It can be administered to individuals or groups of students as a screener for those needing supportive counselling or as a prereferral assessment of students within the regular classroom who are experiencing behavioral or emotional difficulties. The SSCS can be used as part of a comprehensive psycho-educational assessment, it can be used as a follow-up

assessment to measure changes in self-concept as a result of counselling or special education programs, or it could be used as a component of research projects designed to measure self-concept changes and characteristics of certain population.

The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory was designed to measure attitudes toward the self in social, academic, family and personal areas of experience. Coopersmith, 1991, indicates that in relation to the SEI, self-esteem refers to the evaluation a person makes and maintains of him or herself, a personal judgment of worthiness expressed in the attitudes a person holds toward the self. The SEI was developed based on the belief that self-esteem is significantly associated with personal satisfaction and effective functioning.

From the School Form, Four Subscales can be obtained: General Self; Social Self-Peers; Home-Parents and School-Academic. To obtain a Total Self Score, the number of self-esteem items answered correctly are summed. The Total Score for the Lie Scale is obtained by summing the number of Lie Scale Questions answered as true.

Coopersmith (1991) claims the mean for the SEI is in the range of 70 to 80 with a standard deviation of 11 to 13.

The SEI has many uses, it can be used in individual assessment and classroom screening. A general assessment of low, medium or high self-esteem can be obtained. The SEI results could be used for Individual Program Plans or Individual Counselling Plans for those individuals needing assistance with building their sense of self worth and efficacy. The SEI can be used on a pre/post basis to evaluate the effectiveness of self-worth programs such as the Wilderness Program at WE Graham School. Coopersmith, 1991, indicates that the SEI has also been used in clinical and research settings to investigate antecedents of self-esteem.

In December 2000, after receiving parental permission to assess all nine of the wilderness girls' self-esteem levels, the two standardized, norm referenced assessments will be administered to each girl. This assessment will be considered the pre or early program assessment. Six months later in June 2001, the same two standardized, norm referenced assessments will again be administered to each girl.

Comparisons of the pre and post assessment results will be completed for each

individual girl to chart and determine if any changes in self-esteem occurred over a six month period while enrolled in the wilderness education program. The data will be illustrated using bar graphs for each individual student showing the pre and post data results.

Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

As Immy (1997) describes the new and evolutionary views taken on by biology and psychology has surpassed the “simplistic” positivist approach (p. 13.) The positivist approach does not always answer the complexities of human behavior, much like Morse (1994) argues that,

the laboratory of the qualitative researcher is everyday life and cannot be contained in a test tube, stopped, manipulated or washed down the sink. Variables are not controlled, and until qualitative researchers get close to the end of the study, they may not even be able to determine what those variables are. Therefore, theory development, description and operationalization are often the outcomes. They are the products of the research process, rather than the means, and the tools used while conducting research (p. 1).

Qualitative research is vital to the pursuit of knowledge within the social sciences. So therefore, the nature of this particular research study lends itself well to the qualitative research paradigm. I find this type of research fascinating since what I will discover will be a by product of the process itself. I personally find this exciting. The qualitative research tradition can be driven to gain understanding of human behavior. As Palys (1997) states, social science begins with a human-centered methodology since social science is about understanding behavior. It is from the human behavior being studied that a working hypothesis is obtained.

From this context or perspective, Schultz (1970) believes social science ought to view humans in the study as thinking, motivated actors. This philosophy which reflects this position is known as Phenomenology. The Phenomenological approach is the focus on understanding the meaning of events for the individuals being studied.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) cite in their research that,

ontological assumptions concern questions about the nature of reality. One key ontological question is: What is the nature or reality? Epistemological

assumptions concern the origins of knowledge. What is the relationship between the knower and the known? What roles do values play in understanding? Are important epistemological questions (p. 3).

The philosophy of Phenomenology maintains that to understand human behavior, one must recognize that humans are active cognitive beings, trying to make sense of the world around them. Palys (1997) defines Phenomenology as humans having the capacity to abstract from their experience and ascribe meaning to their behavior and the world and are affected by those meanings.

Studying Phenomenology is to define a person's perceptions as their reality. Thomas (1928) describes perceptions as reality because consequences are real. Therefore, this project will qualitatively, through the Focus Group strategy, measure if changes occurred in self-esteem as a result of being enrolled in the Valhalla Wilderness Program. How will this program affect realities concerning the perceived abilities before and after the program? Will the girls' reality be that they feel more confident and have gained an increased ability when dealing with challenging outdoor tasks and with more confidence.

What effect does the group have on the girls? These are the questions in the back of my mind and I must be aware of them during this research process. My perceptions and reality may not be the perceptions and reality of the group being studied. Palys (1997) indicates that any behavioral science is not treated with credibility unless human perceptions are taken into account. Any approach, defined as Phenomenological makes understanding human perception its focus.

To gain insight in the wilderness girls' perceptions, I am adopting the Naturalistic and Ethnographic research perspective for this study. The Naturalistic/Ethnographic researcher, using the qualitative research tradition, rejects all "positivistic" or logical research strategies the forcing of social phenomena into variable formats. This type of researcher rejects causality theories as well as any attempts to define universal laws. Rather, I support the richness of verbal descriptions, the identification of behavioral patterns and the encouragement of inductive thinking which promotes Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory as described by Morse(1994) is a method that describes the

world of the person or persons under study. Palys (1997) describes Grounded Theory as the theory that emerges from the research. At the start of my study, the intent is not trying to prove or disprove a known theory, rather, the theory is discovered while the study is being conducted.

As a Naturalistic/Ethnographic researcher, I reject any absolutes and any attempt at correctness of interpretation. I value one's feelings on gaining insight and promote holistic inquiry within the natural setting. Human beings become the major source of the data gathering. The focus of this study is on the Valhalla Wilderness Program and the perceived effectiveness of the program from the girls' perspective.

In Immy's (1997) work, he outlines "seven characteristics and aims that the qualitative researcher needs to be aware of when conducting qualitative research" (p.5). They are: Researchers focus on the everyday life of people in natural settings.; The data have primacy; the theoretical framework is not predetermined but derives directly from the data. As a researcher, I will be approaching the Valhalla Wilderness Program girls in order to find out about them. Their ideas will be known through a Focus Group session, to collect the rich in-depth data that is needed to form a theory. As Immy (1997) states, the design cannot be strictly predefined before the start of the research. The data becomes the priority rather than forming the hypothesis before the experiment starts. The research project is not predetermine but rather, the project is based on the incoming data. Qualitative research is not static but developmental and dynamic in character, the focus is on process as well as the outcome. The developmental process is valued as much as the outcomes are.

Qualitative research is context-bound. This means that the researchers have to be sensitive to the context of the research and immerse themselves in the setting and situation (Immy, 1997, p.5). The context of lives affect a person's behavior. As a researcher, I must take into account the total context of a person's life and their culture. My aim is not to change context and culture but to understand it. Immy (1997) claims if a researcher understands the context, they can identify the actions and perceptions of individuals and grasp the meaning they are communicating to us. As a researcher, I must immerse myself into the real world of the participants I am trying to study. This

method can determine progress and development over time. To achieve this, I must become very familiar with “their” world and the context they live and work in. As Immy (1997) suggests, I must not take this world for granted but should question my own assumptions and act like a stranger to the setting as a naive observer. I think I am at an advantage here since I will be moving to a new community and a new school. I must learn every aspect of their context to truly understand who they are and how they operate. This means I must totally immerse myself in the culture and the world I am studying.

Qualitative researchers focus on the emi perspective, the views of the people involved in the research and their perceptions, meanings and interpretations (Immy, 1997, p. 5). This belief is grounded in the social sciences of Anthropology and Linguistics. As a researcher, Immy (1997) believes that the ideas and perceptions of the girls must be researched to gain “an insiders” view and to search for commonalities and patterns. It would mean that as a researcher, I attempt to examine the experiences, feelings and perceptions of the people I am studying, rather than imposing a framework of my own, contaminating and distorting the ideas of the participants. I need to uncover the meaning the girls’ give to their experiences and how they interpret those experiences. I will be constantly searching for patterns and commonalities. This type of research is based on the premise that the Valhalla Wilderness Girls is the best place to start in understanding their situations and feelings. However, I must be aware that social phenomenon is constantly changing.

I will be engaging in a process of seeking to find how the girls make sense of their program and to find the rules which govern their thoughts and actions. Immy (1997) calls this gaining access to their social reality. Through my research, my aim is to give the participants a voice to guide the study, to gain their trust and to gain insight into their world.

Qualitative researchers describe in detail; they analyze and interpret; they use “thick description (Immy, 1997, p. 9). This description means to detail the girls’ experiences to the level of interpretation and to uncover their feelings and actions. Thick description comes from both the research data and the context the participants live and work in. It

involves verbatim narrative accounts of perceptions and ideas within a context. (Immy 1997, p. 9), defines thick description as,

A reason for thick description is to all readers of the research study to become involved with the participants, their culture and context the research is happening in. It gives readers the chance to take an active role or participate in the study. Qualitative researchers are story-tellers.

The relationship between the researcher and the researched is close and based on a position of equality as human beings (Immy, 1997, p. 9). In order to gain full access to the participants true thoughts, interpretations and feelings, a non-judgmental attitude must be adopted by the researcher. The listener becomes the learner, while the informant, as Immy (1997) puts it, is the teacher who is encouraged to be reflective. An atmosphere of negotiation must be developed. That is the challenge.

The last characteristic of Qualitative research from Immy's point of view is that data collection and data analysis generally proceed together and interact. A hypothesis is not set before the study starts but rather as data is collected. Analysis and hypothesis building as the data is being collected.

Why Focus Groups? Focus Groups pay attention to the perceptions of the users and consumers of solutions, products and services (Krueger, 1988, p. 29). With the need to understand how social service programs are meeting the needs of those it is designed to help, Focus Groups provide a unique opportunity for participants to disclose their perceptions about social programs.

Focus Groups have been historically used in the are of marketing and communication research. Focus Groups have been used to evaluate how people feel and how they have used commercially produced products.

I plan on using the Focus Group strategy to evaluate from the female perspective, how and if the Valhalla Wilderness Program has affected them.

A Focus Group is a special type of group where the views of the participants is nurtured and encouraged. As Krueger (1988) states, careful and systematic analysis of the discussion can provide clues and insights as to how a service is perceived. He defines a Focus Group as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions

on a defined area of interest in a non-threatening environment. That is what I am hoping to achieve, is a carefully planned discussion about the Valhalla Wilderness Program with the Grade 9 girls in a permissive, non-threatening environment. The advantage of working with a Focus Group is that it will provide in-depth information about the program from the perspective of the Grade 9 girls. I will learn their unique perspectives, their particular needs, interests and concerns.

More recently than ever education, medical and social programs have been under heavy criticism for failing to document what they are doing and the impact these programs have had with people. Krueger (1988) found that as a result, public providers of service are more interested in knowing more about the client's view of how well or how poorly programs are run. By using the Focus Group strategy, the impact of the wilderness program on the girls' self-esteem will be learned.

Why do Focus Groups Work? Krueger (1988) states that it is because they tap into human tendencies. Perceptions are formed about programs because of the interaction participants have with one another. Perceptions are socially constructed, we are influenced by the people around us.

Another important technique of Focus Group sessions is that questions are formed very simply. When questions are asked in a group environment and nourished by skillful probing, the results are candid portraits of consumer perceptions (Krueger, 1988, p.23). The intention of a Focus Group is self-disclosure. This may be easier for some than others. It is through trust and relationship building that everyone is encouraged to speak their ideas and perceptions.

(Krueger, 1988, p.5), identifies five characteristics of Focus Groups. Focus Groups: involve people; possess certain characteristics; provide data; which is qualitative in nature; in a focused discussion. To further expand on these ideas, research indicates that Focus Groups involve three to ten people. This is good because the research group will be composed of ten. Krueger (1988) suggests that group size should be small enough to allow everyone to share insights and big enough to provide a wide range of perceptions.

Focus Groups contain people who are similar with each other based on the purpose

of study. This is true of the girls in the wilderness program.

Focus Groups provide the data the researcher analyzes for trends and patterns of perception. The Valhalla Wilderness Girls, through their spoken perceptions will provide the data I need to analyze. Focus Groups have a rather narrow purpose for which they work particularly well - that is, to determine the perceptions, feelings and manner of thinking of consumers about products, services or opportunities (Krueger, 1988, p.29).

Focus Groups provide qualitative data which provide insight into the attitudes and the perceptions of those who make up the group. The qualitative data is collected through open-ended questions. Focus Groups provide an environment where participants form their opinions based on what others have to say on the topic. This structure is provided to mimic real-life interaction of people and how others influence perceptions. The nine wilderness girls, through discussion, will be providing me with the qualitative data I need to form a hypothesis and theory. A safe and verbally interactive environment will be provided. The goal is to provide a safe and caring atmosphere where each participant can openly share their views with one another.

The topics for discussion will be provided for each participant before the session starts. They will be presented to each girl in the form of a Discussion Guide. The questions are ordered from general to specific. The reason for giving the participants questions before the session is to give each participant the chance to form their perceptions into an opinion.

How Valid is This Type of Data Collecting? The data is only as valid as what it purposed to measure. As Krueger (1988) explains if a Focus Group was conducted to gain perceptions on the effectiveness of the Valhalla Wilderness Program from the girls' perspectives, did the Focus Group procedure really provide perceptions on the program or were the results artificially developed by the interaction of the participants? A considerable effort to measure what is intended to measure will be made. I think the key in obtaining valid data is to create a non-threatening and non-judgmental environment to allow the girls to share their perceptions. Krueger (1988) states that typically, Focus Groups have high face validity which is due to the believability of the

participants. Other advantages of running a Focus Group for Qualitative data selection as Krueger (1988) defends are: Focus Groups are socially oriented research procedures; discussions are set up so moderators can probe; Focus Groups have high face validity; are relatively cheap to run; can provide fast results and can enable the researcher to increase sample size of qualitative studies.

As with any strategy, Krueger (1988) outlines the limits of such research. They are: researchers have less control in a group interview compared to individual interviews; data is more complex to analyze; researchers must be skilled interviewers. my counselling skills will assist with probing for information and reflecting back meaning to clarify perceptions; each Focus Group is comprised of individuals so not two groups will ever be the same;

Focus Groups can be challenging to arrange and the discussions needs to be conducted in an appropriate environment. The Focus Group Interview for this research will take place at WE Graham School. That is the school were the wilderness program is run, so that is where the Focus Group will be held.

Determining the Purpose of a Focus Group. The first step in planning a Focus Group to research starts with the purpose. Questions are then developed in a logical and sequential process. Precision in clarifying problems and clarifying what information is needed is the initial task for effective Focus Group implementation. The Valhalla Wilderness Girls will be able to provide me with the information I need, the correct questions need to be asked. A developed written description of the problem and a plan of action need to be put into place. A tentative list of purposes for the research on the Discussion Guide outline will be developed. This may change as I begin to understand the program. Krueger (1988) supplies some examples of formats the researcher can use. I modified the plan to suit the needs of this research study.

Chapter 4: Findings

Quantitative Data Analysis

As illustrated below in Table 1 and Table 2 of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory Bar Graphs, all students, with exception of Student A, increased her Self-Esteem Inventory score significantly over the six month period. Student A scored the same in December and June. Both of her scores were high in December 2000 as well as in June 2001. Table 1 shows the Raw Score changes and Table 2 shows the Percentile Ranking changes. Table 3 on page 42 charts out the changes in each girls' score using numerical calculations.

Table 1:

Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory Raw Score Comparisons.

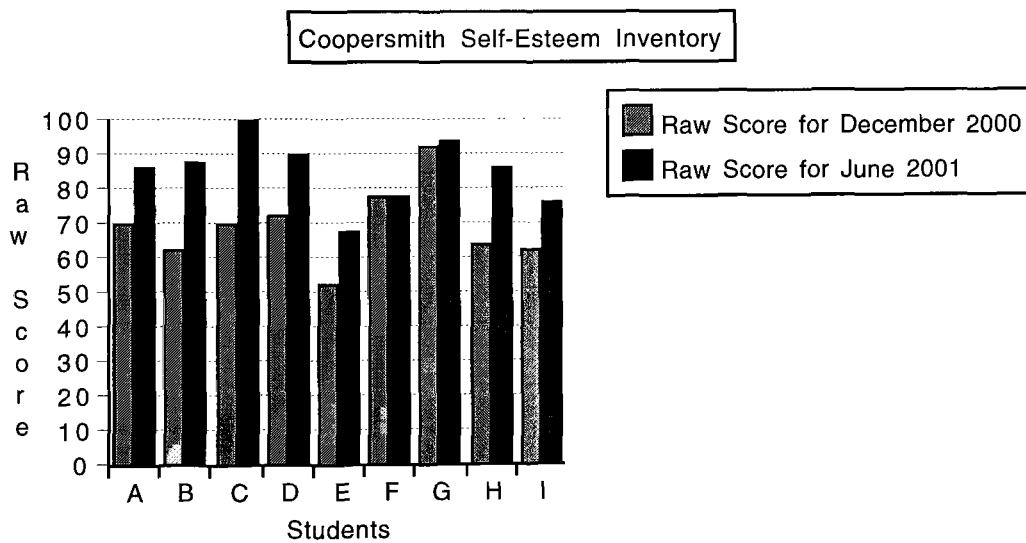


Table 2:

Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory Percentile Ranking Comparisons.

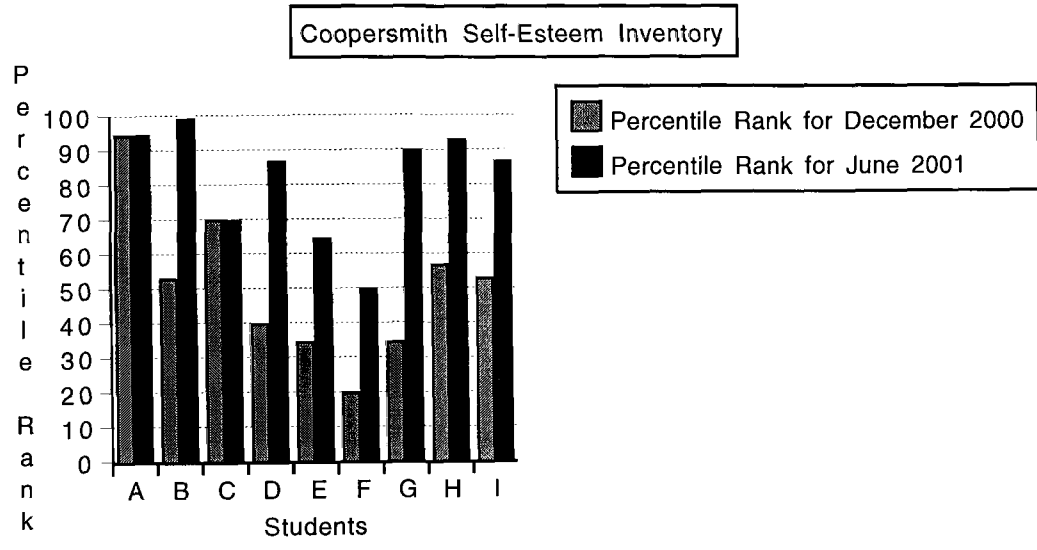


Table 3:

Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory Percentile Ranking Comparisons.

Student	Percentile Ranking December 2000		Percentile Ranking June 2001		Change
A	95	(high)	95	(high)	0
B	35	(low)	90	(high)	+55
C	53	(ave.)	99	(high)	+46
D	57	(ave.)	93	(high)	+36
E	35	(low)	65	(ave.)	+30
F	20	(low)	50	(ave.)	+30
G	35	(low)	90	(high)	+55
H	57	(ave.)	93	(high)	+36
I	53	(ave.)	87	(high)	+34

When analyzing the girls' Outcome Confidence Composite Percentile Ranking Scores on the SSCS, five of the girls increased their score, two of the girls' scores decreased and two stayed exactly the same. This means 56% the girls increased their Outcome Confidence Percentile Ranking Scores over the six month period.

Six of the girls' Self-Confidence Composite Percentile Ranking scores increased in comparison to three of the girls' scores which decreased over the six month period. Of the three girls whose scores decreased, it was interesting to note that Self-Confidence with Self-Image decreased the most in this Subscale Score. Analysis of the girls' Self-Confidence in Social situations also produced some interesting results. Five of the girls' scores increased, one stayed the same and three of the scores decreased over the six month period. This means 56% of the girls' perception of Self-Confidence in Social situations increased.

Analysis of the Importance Subscale yielded some interesting results as well. 67% of the girls' rating of the Importance of Self-Image, decreased significantly over the six month period. Two of the girls' Importance rating of Self-Image stayed the same over the six month period. Both of these girls' initial rating of the Importance of Self-Image was low to begin with in December. Student B's Percentile Rank stayed at 23 and Student H's Percentile Rank stayed at 31.

Comparison Bar Graphs charting the differences in SSCS scores over the six month period can be found in Appendix B.

Table 4A:

Student Self-Concept Scale (SSCS) Percentile Ranking Comparisons.

Interpretive Area	Student A		Change
	Percentile Ranking December 2000	Percentile Ranking June 2001	
<u>Self-Confidence</u>			
Self-Image	84	76	-8
Academic	92	98	+6
Social	97	93	-4
Self-Confidence Composite	81	96	+15
<u>Importance</u>			
Self-Image	31	16	-15
Academic	80	61	-19
Social	88	85	-3
<u>Outcome Confidence Score</u>			
Outcome Confidence Composite	46	46	0

Table 4B:
Student Self-Concept Scale (SSCS) Percentile Ranking Comparisons.

<u>Student B</u>			
Interpretive Area	Percentile Ranking December 2000	Percentile Ranking June 2001	Change
<u>Self-Confidence</u>			
Self-Image	31	96	+65
Academic	72	98	+26
Social	39	67	+28
Self-Confidence Composite	46	96	+50
<u>Importance</u>			
Self-Image	23	23	0
Academic	50	50	0
Social	42	47	+5
<u>Outcome Confidence Score</u>			
Outcome Confidence Composite	23	30	+7

Table 4C:

Student Self-Concept Scale (SSCS) Percentile Ranking Comparisons.

Interpretive Area	<u>Student C</u>		Change
	Percentile Ranking December 2000	Percentile Ranking June 2001	
<u>Self-Confidence</u>			
Self-Image	39	76	+37
Academic	8	35	+27
Social	5	33	+28
Self-Confidence Composite	10	49	+39
<u>Importance</u>			
Self-Image	84	39	-45
Academic	71	71	0
Social	42	63	+21
<u>Outcome Confidence Score</u>			
Outcome Confidence Composite	14	97	+83

Student 4D:

Student Self-Concept Scale (SSCS) Percentile Ranking Comparisons.
Student D

Interpretive Area	Percentile Ranking December 2000	Percentile Ranking June 2001	Change
<u>Self-Confidence</u>			
Self-Image	96	84	-12
Academic	24	5	-19
Social	39	12	-27
Self-Confidence Composite	56	19	-37
<u>Importance</u>			
Self-Image	72	31	-41
Academic	33	24	-9
Social	53	22	-31
<u>Outcome Confidence Score</u>			
Outcome Confidence Composite	37	14	-23

Table 4E:

Student Self-Concept Scale (SSCS) Percentile Ranking Comparisons.

Interpretive Area	<u>Student E</u>		Change
	Percentile Ranking December 2000	Percentile Ranking June 2001	
<u>Self-Confidence</u>			
Self-Image	84	67	-17
Academic	42	35	-7
Social	88	93	+5
Self-Confidence Composite	77	72	-5
<u>Importance</u>			
Self-Image	95	39	-56
Academic	90	80	-10
Social	78	63	-15
<u>Outcome Confidence Score</u>			
Outcome Confidence Composite	23	80	+57

Table 4F:

Student Self-Concept Scale (SSCS) Percentile Ranking Comparisons

Interpretive Area	Student F		Change
	Percentile Ranking December 2000	Percentile Ranking June 2001	
<u>Self-Confidence</u>			
Self-Image	31	91	+60
Academic	5	13	+8
Social	59	67	+8
Self-Confidence Composite	21	56	+35
<u>Importance</u>			
Self-Image	48	16	-32
Academic	66	33	-33
Social	37	42	+5
<u>Outcome Confidence Score</u>			
Outcome Confidence Composite	30	30	0

Table 4G:

Student Self-Concept Scale (SSCS) Percentile Ranking Comparisons.Student G

Interpretive Area	Percentile Ranking December 2000	Percentile Ranking June 2001	Change
<u>Self-Confidence</u>			
Self-Image	67	67	0
Academic	6	13	+7
Social	74	59	-15
Self-Confidence Composite	38	41	+3
<u>Importance</u>			
Self-Image	72	31	-41
Academic	19	33	+14
Social	42	32	-10
<u>Outcome</u>			
Outcome Confidence Composite	46	30	-16

Table 4H:

Student Self-Concept Scale (SSCS) Percentile Ranking Comparisons

<u>Student H</u>			
Interpretive Area	Percentile Ranking December 2000	Percentile Ranking June 2001	Change
<u>Self-Confidence</u>			
Self-Image	84	48	-36
Academic	96	96	0
Social	82	82	0
Self-Confidence Composite	93	81	-12
<u>Importance</u>			
Self-Image	31	31	0
Academic	80	50	-30
Social	42	85	+43
<u>Outcome Confidence Score</u>			
Outcome Confidence Composite	18	72	+54

Table 4I:

Student Self-Concept Scale (SSCS) Percentile Ranking Comparisons

Interpretive Area	Student I		Change
	Percentile Ranking December 2000	Percentile Ranking June 2001	
<u>Self-Confidence</u>			
Self-Image	18	96	+78
Academic	20	35	+15
Social	67	74	+7
Self-Confidence Composite	30	77	+47
<u>Importance</u>			
Self-Image	6	23	+17
Academic	50	55	+5
Social	42	78	+36
<u>Outcome Confidence Score</u>			
Outcome Confidence Composite	7	23	+16

Qualitative Data Analysis

When comparing the general atmosphere of both Focus Group sessions, in December most of the girls wanted to be heard regarding their experiences in the program. They seemed enthusiastic about the Interview and were ready to comment and share their thoughts freely. In June, however, the group appeared to be more at ease with each other. Before the June Interview there was a lot more interaction between the girls before the tape was recording than in December. They joked with each other, laughed a lot and flopped down on a big couch. The December Interview seemed more clinical and the girls seemed a little more apprehensive, perhaps due to the uncertainty

of the entire process?

The June Interview had some noticeable differences than the December Interview. Sometimes one girl spoke her ideas and the others just agreed without elaborating or extending ideas. Their thoughts and feelings were similar and it seemed like they didn't need to expand on the ideas presented by their female peers.

There seemed to be a stronger sense of cohesiveness in June and the girls seemed to be a stronger, more confident Unit. The girls seemed to be more comfortable talking about themselves and how the VWP affected them than earlier in December. The following are the key chunks of meaning extracted from the Focus Group Interview.

1. Why was it important for you to register in the Valhalla Wilderness Program?

Student C and in December and Student D in June both stated that, "You get more out of school." Student C explained that, "We learn twice as much as our regular school stuff and then the wilderness school stuff." Student H explained that, "It's not like school, you learn so much other stuff, its really fun." Student A stated that, "The program is a lifetime opportunity learning about avalanche awareness and mountaineering."

The philosophy of program appealed to the girls as Student C stated, "It's like a complete change from another year at school." So its as if the girls are at school, but also at a real different kind of school. A school presenting them with information and experiences which were unique and that excited them a great deal.

2. Overall, how would you describe the effect that the Valhalla Wilderness Program has had on you? Even by December Student C realized that the program had already made her stronger. When asked if the program made them feel physically or mentally stronger, the group replied with, "Both." Student C and G talked about climbing a mountain they thought they couldn't and bike riding a distance they thought they couldn't ride. Student C in June, exclaimed in excitement that she rode her mountain bike 10kms in the backcountry within three days. She was kind of astonished at her accomplishment. It was evident that she was very proud of herself and thought before the program there wasn't a chance she could do this. Student G summed it up by saying, "It's so easy now for sure, its [the distances] so short."

3. What has the Valhalla Wilderness Program done for you and how you view yourself? Again the group agreed that the program made them physically and mentally stronger. Student A brought up the gender difference issue. She said that the program puts into perspective that girls and guys can do the same things and just as well. Student H explained that the program made her feel different in some way but needed more time to reflect on this to articulate it to her level of satisfaction.

In the December Focus Group Interview the girls discussed how the program had provided them with social skill training. Because all of the students had to live in the same environment over a period of time, Student G thought that the group was more friendly with each other as a result. Student C commented that, "For five days you have to get along. If you have differences with anyone its going to be, the trip is just not going to be fun." " Yeah, you have to deal with it [disagreement] quickly." Student E added, "If you are not getting along its like you're like loosing out, like...." Trust was brought into the arena here as well with Student A explaining that "You have to be able to trust everyone and get along with everyone. You don't have time [to argue] or anything like that." "Getting along seems to make the trip go faster and it's funner when you're not arguing," as Student C added at the conclusion of this discussion. During the June Focus Group Interview, it seemed that getting along with others was not an issue since the group did not have any more to say about it.

4. How has your view of yourself changed since the beginning of the program? If so, how has it changed? Student F described her change as now having the belief that, "We [the girls] know for sure we can do it." Student C agreed by adding, "You know that you know you can climb up that mountain. You can go a certain amount you can go hiking and stuff, its not like before [the program.] Student E explained how she never thought she could bike down those trails." "Biking a 100 kms was something I never thought I could ever do. Now I, know you can do it, its so awesome. Now you know you can get out there and do it anytime," added Student C. It was like a transformation took place, one from the girls thinking, "I can't do that?" to, "how can I do that?"

As a group, they assisted each other during the difficult moments on the trail as well. Student C explained this, "It looked, it looked so hard. Usually you stop when

you ... we hadn't done anything like this before. Plus with a group too, like if you were with just a friend so something you would just go back but with a group you have to do it." So there was a kind of positive social pressure that kept the girls going during the difficult moments. But ironically the girls felt less pressure to perform or live up to some kind of standard. When I asked the group again, "So there is less pressure amongst the group in this kind of class arrangement?" They agreed, "Oh definitely." Overall, the girls felt an increased level of confidence in their ability to perform outdoor wilderness activities and felt less pressure to conform to some standard. They just had to make it on the outtrip and not give in to their thoughts and feelings of, "I can't do that," to feel successful.

The girls commented that Sean, their teacher was an inspiration and how his enthusiasm kept them going. Student G described his motivational methods as inspiring. She liked how he commented that she was, "Doing well, come on keep going we can do it, a little more to go. He is a really good teacher. He kept us going." "Yeah and before we knew it, we were there, eight or ten kms down the trail!" added Student C, "My self-esteem has been totally lifted."

5. How has the Valhalla Wilderness Program affected how you get along with others, mainly girls? Student A summarized the discussion well by stating, "If we were in regular school like we wouldn't have known each other as well. You have to be more cooperative and everything." "You definitely have to work together, I think its team work," added Student C. Student D commented that, " Five days at a time we can't change that so ... you can't just go off and do your own thing cause you are stuck [on the mountain.]"

6. What has been the biggest lesson you have learned about yourself through this program? Student C started the conversation off by stating, "Self-esteem, I don't know, I think its just like you can motivate yourself and know what you can do and push your level." She also commented on how her thinking changed during the program. "Like before I looked at a mountain and thought, I can't do it. Now I look at a mountain and say, "Well I can go here and then here, I know where to go." Student's C's thinking changed from, "I can't do it," to "How can I do it." By learning and

practicing new skills, Student C became more confident with planning her climbing strategy on a mountain. Student A added, "Its like there is nothing you can't do." Student A had developed an huge sense of self confidence. Student D claimed she learned patience with herself through the program. Student F felt it was responsibility for her, Student C felt it was independence and Student G felt the program was inspirational for her and will assist her with new challenges in the future.

It was evident that the group of nine girls matured through the program. They were very articulate and thoughtful in their responses. They had already done some deep thinking about the program and how it helped them develop into confident and independent young women.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

The Valhalla Wilderness Program appears to have had a positive effect on the development of self-esteem and confidence on the grade 9 girls enrolled in the program. In reviewing all of the data, both quantitative and qualitative, the following is a summarization of the data, it's themes and it's significance.

The most significant piece of data are the results from the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory's pre and post data. All but one the the girls scores increased significantly over the research period. The one girl who scored the same score in December as well as on the June result, her score was high to begin with in December 2000 scoring at the 95th Percentile.

The data from the Student Self-Concept Scale produced some interesting results in three areas which the assessment measures. 56% of the girls increased their Outcome Confidence Score and Self-Confidence Score. 67% of the girls rated Importance of Self Image as less important in June as compared to December data. The Importance of Self Image to the girls decreased significantly over the six month period according to the results on the SSSS.

The qualitative data provided some rich information which the standardized assessments could not measure or reveal. The words confidence, cohesiveness, accomplishment, pride, achievable goals, trust and excitement were strong descriptors of what the Valhalla Wilderness Program provided for the girls, for their sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy.

There were never any negative comments about male classmates. The girls felt that they could do the same things on the out trips and do them just as well. There was a sense that the girls and boys were apart of the same group and all of them supported and helped one another despite any gender issues. Working out differences was another pattern or theme which kept coming up. The group believed that any differences had to be worked out quickly to prevent spoiling the trip for everyone. The girls believed that arguments were hard on individuals as well as on other group members. No on wanted to spoil the fun and adventure for themselves or others. They developed and recognized this as an area of personal responsibility for themselves and other group members.

Disagreements and the getting along with others was not an issue at all during the June Interview.

There was also a kind of positive social pressure apparent within the group. The girls felt that if they turned back or believed the goal could not be accomplished, the entire group was let down. There seemed to be less pressure to conform to a social level or standard. The girls were functioning as a unit, supporting one another to assist in everyone, "making it." There was a definite focus on being good group members vs a selfish focus on themselves and personal needs. The girls felt that they got to know each other on a much deeper level than they ever would have in, "regular school."

I think one of the most significant discoveries was how the girls changed their view of themselves during the program. The girls discussed how they proved to themselves that they could accomplish the difficult physical challenges of the program. Their thoughts changed from, "I can't do it," to "how can I do it?" The girls discussed the skills they learned and how they could plan out a successful expedition into the dangers of the backcountry and be successful.

The girls felt strongly that the teacher made a huge impact on the program. He was a role model of perseverance, determination and commitment to the goal. His encouraging nature was a necessity.

Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy meant to the girls, motivating oneself and to constantly push their present level of skill development. Making it through a grueling mountain bike trail to have everyone at the end to cheer you on and congratulate you seemed to provide the girls with a positive support group which increased Self-Esteem and a sense of Self-Efficacy.

Other words and comments revealed that the girls discovered their patience, an increase in their sense of responsibility, independence and inspiration. The Valhalla Wilderness program seemed to have had a positive impact on the development of Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy and Confidence. The de-emphasis on the Importance of Self-Image was a significant change. This discovery was exciting.

I strongly believe that this type of program could be recommended for girls who have a low sense of self-esteem, self-efficacy and confidence. Girls who need a larger

world view away from the focus of themselves could be provided through a program such as the Valhalla Wilderness program. It provides the context of cooperation within a group setting. Girls who need to build their physical and mental strength could do so in a program such as the Valhalla Wilderness Program.

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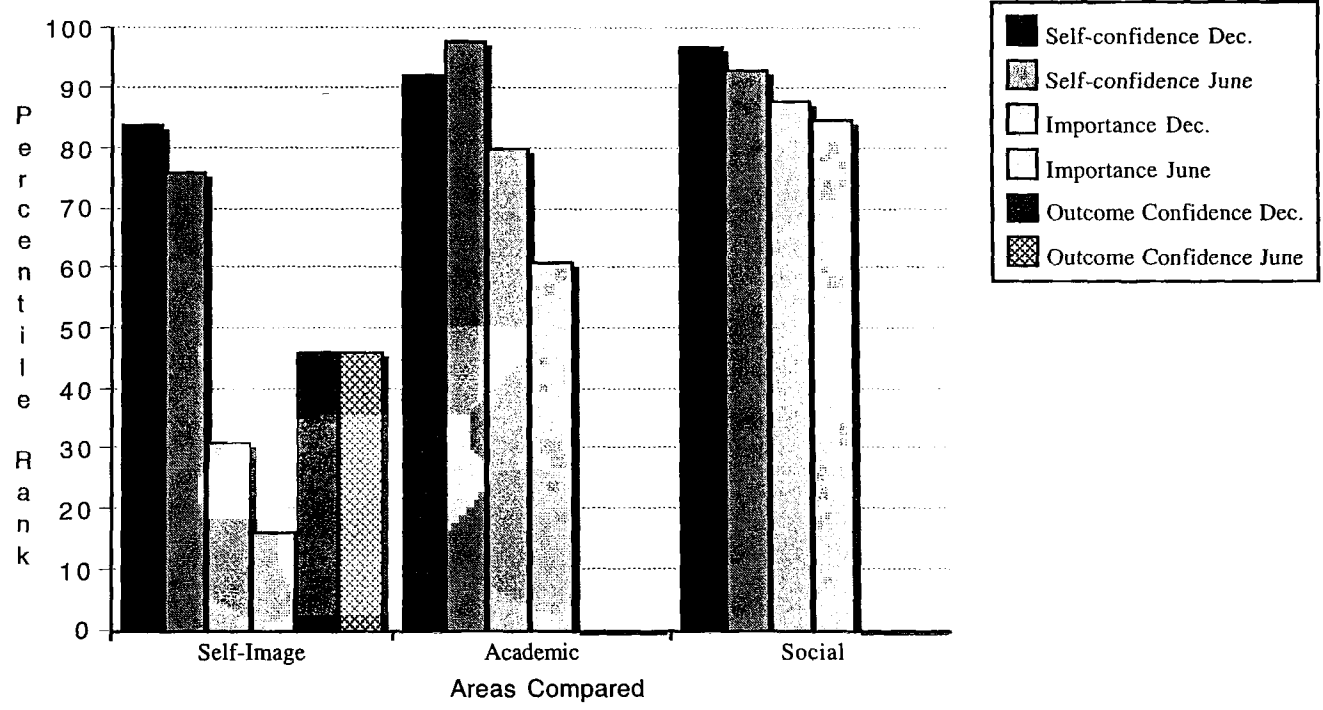
Appendix A

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Why was it important for you to register in the Valhalla Wilderness Program?
2. Overall, how would you describe the effect that the Valhalla Wilderness Program has had on you?
3. What has the Valhalla Wilderness Program done for you and how you view yourself?
4. Has your view of yourself changed since the beginning of the program? If so, how has it changed?
5. How has the Valhalla Wilderness Program affected how you get along with others, mainly other girls?
6. What has been the biggest lesson you have learned about yourself through this program?

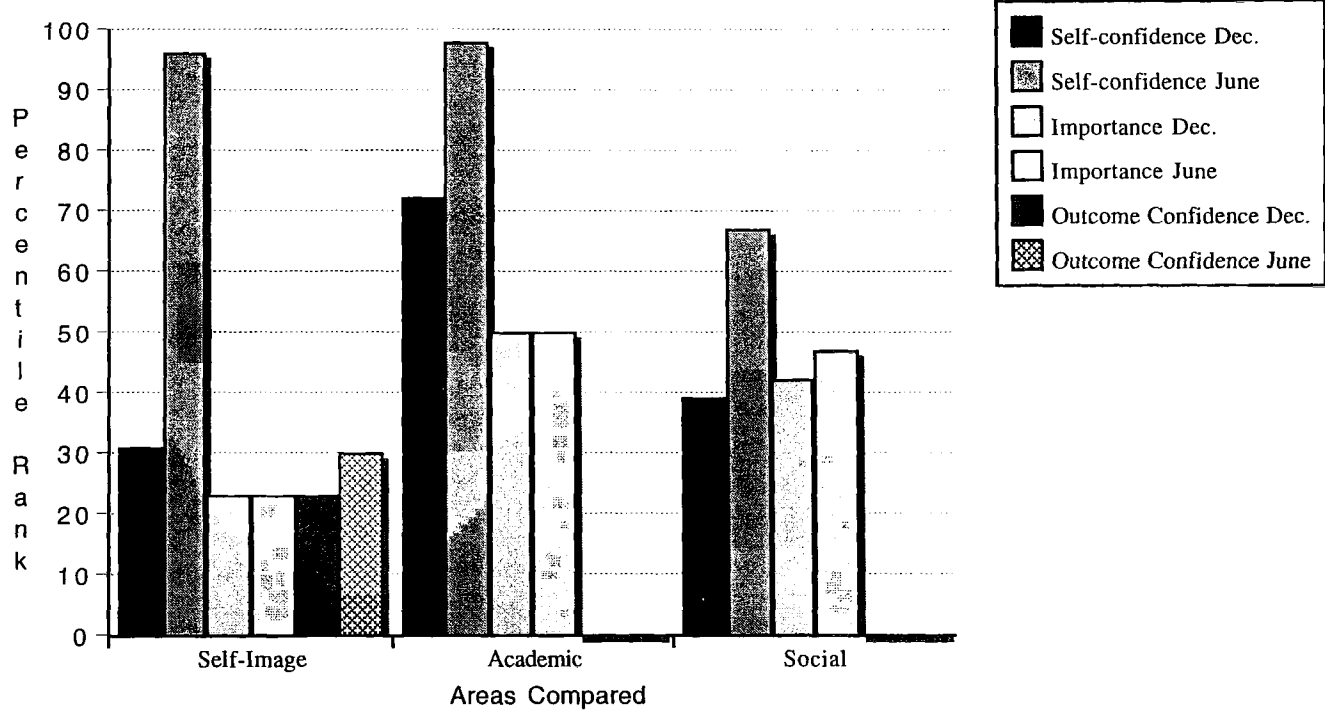
Appendix B

Student A SSCS Percentile Rank Comparisons (December 2000-Jan. 2001)



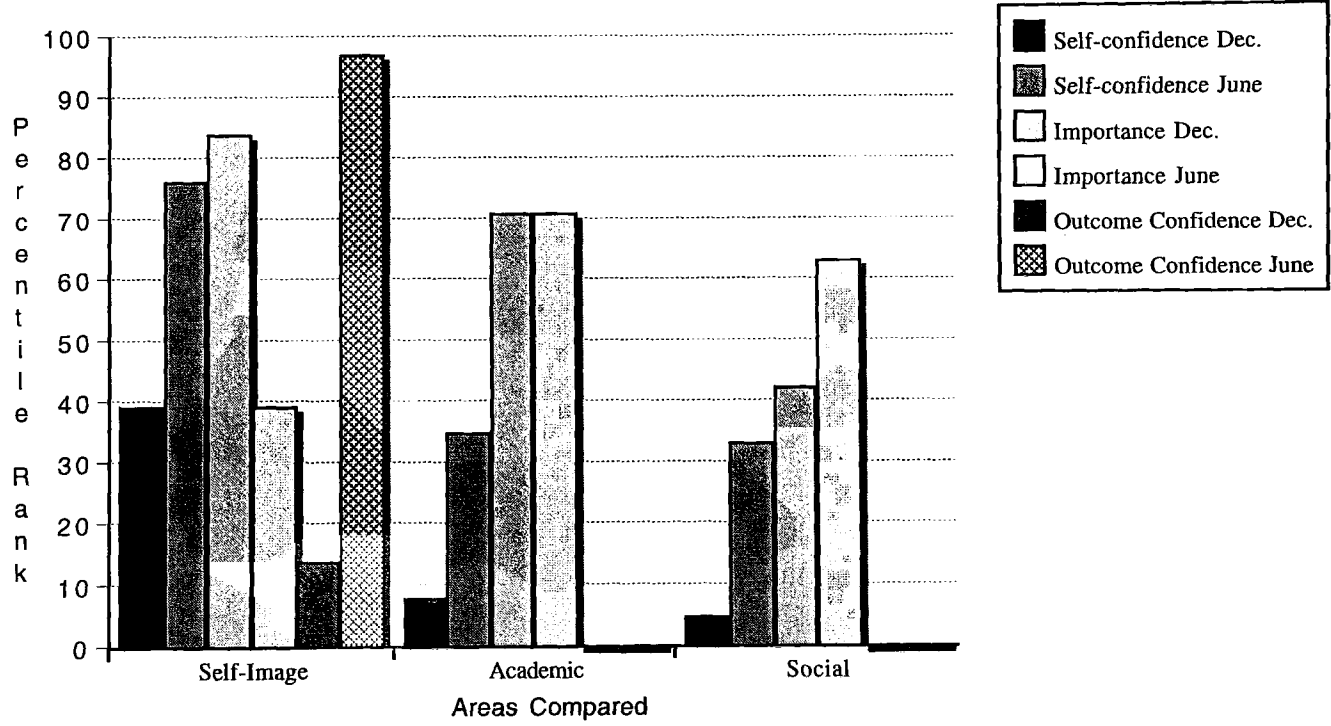
Appendix C

Student B SSCS Percentile Rank Comparisons (December 2000-Jan. 2001)



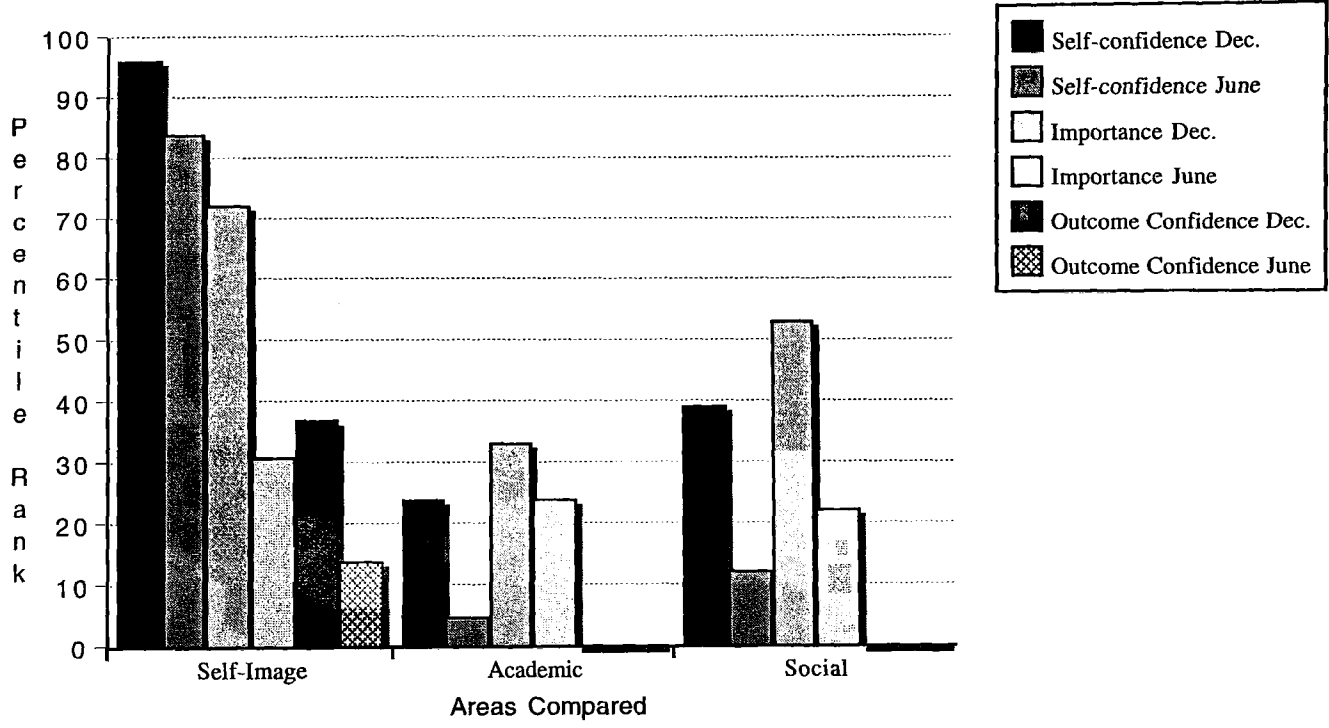
Appendix D

Student C SSCS Percentile Rank Comparisons (December 2000-Jan. 2001)



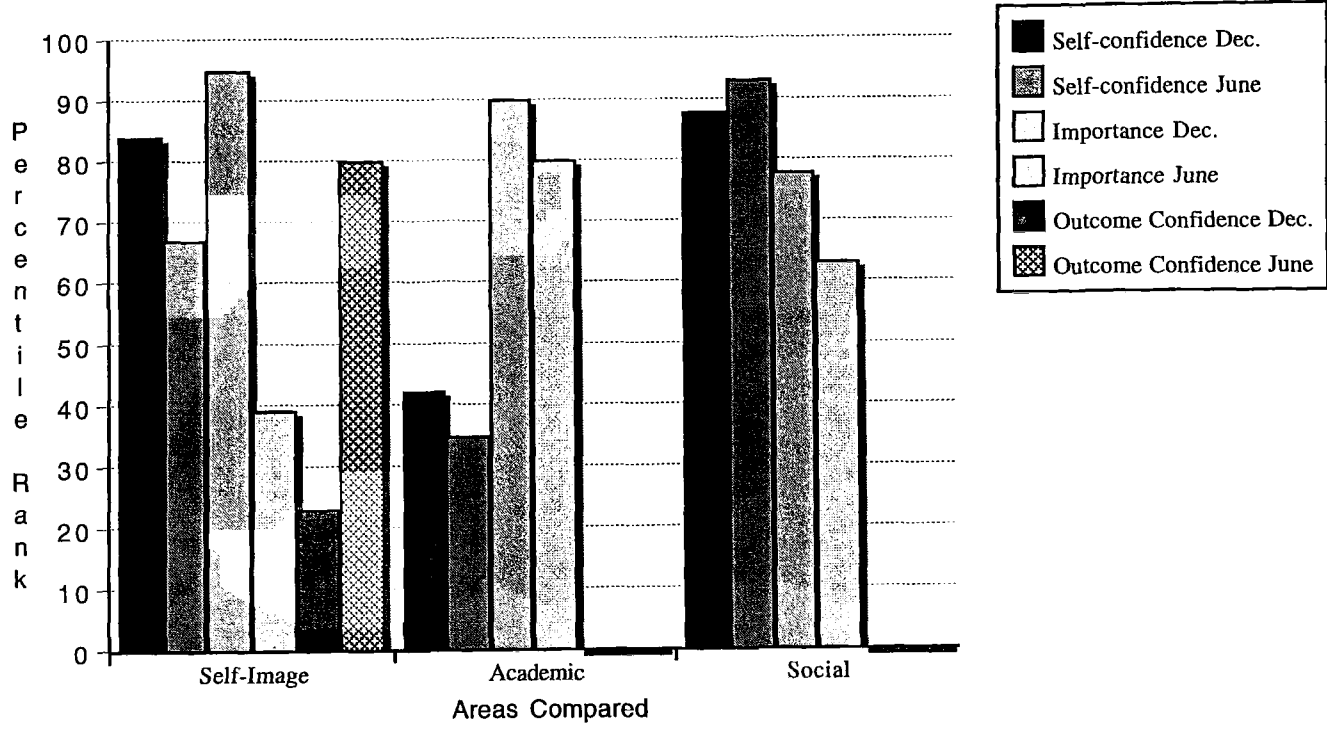
Appendix E

Student D SSCS Percentile Rank Comparisons (December 2000-Jan. 2001)



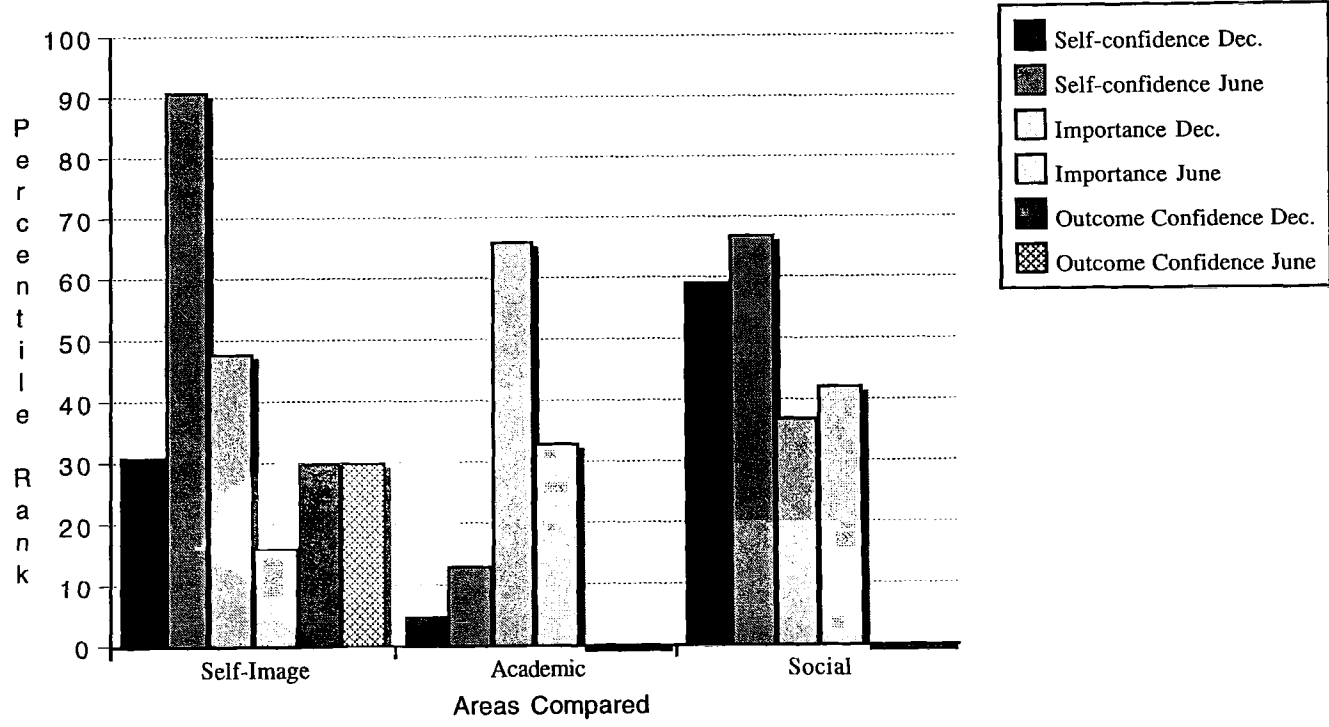
Appendix F

Student E SSCS Percentile Rank Comparisons (December 2000-Jan. 2001)



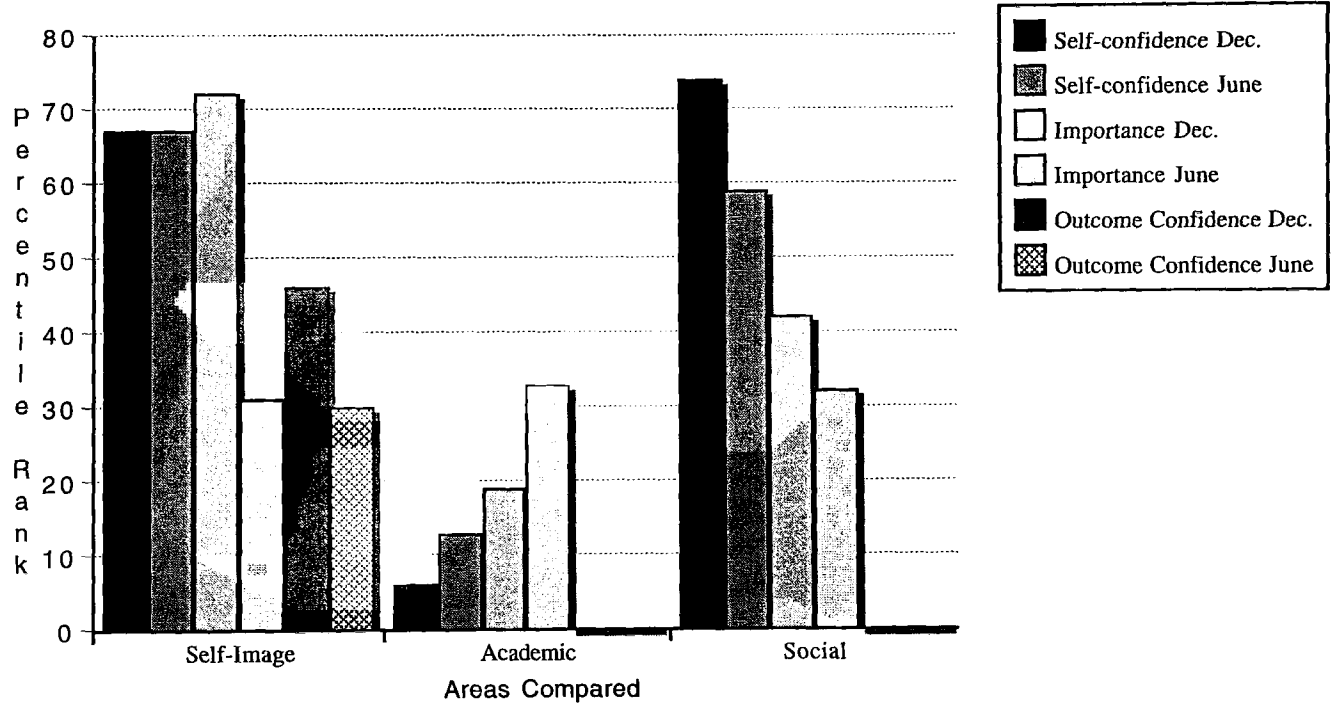
Appendix G

Student F SSCS Percentile Rank Comparisons (December 2000-Jan. 2001)



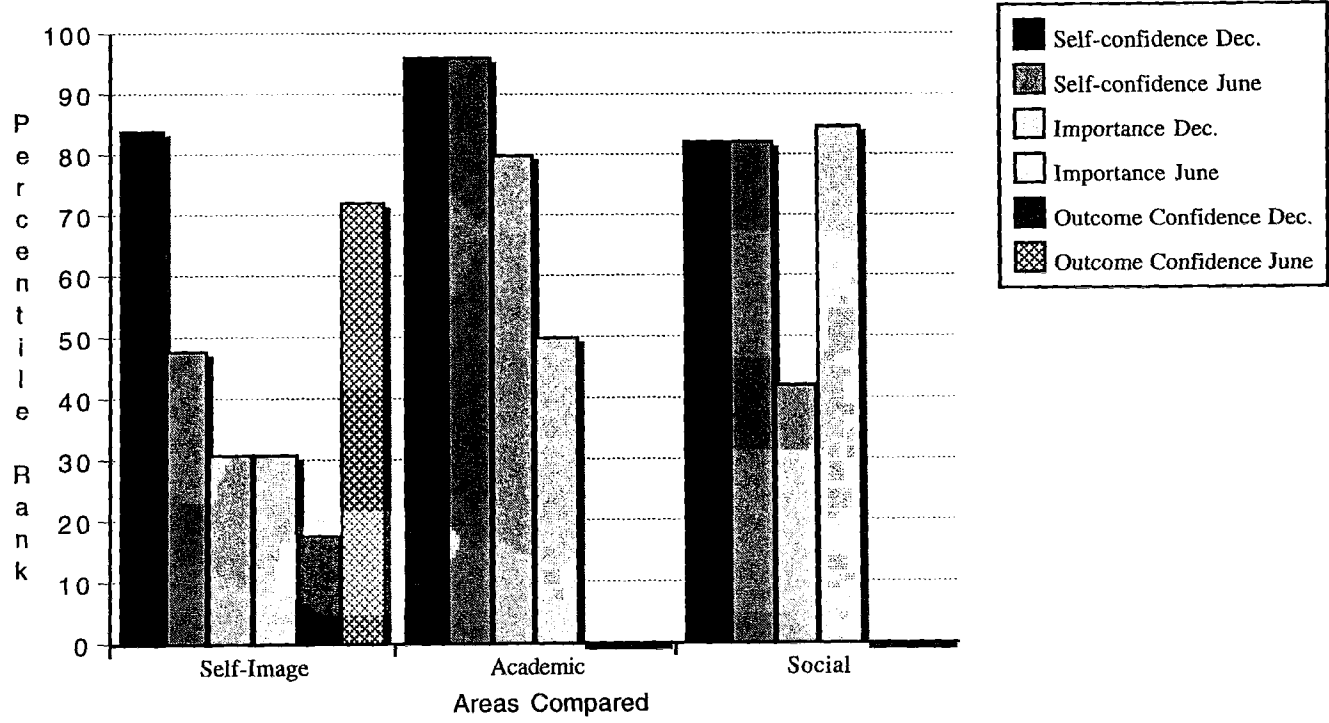
Appendix H

Student G SSCS Percentile Rank Comparisons (December 2000-Jan. 2001)



Appendix I

Student H SSCS Percentile Rank Comparisons (December 2000-Jan. 2001)



Appendix J

Student I SSCS Percentile Rank Comparisons (December 2000-Jan. 2001)

