ADOLESCENTS' ACADEMIC SELF PERCEPTIONS IN A DISCIPLINARY ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM: THE IMPACT OF A SELF-AFFIRMATION INTERVENTION PROGRAM.

A Dissertation

by

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This dissertation meets the standards for scope and quality of
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ABSTRACT

Steele and Aronson (1995) described stereotypic threat as the experience of personal distress related to the fear and anxiety that one might confirm a negative stereotype about a meaningful identity group. Adolescents enrolled in Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP) face stereotype threat consequences in the form of lowered expectations, increased anxiety, dejection, and frustration which can impact their academic self-concept and self-image (Yeager & Walton, 2011). Exposure to positive and affirming self-affirmation interventions (e.g., SAP; Schmidt & Canela, 2015; Sherman & Cohen, 2006) have been found to be effective for increasing clients' ability to defend their self-identity and maintain optimism and motivation in the face of stereotype threat (Cohen, & Sherman, 2014; Cook, Purdie-Vaughns, Garcia, & Cohen 2012). There is a dearth of outcome based research with students in DAEP. The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of a self-affirmation program (SAP) in a DAEP setting.

Participants in the SAP were students, obtained using non-probabilistic and purposeful sampling methods, aged 11 to 15 years (*n* = 23) enrolled in a DAEP. A mixed method methodology was utilized wherein quantitative (pre-post) data and qualitative (phenomenological and personal construct) data were collected concurrently, analyzed independently, and compared. Quantitative data were collected to explore changes in student academic engagement, disengagement, behavior, and self-concept change across time. Qualitative data were collected to glean information from participants' lived experiences of themselves within the academic domain and after exposure to the SAP.

Quantitative results indicated statistically significant increases in students' perceptions of academic self-concept threat over time. Significant results were also found in student behavioral disaffection scores. No significant changes in emotional engagement, disaffection, behavioral engagement, or active disengagement were found. Qualitative findings voiced adolescent characterizations of themselves within the academic domain and reports of attendance in the SAP and the DAEP as helpful.

Implications from this study support the self-affirmation as useful for behaviorally disengaged students vulnerable to identity threat. Self-affirmation holds benefits for adolescent students’ academic self-concept and self-identity beliefs. In addition, this research suggests valuable information toward reinforcing positive self-identity and reducing psychological threat of students assigned to alternative education settings.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated first and foremost to the memory of my grandparents, Earnest and Lucille Carter; may I always make you proud. Secondly, this dissertation is dedicated to all the bad kids, the disrespectful little girls and boys, the wild kids, the savage kids, and all the outcasts who get seen for all the wrong reasons. I see you.

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By the grace of God, I have been blessed beyond measure; without Him, this journey would not have been possible. As this journey comes to an end, I must give thanks to all the people who walked along side me, encouraging and celebrating at each triumph, and caring and comforting at each challenge. I am beyond thankful to my family, who have been instrumental emotional supports, even when I ignored and neglected them. My mother who is a model of persistence, perseverance, and dedication, thank you for your unending support and love. My siblings, Jynnifer and Wesley, for their unconditional encouragements. To Uncle Fred, for being my archetype of hard work and commitment and Uncle Sherman for his inspiration and praise.

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Thank you to the motivational members of Cohort XIII, who struggled and endured with me, most specifically, my fellow musketeers. Thank you ladies for being my sisters in all but blood, laughing, crying, and venting with me. Thank you to all the wonderful people of the Student Support Center, this process would not have been possible without your support. A special thank you to Esther and all the kids at SSC for helping with all the data! Lastly, thank you to Regina, Dani, Ryan, Joshua, Deanna, Alicia, Bob, Christian and everyone else for listening to me rant, encouraging me, reminding me to take care of myself, and a million other little things.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Adolescent identity development is multifaceted and is, therefore, reflective of a number of layered ecological contexts (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Rusby, Crowley, Sprague, & Biglan, 2011). Scholastic settings represent a significant portion of the daily experiences of most children and adolescents. For youth, positive and self-efficacious beliefs about one's ability to function and be perceived as productive in school settings may be particularly central to their overall conceptualizations of who they are (Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach & Rosenberg, 1995) and perhaps the extent to which they are perceived as valuable to society and those around them (Capuzzi & Gross, 2014). The development of self-affirming academic beliefs may be crucial to overall self-concept, and positive youth development (Brown, Kanny, & Johnson, 2013), and further may motivate day to day decision making and investment in academic achievement (Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach & Rosenberg, 1995). Academic self-concept refers to a constellation of personal beliefs about functional competence (attitudes, feelings, and perception of ability) in scholastic settings (Lent, Brown, and Gore (1997).

The individual and personalized experience of threats to academic self-concept are a common occurrence for many students, particularly those from minority and low-income backgrounds (Brown, Kanny, & Johnson, 2013; McNulty & Roseboro, 2009; Nguyen & Ryan, 2008; Steele, 1997; Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011). Minority students often contend with low expectations, increased anxiety, dejection, and frustration as they learn new material, during testing, initiate help seeking, and engage socially on the school campus (Cohen, & Sherman, 2014; Cohen & Garcia, 2008; Yeager & Walton, 2011). Adolescent interactions within the academic organizational context ("school climate, sense of community, peer interactions, and more structural aspects of the particular environment (e.g., school size, availability of extracurricular activities, etc.”) (Brown, Kanny, Johnson, 2013, p. 182) in particular are central to adolescent positive identity development.

Aronson, Cohen, McColskey, Montrosse, Lewis, and Mooney (2009) suggest academic underperformance may be at least in part due to the stress created by an over-emphasis on evaluation, which can further threaten one’s sense of competence (academic self-concept) in the classroom. Also, popularly held overgeneralized and stereotypical attributions of performance expectations have also been shown to affect students’ academic self-concept.

Steele and Aronson (1995) describe stereotypic threat as the concern and distress that one may be confirming a negative stereotype about oneself and one’s identity group. Multiple identity groups have demonstrated susceptibility to stereotype effects (Cohen & Garcia, 2008). Consequences of stereotype threat are as robust in their expression as the mechanisms behind the threat (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). A meta-analysis assessing the impact of stereotype threat on test performance in minorities and women found the effects of threatening information to be largest when signaling cues were moderately explicit (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008). For example, when females are told by proctors of an exam they are likely to perform poorly because women do not traditionally excel on the exam subject, stereotypic effects have been shown to be largest. Other examples are demonstrated with regard to gender differences of stereotypes: females are vulnerable to stereotype threat in academic mathematics and STEM domains in general (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999) and males are vulnerable in regards to social sensitivity tasks compared to women (Koenig & Eagly, 2005).

Research has shown negative impacts on student academic performance when individuals believe they are being compared to stereotypic exemplars that are consistent with their personal characteristics. Students from low socio-economic backgrounds demonstrated vulnerability when performing intellectual tasks where they believed they would be compared to peers of high socio-economic status (Harrison, Stevens, Monty, & Coakley, 2006). Additional consequences of perceived personal threat included self-handicapping strategies (e.g., studying less for a test) and decreased identification with the threatened domain, discounting (e.g., questioning the personal importance of performance in the domain), and disassociation (e.g., detaching one's identity from the domain) (Stone, 2002). 'Acting out' or tendencies toward maladaptive behavioral reactivity in the form of non-responsiveness may be exacerbated by perceptions of low or negative views from others. For example, a student wanting to succeed academically may distrust that authority figures will reward his/her efforts and engage in violent behavior in order to gain respect or exert control (Matsuda, Melde, Taylor, Freng, & Esbensen, 2013). Students identified with a history of disruptive behavior are likely to be impacted by identity and stereotype threat at Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP), based on demographic and enrollment characteristics of students.

Disciplinary Alternative Educational Programs

Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP) are designed to manage and correct behavioral problems of "at risk" and disruptive students, wherein enrollment is not voluntarily but follows an administrative or judiciary referral (Aron, 2003; 2006; Raywid, 1994). Students complete a specified term, on average 36 days, at a DAEP before returning to their home school, following fulfillment of guidelines outlined in disciplinary hearings, behavioral, and academic improvement plans (Cortez & Cortez, 2009). Placement at a DAEP is often a part of Response to Intervention (RTI) planning for students. RTI is a multi-tiered early identification support for students who are "at risk," struggling behaviorally or academically, as compared to appropriate grade level peers (Erford, 2014). As a condition of the RTI plan, interventions are offered to students, at increasing levels of intensity, from a multidisciplinary team of school personnel. RTI plans are designed to assist students in complying with developmentally appropriate learning goals and behavior (Erford, 2014). DAEP placement is therefore a component of RTI planning, providing educational and therapeutic support to students who exhibit academic, emotional, and behavioral problems which impact and inhibit functioning in traditional educational settings (Lehr & Lange, 2003; Mitchell, Booker, & Strain, 2011; Raywid, 1994, 1999; Tobin & Sprague, 2002; Verdugo & Glenn, 2006).

Sagor (2006) argues that American school systems are caste-like in nature, wherein stigma associated with alternative school placement relegates students to second-class citizenship. In regards to a standard definition for alternative education, consensus is limited to these facilities as being providers of education to at-risk students (Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009). The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) defines at risk status:

> when used with respect to a child, youth, or student, means a school aged individual who is at-risk of academic failure, has a drug or alcohol problem, is pregnant or is a parent, has come into contact with the juvenile justice system in the past, is at least 1 year behind the expected grade level for the age of the individual, has limited English proficiency, is a gang member, has dropped out of school in the past, or has a high absenteeism rate at school. (NCLB, 2002, § 1432)

While DAEP environments are designed to be formative and therapeutic, a student's referral and placement at a DAEP is associated with stereotypic attributions about limited or negative prospects for this student, which may further displace them from traditional schooling and, by association, from "normalcy" (McNulty & Roseboro, 2009). The salience of negative views toward student offenders is often very evident in the adjudication context that results in

DAEP placement, which often involves disciplinary and judicial consequences that have followed as a natural consequence of placement decision.

A student's emotional reactivity to the negative views they perceive from others is a typical example of stereotypic threat (Farrally & Daniels, 2014; McNulty & Roseboro, 2009; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

In a recent qualitative investigation of students in alternative programs, students reflected extensively on their experiences confronting their identification as "bad kids" and deficient in the learning environment (McNulty & Roseboro, 2009). Students disclosed examples of being identified as a troublemaker within the school setting. One student participant, Billy, had this to say:

> Like calling you to their office for no reason. Sometimes they just pick on you like with little stuff. I mean, I know some kids use that as an excuse that they get picked on at school, but most of the time it is true. 'Cause I know a lot of teachers who do. I feel that I've been brought out just 'cuz of some of the stuff I do, some people think I'm bad 'cuz of that, and I don't think that's fair 'cuz of some of the things you've done in the past. (McNulty & Roseboro, 2009, p. 420)

Further adding:

> The officers [at regular school] suck, plus the principal—they is always on you. They constantly are nagging at you. "Your pants are falling down or are too low, your hair is too long," something like that. I just get tired of it. I would get tired of it, and then I would like blow up in their face. And then I would get in trouble for blowing up in their face. (McNulty & Roseboro, 2009, p. 420)

As evidenced by the example above, students attending alternative education programs are likely to face a number of ongoing inter- and intrapersonal stressors that may potentially interfere with academic performance in scholastic settings (Farrally & Daniels, 2014; McNulty & Roseboro, 2009; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Decreased or lowered academic (and future life role) expectations for students attending DAEP programs portend significant vulnerability to the negative impact of persistent labeling. Students affected by stereotype threat make decisions, whether intentionally or unintentionally, to engage in patterns of behavior which can create for them a difficult school milieu (Cohen & Garcia, 2008).

Exposing at-risk students to positive and affirming strategies which instill hope or encourage them to reinvest in adaptive work at school has proven to be impactful when working chronically underachieving students (Scott et al., 2002; Simonsen & Sugai, 2013). Further teaching students to reflect and 'self-affirm' on their personal strengths, goals, and identify available resources has been shown to boost adaptive functioning in school settings (Howell, 2016).

Self-affirmation interventions have been effective in increasing clients' ability to defend their self-concept and maintain optimism and motivation in the face of stereotype threat (Cohen & Garcia, 2008; Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Self-affirmation interventions include strategies for maintaining self-integrity, affirming oneself in the face of threatening information, and incorporating culturally and socially relevant experiences and norms (e.g., being respected, able to control and influence important outcomes or being a good family member). Self-affirmation interventions are founded on strength-based culturally relevant ideology through recognition of client's cultural resources as tools to cope with difficulties, reinforce competence, and resilience as opposed to symptoms of pathology (Steele, 1988; Sherman & Cohen, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

Annually, nearly one-half million “at risk” students are placed in disciplinary alternative education programs (DAEPs) across the United States rather than being expelled from a school or school district (Tajalli & Garba, 2014). Despite the goal of supporting a transitional environment for student reinstatement at their home school, students placed in DAEPs may be further disciplined and excluded for their initial failure to follow cultural norms and expectations for conduct and behavior in the academic domain (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). These students are disproportionately represented by members of minority or low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds, and often have comorbid conduct, emotional, intellectual, or physical disabilities/disorders (Pang & Foley, 2006; Nelson & Eckstein, 2008).

Through small enrollment programs of approximately 200 or fewer students, individualized instruction, and increased structure, DAEPs are intended to meet students’ unique academic and social-emotional needs (Pang & Foley, 2006; Lange & Sletten, 2002). However, researchers have found particularly high rates of recidivism of 50-80%, with most students returning to the DAEP within the same academic year (Hosley, 2003; Geronimo, 2011; Mathur & Nelson, 2013; Tsang, 2004). Identification of effective, brief counseling interventions which are capable of being integrated within the RTI plan address the academic and therapeutic needs of students and are likely to reduce the recidivism rate of DAEPs are necessary.

Despite the evident needs of students within DAEPs and alternative education programs (AEPs) as a whole, a dearth of research remains, especially investigations incorporating student voices (Brown et al., 2013; Darling & Price, 2004; de la Ossa, 2005; McNulty & Roseboro, 2009). Presently, quantitative studies dominate the limited literature on DAEPs and AEPs and focus on standardizing definitions, policies, and identifying trends (see Aron, 2006; Mitchell et al., 2011; Cox, 1999; Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009). The few qualitative investigations focus on policy, curriculum, and the school milieu of DAEPs and AEPs from the perspective of adult stakeholders (i.e., teachers, parents, and administrators) (Hoge & Rubinstein-Avila, 2014; Lehr & Lange, 2003) and high school students (Brown et al., 2013; Darling & Price 2004; de la Ossa, 2005; Loutzenheiser, 2002). Therefore a need exists for in-depth investigations which jointly explore student outcomes and quantitative results with detailed self-reported perspectives provided by adolescent students.

Purpose of the Study

This convergent parallel mixed method intervention study (Creswell, 2014) was designed to address the gap in the literature regarding student outcomes and qualitative inquiry for adolescents in a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP). Focus was placed on examining student academic self-concept constructs, academic self-concept threat perceptions, and the impact of a Self-Affirmation Program (SAP) on early adolescent academic engagement and behavior across time during placement at the DAEP. The SAP was designed to emphasize empowering resiliency and self-awareness of positive strengths and personal resources. Self-affirmation interventions were expected to positively impact adolescents' academic engagement and behavior and reduce the immediacy, salience, and reported perception of threats to academic self-concept during enrollment at the DAEP. The Engagement vs. Disaffection with Learning: Student Scale (EvD; Lloyd, 2014; Skinner & Belmont, 1993) was used to collect student self-reports of academic engagement and disengagement. Student self-reported beliefs about academic self-concept threat were collected using the School Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ).

Academic self-concept constructs (e.g., how they are viewed and would like to be seen by important others (i.e., parents, teachers, and friends) at school) (Fransella, Bell, & Bannister, 2004) were identified and elaborated upon by students using the Views of Me worksheet and a construct elaboration interview. Finally, a second interview was conducted for the purpose of exploring and identifying meaningful programmatic factors of the SAP. A demographic sheet was further utilized to provide information on student characteristics within the study.

Convergent parallel mixed method design (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) was used to document, describe, and analyze change processes of academic self-concept threat perceptions and academic engagement and behavioral outcomes of middle school DAEP students enrolled in the SAP. An aim of this investigation was to provide education professionals (counselors, teachers, researchers) and mental health professionals working with DAEP campuses information about the impact of a psycho-educational program as a facilitative tool for reducing student susceptibility to academic self-concept threat and improving student academic engagement and behaviors.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided inquiry during this investigation:

1. To what extent do early adolescents' self-rated reports of academic self-concept threat, as measured by SEQ, change across time?
2. To what extent does early adolescent academic engagement, as reflected by student rated Engagement vs. Disaffection with Learning: Student Scale scores, change across time?
3. To what extent does early adolescent academic behavior change, as reflected by teacher reported Daily Progress Reports scores, change across time?

4. What constructs are evident in students’ academic self-concept reflections of how DAEP students perceive significant others (parents, teachers, and friends) as viewing them in school and how would they like to be seen by others, both as individuals and as a group?
5. What programmatic factors of the Self-Affirmation Program (SAP) are most meaningful to early adolescents in the DAEP setting?

Significance of the Study

The current study was designed in an effort to explore academic self-concept constructs, academic self-concept threat perceptions, academic engagement, and responses to an intervention with early adolescents enrolled in a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP). Students were provided with strategies for bolstering positive self-beliefs and reducing psychological threat consequences in school during the classroom guidance SAP. The SAP was created by the principal researcher to emphasize awareness and utilization of the students’ positive assets and resources. Accordingly, this investigation was designed and implemented to advance knowledge and the literature on culturally sensitive strengths-based approaches and student outcome research at restrictive education centers (Pang & Foley, 2006; Tobin & Sprague, 2002).

Sagor (2006), McNulty and Roseboro (2009) argue that during placement at an alternative education school, students are subject to labels of negative social identities which may impede positive youth development. Recidivism rates further suggest returning and flourishing in the traditional home school setting following placement at a DAEP is a challenging process for students (Geronimo, 2011; Hosley, 2003; Mathur & Nelson, 2013; Tsang, 2004). Through this study, I sought to expand the menu of programs serving early adolescents in DAEP (Pang & Foley, 2006; Tobin & Sprague, 2002). Additionally, I aimed to expand upon the work of Schmidt and Canela (2015) investigating the impact of self-affirmation on middle school outcomes. The researchers found statistically significant associations between positive self-affirmation and behavioral outcomes within a sample of Midwestern adolescents. However, Schmidt and Canela (2015) found little practical significance and suggested further research. By assessing adolescents' academic self-concept threat perceptions, mental health and school personnel might be able to understand the students' viewpoints in novel ways.

Recognizing that students at DAEPs often reject interventional support, a transformation in the delivery of therapeutic services for students is needed (Ricard, Lerma, & Heard, 2013). These researchers suggest exploration for expanding programs into "therapeutic living environments," wherein counselors and teachers as "natural change agents" collaborate to intentionally incorporate mental health topics throughout the course of students' academic day and there is less pull out of therapy (Ricard, Lerma & Heard, 2013). The results of this study and the delivery of the SAP, as a part of RTI and guidance curriculum, are therefore predicted to have implications for improving counseling outcomes among early adolescents who exhibit academic, social-emotional, and behavioral difficulties. Furthermore, student experiences and voices are reflected in this study through utilization of convergent parallel mixed methodology. Findings of this investigation are expected to advance knowledge about academic engagement, academic self-concept threat, and provide evidence of the effects of Self-affirmation on early adolescents placed in DAEPs, restrictive alternative education, and other corrective settings.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are used as defined below:

Academic behavior. Behavioral compliance with school code of conduct and rules; displaying academic effort, involvement in class activities, and completion of homework assignments (Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2008).

Academic engagement. Skinner, Kindermann, and Furrer (2008) identify academic engagement as a sense of behavioral and emotional interest or belonging in classroom/school activities and enjoyment in the learning process.

Academic disengagement/disaffection. Opposite of academic engagement, Connell and Wellborn (1991) reference academic disengagement as behavioral and emotional withdrawal from school and classroom activities, including the absence of engagement, effort, or persistence.

Academic self-concept. Lent, Brown, and Gore (1997) describe academic self-concept as a students' attitudes, feelings, and perceptions concerning their academic abilities or skills (Lent, Brown, & Gore, 1997).

Academic self-concept threat. This term refers to psychological threat in the academic domain (Sherman, D. K., Hartson, K. A., Binning, K. R., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Garcia, J., Taborsky-Barba, S., ... & Cohen, G. L. (2013).

Disciplinary alternative education program. Texas Education Code (TEC, §37.008) defines disciplinary alternative education programs as facilities which provide temporary student placements for behavior management and education, supplying supervision and counseling, and assisting students to perform at grade level.

Identity threat. Cohen and Garcia (2008) specify identity threat as a psychological threat which arises from the possible devaluation of one's self-concept.

Positive youth development. Intentional efforts to engage youths' within their environment and enhance their strengths in order to promote positive outcomes (Lerner et al., 2013).

Response to intervention. Erford (2014) describes response to intervention (RTI) as a multi-tier approach to the support and early identification of students with learning and behavior needs. RTI processes follow a pattern of increasingly intense levels of interventions, assessment, and reevaluation to assist students in meeting developmentally appropriate target goals (Erford, 2014).

Self-affirmation. The process of maintaining self-integrity while under psychological or identity threat through demonstration of one's adequacy (Steele, 1988).

Self-stigma. Corrigan, Larson, and Rüsch (2009) define self-stigma as a process in which stigmatized individuals internalize experiences of discrimination and prejudice and accept diminished self-expectations.

Strength-based approach. A specific method of working with and resolving problems by identifying the positive basis of the person's resources and strengths (Hammond, 2010).

Stereotype threat. Steele and Aronson (1995) describe stereotype threat as "being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's group" (p.797).

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

This investigation (a) explored personal and academic stigma beliefs of adolescents at a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program and (b) implemented and evaluated an intervention program designed to address academic self-concept and psychological threat perceptions interfering with academic engagement and behavior. In examining literature related to the current study, three areas have been highlighted. First, previous research related to key processes and technical considerations for the integration of self-affirmative techniques as a process for strengths-based culturally sensitive approach toward positive academic self-concept development among adolescents in school settings. Second, self-concept development, in relation to its elicitation, exploration, and change particularly with children and adolescents. In this regard, theoretical foundations of personal construct theory (Kelly, 1955) and self-perception theory (Bem, 1972) are reviewed as the theoretical framework of this investigation. Finally, conceptual issues related to applications of student academic engagement and measurement among at-risk youths, specifically minority adolescents in DAEP environments, are explored.

Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs

Disciplinary alternative education programs (DAEP) are designed to provide opportunities for community engagement, general and vocational education, and behavioral management for at risk students with emotional, behavioral, and educational difficulties which impact functioning in traditional classrooms (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Foley & Pang, 2006; Raywid, 1999). DAEPs vary in their implementation, sharing a highly structured framework, with different instructional arrangements and behavioral management approaches being utilized at different locations. DAEPs typically utilize metal detectors, require uniforms, and maintain small student to teacher ratio (Cortez & Cortez, 2009; Lehr et al., 2009). Instructional methods span a continuum from teacher-oriented and directed to computer assisted programming. Likewise, behavior management approaches can include totalitarian boot camp environments to those that reward good behavior (Cortez & Cortez, 2009).

Spurred by Zero Tolerance policies, placement rationale for students at DAEPs has expanded from mandatory (e.g. felonies, terroristic threats, and assault) to discretionary (e.g. referrals, rule breaking/disruptive behaviors) (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). The practice of discretionary placement, Booker and Mitchell (2011) report, has permitted administrators to make impartial judgements about whether rule breaking is a deviant act warranting alternative education. Moreover, a disciplinary gap exists with disparities in the racial, gender, and disability demographics of DAEP campuses (Aron, 2006; Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Foley & Pang, 2006; Raywid, 1999). Students of color, males, and students in special education are especially over-represented at DAEPs. Booker and Mitchell (2011) further described issues pertaining to the disciplinary gap between students of color and DAEP placement, highlighting ethnic minority adolescents as being "more likely to be placed in AE for discretionary reasons, and more likely to return for subsequent assignment in the same academic year" (p. 203).

> As Waquant (2001) describes, DAEPs serve as "institutions of confinement" (p.108). Like the prison system, their recruitment is severely skewed along class and ethnoracial lines: 75 percent of the pupils of Chicago's establishments come from families living under the official poverty line and nine of every ten are black or Latino. Like inmates, these children are herded into decaying and overcrowded facilities, built like bunkers, where undertrained and underpaid teachers, hampered by shocking penury equipment and supplies . . . strive to regulate conduct so as to maintain order and minimize violent incidents. (Waquant, 2001, p. 108)

The Intercultural Development Research Association proposed strategies for assisting DAEPs ability to work for students. These strategies included:

1. Use DAEPs only for those students with criminal offenses – the original purpose of the law
2. Use other proven ways of dealing with discipline problems, such as improving classroom management skills of teachers, peer mediation, or even in-school suspension for the most grievous problems
3. Short-circuit over-representation of minority, low-income and special education students in DAEPs with early warning triggers at each school and by holding schools accountable for excessive referrals (Cortez & Cortez, 2009, p. 5)

Furthermore, researchers have proposed strategies for assisting DAEPs in meeting the diverse psychosocial and developmental needs of students such as having flexible schedules, modified curricula, and small teacher-student ratios (Aron, 2006; Cortez & Cortez, 2009).

Strengths-Based Cultural Sensitive Approaches with Adolescents

The “best predictors of children’s functional outcome into adulthood lay not in the relief of their symptoms but rather in understanding, appreciation, and nurturance of their strengths and assets” (Goldstein & Brooks, 2006, p. xiii). This statement underlies the assumption of strength-based approaches. Strength-based approaches emphasize recognizing the resilience of individuals, focusing on their assets, abilities, positive traits and emotions rather than the traditional deficit based models (Bozic, 2013; Grant & Cadell, 2009). Through counselor awareness of the client’s worldview and strategic integration of cultural strengths within the counseling session, strengths-based approaches increase service utilization, therapeutic satisfaction, and alliance (Cox, 2006; Grothaus, McAuliffe, & Craigen, 2012; Zhang & Dixon, 2001). Strengths-based approaches, researchers outline, focus on personal relationships, acknowledging the contributions and competencies of clients, attending to context, inviting meaningful participation between therapist and client, providing opportunities for skill-building and learning, and concentrating on potential (Alliance for Children and Youth of Waterloo Region, 2015).

Researchers have indicated that strengths-based approaches are especially powerful among children and adolescents (Alvarado & Ricard, 2013; Day-Vines & Terriquez, 2008; Kim, 2007; Lerner et al., 2005; Smith, 2006; Weisz, Sandler, Durlak, & Anton, 2005). Therapists utilizing strength-based approaches are especially effective due to their ability to engage adolescents through interpersonal skills such as empathy and genuineness (Karver, Handelsman, Fields, & Bickman; 2006; Lambert & Barley, 2001; Oetzel & Scherer, 2003). Positive youth development (PYD) is a strength-based approach which emphasizes the capacity for change and growth and is grounded in the importance of affirmative personal connections (Alliance for Children and Youth of Waterloo Region, 2015). PYD moves beyond focusing on the prevention of problems by focusing on opportunities for learning (Lerner et al., 2005; Lerner et al., 2013).

The Search Institute, a leader in research on positive youth development, has identified 40 developmental assets which assist in the promotion of resiliency during adolescence and adulthood (Lerner et al., 2005; Lerner et al., 2013). These assets, operationalized within the Five Cs model, include competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2002; Lerner et al., 2005). Conway, Heary, and Hogan (2015) define the Five C's as follows:

> Competence represents a positive view of one's actions in domain specific areas (e.g., academic, social, cognitive, and vocational). Confidence is an indication of an internal

> sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy and one’s global self-regard. Connection refers to positive bonds with people and institutions. Character is an indication of an individual’s respect for societal and cultural rules. Caring is an indication of a person’s sense of sympathy and empathy for others. (Conway, Heary, & Hogan, 2015, p. 2)

Adolescents with more developmental assets are less likely to hold at-risk characteristics and more likely to have positive outcomes (Sesma, Mannes, & Scales, 2012). Strength-based interventions have further been shown to reduce rates of truancy, tardiness, and premature termination of counseling services among youth aged 5 to 18 with emotional or behavioral disorders (Cox, 2006). Theoretical frameworks utilized to enhance investigation procedures in this study include self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988) and personal construct theory (Kelly, 1955). Collectively, these frameworks are explored to evaluate the extent to which personally held beliefs about school-based functioning (academic self-concept) are influenced by beliefs about others and exposure to an intervention program.

Self-Affirmation Theory

Self-Affirmation theory (SAT) is buttressed in the belief that individuals are inherently motivated to maintain integrity, affirming themselves as adequate, “competent, good, coherent, capable of choice, and controlling critical outcomes” in the face of psychological threat (Steele, 1988, p. 262). Psychological threat as defined by Cohen and Sherman (2014) refers to the perception of challenge within the environment or social setting to self-adequacy and can include major life events (e.g., losing a job or receiving a medical or mental health diagnosis) and everyday events (e.g., having personal views challenged or entering new social situations). When self-adequacy is threatened, individuals respond in ways to restore or preserve their self-worth (Steele, 2010). For example, students faced with the negative feedback and evidence of their poor performance are likely to become defensive. This defensiveness can lead to a learned sense of helplessness, engaging in self-handicapping behaviors, disengaging with academic tasks, and a decrease in internal control expectations of academic outcomes (Cohen & Sherman, 2014).

When confronted with threats to their self-worth, individuals can (a) accept the threatening information, utilizing it as the basis for change, (b) employ defensive biases, ameliorating the impact of the threat through direct adaptation (e.g., reframing, denying, avoiding) (Sherman & Cohen, 2002), or (c) respond to the threatening information by focusing on self-resources (e.g., values) unrelated to the threatening event or information (Steele, 2010). Self-affirmation theory (SAT) postulates that individuals are intrinsically motivated to maintain a global narrative of self-adequacy rather than a specific self-concept or domain (i.e., “I am a good person” vs. “I am a good student”).

A strong global narrative allows greater flexibility in defending self-concept against specific domain threats, assisting people in maintaining the optimism to stay motivated (Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Sherman & Cohen, 2002; 2006). A global narrative further takes into account a cohesive view of the self-system, comprised of an individual’s many roles (e.g., familial roles, social, cultural, religious, gender, or ethnic identity), goals, and values. Strategies for maintaining self-integrity and affirming oneself in the face of identity threatening information incorporate culturally and socially relevant experiences and norms such as being respected, being able to control and influence important outcomes, or being a good family member and therefore vary across culture, groups, and situations. Affirmations of qualities, characteristics, and values that are essential to an individual’s view of themselves lessen the impact of psychological threats (Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Leary & Baumeister, 2000; Sherman & Cohen, 2006).

Self-Affirmation interventions, therefore, attempt to remind clients of their access to psychosocial resources and supports through social-psychological skills training and psychoeducation during psychologically threatening situations. Self-affirmation interventions targeting stereotype threat can reassure individuals of their integrity and adequacy despite the adversity before them. By reminding the individual to access and recall other important aspects of their self-concept, the impact of psychological threats are potentially diminished when clients can maintain positive self-assertions of self-worth (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). Self-affirmation research has been empirically supported as effective for reducing defensive and physiological stress responses (e.g., use of denial and rationalization), and increasing academic performance when individuals are presented with negative identity threatening information (Cohen et al., 2006; Cohen & Garcia, 2008; Creswell, Welch, Taylor, Sherman, Gruenewald, & Mann, 2005; Harris & Napper, 2005; Howell & Shepperd, 2012; Jaremka, Bunyan, Collins, & Sherman, 2011; Sherman, Nelson, & Steele, 2000; Steele, 1997, 2010; Stone, 2002). Self-affirmation interventions foster resiliency and reduce defensive responses within the individual, enabling them to address future threats (Cohen & Sherman, 2014).

In their study, Huggard and McGoldrick (2013) utilized a grounded theory approach to detail self-affirmation intervention processes which impact student attitudes toward academics and influence achievement. Participants in the study described the effects of reminiscing on positive experiences and feedback unrelated to threatened situations. For example, Participant B reflected,

> “I was doing some stuff on the computer and my teacher was really impressed, so that made me realise I was quite good at this. Then if I’m not able to understand the problem then I know it’s because it is difficult and not because I’m not any good at it. That seems to make it easier.” (Huggard & McGoldrick, 2013, p. 1809)

Whereas Participant F reflected,

> “I did well in school. I was good at English and History, as well as Maths. I know I can do well. However, there are so many different things involved in programming that it just threw me completely. It was very tough. I thought it was just me, but then I realised I’m not the only one. We are all trying our best.” (Huggard & McGoldrick, 2013, p. 1809)

Participants also described experiences of self-doubt and instances of reinforcing their self-worth through focusing on past experiences of happiness. For instance, Participant D reflected,

> I like to go and do something completely different... I might check on my friend's pages or update my profile. Then I can go back to the problem with a clear head. It is best to take a break and then go back. I don’t give up. (Huggard & McGoldrick, 2013, p. 1809)

Self-affirmation can be explored in a variety of ways; within the literature, elicitation of values is a commonly used method of self-affirmation manipulation across a wide variety of threatening situations (McQueen & Klein, 2006; Sherman & Cohen, 2006). Value affirming activities encourage individuals to be reflective and express essential components of their self-system. Sherman and Cohen (2006) propose that value affirmations are effective for three reasons. First, value affirmations boost awareness of coping resources that can be drawn on during threatening situations. Second, affirmations present a broad perspective through which individuals can view information and events in their lives, thereby decreasing focus on threatening identity information. Third, affirmations reduce the threat’s impact by reducing the tendency to heavily self-evaluate based on the focal threat (Sherman & Hartson, 2011). Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007) demonstrated these tasks by teaching middle school math students about brain elasticity. The researchers created a psychoeducational curriculum focusing on multiple intelligences and the brain’s capacity to grow and flex like a muscle with effort. At the end of these sessions, students in the psychoeducational sessions displayed increased math achievement for the rest of the school year, compared to the control group who were taught study skills only. These results and the psychoeducational self-affirmation manipulation utilized reflect the impact of challenging students’ thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about their academic competencies (Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003).

Randomized field experiments have further supported the efficacy of value affirmation in raising achievement among early adolescent African American (Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Masters, 2006) and Latino Americans (Harackiewicz et al., 2014; Miyake, Kost-Smith, Finkelstein, Pollock, Cohen, & Ito, 2010; Sherman et al., 2013; Woolf, McManus, Gill, & Dacre, 2009). For example, in one recent study, students spent approximately 10 minutes participating in a novel value affirmation writing intervention, two to five times throughout the academic year, and typically given before an in-class exam. The following is an excerpt from a middle school participant affirmation essays,

> If I didn’t have my family, I [wouldn’t] be raised right and if I didn’t have my friends I would be a boring person. If I didn’t have my religion, I wouldn’t know what to do, I would be lost”, and “Politics is another really important thing to me because I love politics and I some day want to become a corporate lawyer and to later become the first black president. (Cohen & Sherman, 2014, p. 338).

For economically disadvantaged minority students who participated in the affirmation exercise, the achievement gap was decreased by 22 to 30% (Aronson et al., 2009; Sherman et al., 2013). Grade point average in core courses was additionally found to increase following the self-affirmation intervention, with effects lasting for approximately two years. Harackiewicz and colleagues (2014) found similar results even when controlling for social class. Students who wrote about value affirming issues performed better independent of their social class.

Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical frameworks were used to interpret the study constructs. These theories promote a social cognitive interpretation of the development of academic self-concept.

Personal Construct Theory

Personal Construct Theory (PCT; Kelly, 1955; 1963) has as a central tenet that people act as scientists observing, experiencing, and attempting to make meaning of the world around them. Kelly (1955) admonishes clinicians and urges them to "never discard information given by the client merely because it does not conform to what appear to be the facts! From a phenomenological point of view, the client—like the proverbial customer—is always right" (p. 241). PCT therefore regards patients and research participants as experts into their own lives, regarding them as scientists, who conduct personal experiments to test the validity of their construing abilities using their behavior as a measure (Fransella et al., 2004). Personal constructs, therefore, enable individuals to anticipate the world around them. Constructs are the rudimentary elements for description and analysis with which individuals use to make sense, find meaning, and understand the world around them (Jancowicz, 2004).

Developed by Kelly in 1955, PCT is organized by a fundamental postulate and 11 corollaries (Kelly, 1955; 1963). Kelly's 11 corollaries include the construction corollary, experience corollary, dichotomy corollary, organization corollary, range corollary, modulation corollary, choice corollary, individuality corollary, commonality corollary, fragmentation corollary, and sociality corollary (Kelly, 1955; 1963). Through PCT, academic self-concept can be understood as a dynamic and evolving paradigm impacted by construction of meanings and experimentation. PCT can therefore be utilized as a theoretical foundation for understanding and impacting change within student constructions and expectations of events in academic life (Butler & Green, 2007; Hinkle, 1965).

The fundamental postulate of PCT proposes that “a person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events” (Kelly, 1955, p. 46). The fundamental postulate of PCT reflects that an individual’s experiences, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are processed and impacted according to the ways in which they experience and predict future events (Kelly, 1955). In relation to children, Butler and Green (2007), address this fundamental postulate by noting “children behave in particular ways because it makes sense to them” (p.9). A student seeking to have psychosocial needs for a positive academic self-concept met in the classroom according to the fundamental postulate can, therefore, result in challenging and supportive levels of academic engagement. For example, a student seeking affirmation and validation from other individuals in the classroom might employ disruptive behavior patterns (i.e., talking, interrupting the teacher, or playing jokes) to achieve their goal.

Construction corollary states that a person learns to anticipate events based on their past experiences, and reconstructions occur when assumptions prove false (experience corollary) (Kelly 1955). These corollaries highlight constructive alternative as an underlying assumption of PCT. Constructive alternative simply refers to the malleability of personal beliefs in the context of new experiences, perceptions, behaviors, anticipations, and observations. Constructs are, therefore, constantly changing, open to reconsideration, and evaluation (Butler & Green, 2007). The DAEP environment can provide opportunities for positive growth or to perpetuate negative self-perception. It is therefore important to consider construction corollary as students engage in behaviors consistent with increased academic risk factors in the DAEP setting. Through constant negative interactions with school administration and poor grades, students may construct a low interpretation of their academic self-concept. However, as the experience corollary states, reconstruction of academic self-concept may occur as students have positive interactions and affirming experiences within the scholastic setting.

The third corollary of PCT states personal constructs are dichotomous (dichotomous corollary), exploring bipolar paradigms of phenomena in pairs (Kelly, 1955). Therefore, the meanings individuals assign to their subjective reality can be classified in an either/or fashion. As students construe themselves in the academic domain, they also describe who they are not and whom they would like to be (Butler & Green, 2007). For example, a student describing himself as “good” is also stating I am not “bad.” Dichotomous corollary can provide information into the complex meanings individuals assign to their reality by identifying contrasting poles of information.

The organization corollary affirms that connections can be made between constructs within the construction system through ordinal relationships. The organizational corollary recognizes individuals as creating a unique taxonomy between constructs to which they relate and organize the world around them. Expounding on the dichotomous corollary the organizational corollary describes individuals as assigning hierarchical meanings to constructions. Dichotomous constructs are therefore organized according to their usefulness, with one pole in the superordinate position and the other subordinate (Kelly, 1955). For example, students who construe themselves within the hierarchical relationship of good or bad may view the good pole as superordinate to bad due to the adaptiveness of behaving well in the classroom.

The range corollary posits that no construct is useful for anticipating every event and are convenient toward the expectation of a finite number of events, or elements (Kelly, 1955). The modulation corollary concerns itself with the permeability and impermeability of constructs, wherein some constructs are flexible to expansion, able to describe some elements, and others are not. Range and modulation are important corollaries in student meaning making about academic ability as they relate to positive outcomes for academic engagement and disengagement behaviors. Student constructs of academic self-concept which allow for expansion and incremental intelligence development are more likely to support academic engagement and persistence in the classroom (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Goof, Steele, & Davies, 2008). Without allowances in construct beliefs for modulation or proper range attributions, students are likely to respond with hopelessness and frustration when encountering difficult subject materials or experiences. Within the modulation corollary, the phenomenon of constriction must be discussed as it relates to adolescents within this study. Constriction occurs when elements become restricted based on prior experience. Adolescents experiencing stereotype threat can come to utilize a constricted construal of themselves by identifying heavily with their stigmatized identity. Accordingly, adolescents vulnerable to constriction have a deficiency of access to other elements for expansion of personal constructs (e.g., range).

The choice corollary puts forth that individuals choose dichotomous constructs based on the construct pairs capacity of elaborating, expanding, improving understanding, and the ability to anticipate future happenings (Kelly, 1955). The individuality corollary acknowledges interpersonal diversity and distinctions of personal constructs. Within this investigation, individuals were free to identify and express their beliefs and the extent to which they anticipate future academic outcomes. The commonality corollary moreover clarifies the degree to which one person's construction of experiences is similar to another (e.g., culture, social identity group), psychological processes will be comparable. Individuality and commonality corollaries have further informed the design and analysis of this study. In recognition of the individuality of participants, students were individually interviewed and invited to define and elaborate on their personal construals. The commonality of constructs was studied in a final method of analysis, to provide a concise understanding of adolescent DAEP academic self-construct experiences.

The fragmentation corollary states individuals may be inconsistent within themselves, employing inferentially incompatible construction systems. The fragmentation corollary is of particular importance to considering people in context or roles, circumstances, and environments. For example, a person may act differently according to the situation and subsequently may anticipate different treatment in specific settings. Adolescent fragmentation of behaviors in differing roles was, therefore, a consideration during methodology. Lastly, the sociality corollary proposes that "the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, he may play a role in a social process involving the other person" (Kelly, 1955, p. 95). Sociality corollary was addressed by inquiring adolescents to explore their academic self-concept from the perception of different relational contexts. PCT as a phenomenological approach provides a framework for exploring and eliciting student academic self-concept constructs. However, within PCT, no reference is made toward how students learn to develop an academic self-concept. Therefore, a theory of self-perception is necessary to explore the ways in which students learn to understand and evaluate themselves in school.

Self-Perception Theory

Introduced by Daryl Bem (1972), self-perception theory was inspired by B.F. Skinner's radical-behavioral analysis of private events, which implied individuals have virtually no knowledge of internal states until they have been explicitly trained to label inner conditions with different descriptors (Skinner, 1953). Individuals are thus taught to label private events (e.g., emotional states) by observers, who utilize external cues to identify the critical time when private stimuli are being experienced. In teaching a child to describe 'pain', for example, an observer might see a child fall, scraping his/her knee, and accordingly say "Don't cry, I know it hurts when you scrape your knee" (Bem, 1972). The child thus learns the descriptor "it hurts" and can generalize the experience to other "painful" stimuli. Similarly, children learn to label and generalize feelings in the academic realm based on the behaviors they exhibit in the classroom. For example, the self-perception might be made by a student that they behave poorly and are disruptive in class and therefore must hate school.

Self-perception theory advances the attributional perspective of Skinner's behavioral theory by postulating that individuals come to know themselves and understand their internal states (emotions, beliefs, and attitudes) through making inferences based on their behaviors and the situations in which those behaviors occur as an outside observer. Individuals utilize an outside observer position, relying on external cues to deduce their internal state when cues are ambiguous and weak. For example, a person might come to recognize the intensity of their feelings of interest in school by observing the amount of effort in academic activities. The presence of external factors (i.e., large rewards or pressure from others) is additionally critical to the inferences individuals, as outside observers, make about their internal states. When motivations for behaviors are attributed to external incentives, observers can conclude the action does not reflect on their attitudes, values, or beliefs. Individuals utilize an implicit self-selection rule “what must my attitude be if I am willing to behave in this fashion in this situation?” (Bem, 1972, p. 7).

Self-perception theory rebutted Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance, which postulated that individuals holding two inconsistent cognitions will experience an unpleasant motivational state of pressure (1957) through the deconstruction of the classic experiment of Festinger and Carlsmith (1959). In their classic experiment, 60 undergraduates were required to perform laborious and repetitive lab tasks and randomly assigned to experimental conditions wherein they would receive no pay, $1, or $20 to persuade a waiting subject the task was enjoyable and exciting. Participants then indicated the enjoyment they found in the task and judges made blind ratings of the persuasive arguments made by participants. Participants paid $1 were considered to be no more convincing than those paid $20 and evaluated the tasks to be significantly more enjoyable than those paid $20. Whereas the attitudes of those in the $20 condition did not differ significantly from those in the control condition.

Applying self-perceptions theories self-selection rule, it can be inferred that participants who were seen/heard to enjoy the task must be genuine in their gratification with the experiment as they received little financial incentive to motivate their enjoyment. Conversely, it would be difficult to make an inference or observation about the attitude, behavior, or beliefs of individuals in the $20 condition because of the financial incentive. Individuals can, therefore, develop new interpretations about themselves by recognizing the locus of control within their actions in any given situation. Thus, if individuals observe their behavior to be influenced by external factors, they may be hesitant to determine their actions infer anything about who they are as a person or their internal status. This intervention study sought to capitalize on the implicit self-selection rule of self-perception theory by offering no financial or grading incentive for participation. Students were encouraged to make inferences about their views of themselves as a result of involvement in the affirmation program without the influence of external motivators.

Study Constructs

The following constructs were objects of investigation in this study.

Academic Self-Concept

Self-concept is typically defined as a person's overall composite view of themselves across multidimensional and domain-specific areas, based on insight and personal evaluation of their competencies formed through a phenomenological understanding of interactions and experiences (Byrnes, 2003; Eccles, 2005; Marsh & Seaton, 2013). Often erroneously used interchangeably with self-esteem, self-concept refers to cognitive descriptions and evaluations of self ("I am a good at math") versus the affective assessment provided by self-esteem ("I feel good about how I perform in math") (Hattie, 2014). The Marsh/Shavelson model of self-concept follows a hierarchical structure which begins with a global self-concept (overall perception of the self), which is then distinguished by academic and non-academic domains branches. The academic self-concept domain is discerned into specific content-related areas (i.e., math and science) while non-academic self-concept is further differentiated into social, emotional, and physical self-concept domains (Marsh & Seaton, 2013). With age, the hierarchical structure and differentiations of academic self-concept appear to become weaker for children over 12 (Marsh, 1990; March & Ayotte, 2003); therefore in the context of this study, a broad understanding of academic self-concept was applied.

Academic self-concept refers to the beliefs a student holds about his or her competence (i.e., achievement, attitudes, feelings, and perception of ability) in scholastic settings (Lent, Brown, & Gore, 1997). The development of academic self-concept is significantly shaped by the frame of reference students utilize to make evaluations of themselves in school (Marsh et al., 2015). Students make these evaluations using internal and external frames of reference. External frames of reference include comparisons with others whereas internal references might include appraisals against an aspirational, realistic, or content specific self (Marsh et al., 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2002). Differentiable from general self-concept, academic self-concept has been demonstrated to be more highly correlated with academic achievement, with adolescents with demonstrating poor academic self-concept being more likely to exhibit poor academic performance (Fredricks & Eccles, 2002; Hamachek, 1995; Kenny & McEachern, 2009).

Student Academic Engagement and Behavior

Increasing student engagement is often a key focus area among educators to prevent drop out, decrease student boredom, increase academic achievement and motivation, and understand positive student development. Researchers support academic engagement as a mediator towards enhanced school outcomes (Carter, Reschly, Lovelace, Appleton, & Thompson, 2012; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Lerner et al., 2013). Academic engagement is a multidimensional construct that is contextualized through a frameworks of motivation, sense of belonging, and observable and internal indicators of academic involvement in the learning process (Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009; Yazzie-Mintz, 2010). Academic disaffection, conversely, connotating more than a deficiency of engagement, has a "behavioral component, including passivity and withdrawal from participation in learning activities, and an emotional component, including boredom, anxiety, and frustration in the classroom" (Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, Kindermann, 2008, p. 767). The presence or lack of teacher, parent, and/or peer support in the classroom, for example, can influence a student's level of behavioral and emotional engagement/disaffection toward learning (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Likewise, student academic engagement/disengagement can be reflective of poor academic self-concept or low achievement testing (Skinner, Wellborn, & Connell, 1990).

The impact of academic engagement to student outcomes and the extensive examination of the construct has resulted in considerable variation, and overlap in operationalization and conceptualization emphasized within the literature (Alrashidi, Phan, & Ngu, 2016; Fredricks et al., 2004). However, commonality can be found with behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement being emphasized by researchers to varying degrees to reflect commitment in the learning environment (Alrashidi, Phan, & Ngu, 2016; Fredericks et al., 2004; Skinner et al., 2009; Yazzie-Mintz, 2010). This study utilized an understanding of academic engagement consistent with literature for at-risk and minority children which identified behavior and emotion as central components of autonomy, competence, and relatedness perceptions of students (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Strambler & Weinstein, 2010).

Behavioral Engagement. Academic engagement has been primarily defined by researchers as the quantity and quality of observable behaviors (Fredricks et al., 2004). Behavioral engagement consists of positive, observable behaviors that indicate classroom learning (e.g., active listening, educational effort, exhibiting persistence, participation, and positive conduct) (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Skinner et al., 2008). Behavioral engagement is contrasted with behavioral disaffection or disengagement and identified by negative actions and interest in classroom activities (Skinner et al., 2009). Results of behavioral engagement have supported low behavioral engagement as being consistently correlated with delinquent school conduct, school dropout, and poor academic performance (Fredricks et al., 2004; Skinner and Belmont, 1993; Skinner et al., 2009; Pas, Cash, O’Brennan, Debnam, &

Bradshaw, 2015). Researchers have further reported the benefit of some activities for predicting, producing, and maintaining school success among economically disadvantaged and minority students (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994).

Emotional Engagement. Emotional engagement as an affective state has also been supported by researchers as a component of academic engagement. Emotional engagement describes a student's affective reactions within the school environment, such as positive learning interest, enjoyment, and excitement in school (Fredricks et al., 2004; Skinner, et. al., 2008). Boredom, anxiety, frustration, and sadness are indicative of affective disaffection (Fredricks et al., 2004; Skinner, et. al., 2008). Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) endorsed three facets which affect emotional engagement (1) personal intrinsic interest, (2) assessment of material utility, and (3) assessment of material importance. Emotional engagement is a vital consideration in the academic success of minority and at-risk students. Evidence suggested minority and at-risk students who feel connected and affirmed within the school setting are more likely to engage in academics and less liable to display disaffected behaviors (Cothran and Ennis, 2000). Researchers and educators have supported minority students' tendency to favor work and activities that are instinctive, visual, kinesthetic, and tangible within a collaborative and collectivistic learning environment (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Gay, 2000).

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed methodology study design to explore the utility of a Self-Affirmation Program (SAP) implemented at a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program. Quantitative and qualitative techniques were used to describe and evaluate the possibility of changes in student reported experiences of academic self-concept threat, academic engagement and disengagement, and academic self-concept before and after participation in a structured classroom guidance program. Convergent parallel mixed methodology is a type of design in which qualitative and quantitative data are collected in parallel, analyzed separately, and then merged (Creswell, 2014). In this study, quantitative and qualitative data were used to explore academic self-concept, academic self-concept threat, academic engagement and disengagement, and meaningful programmatic factors of the SAP in the DAEP.

The Self-Affirmation Program (SAP) was delivered over four sessions, each lasting approximately 25 minutes. These sessions focus on assisting students in recognizing and affirming values, self-worth, personal strengths, and defending against identity threats (see Appendix C for outline of sessions). As a part of response to intervention (RTI) planning in the Character Education course, all middle school students enrolled at the DAEP in the Character Education course were introduced to intervention materials, during regularly scheduled guidance lessons. However, only students who provided assent, had obtained parental/guardian consent, and were present for all sessions of the intervention were included in the study.

The rationale for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data and selecting a convergent parallel mixed method approach was to achieve consistency with Personal Construct Theory ideology (Baxter & Jack, 2008). By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, I hoped to enhance understanding of how early adolescents process social information (and perhaps internalize expectations) specific to academic experiences using their own words (Fransella, Bell, & Bannister, 2004). A construct elaboration interview and a post intervention interview were conducted to explore academic self-concept constructs and meaningful experiences in the Self-Affirmation Program as reported by students. A comparison of pre-post quantitative scores on the School Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) and Engagement vs Disaffection with Learning Scale (EvsD; Lloyd, 2014; Skinner & Belmont, 1993) allow for measurement of program impact on general beliefs about academic self-concept threat and academic engagement and disengagement as self-reported by students. Finally, the independent observational teacher ratings provided on the Daily Progress Report provide a third measure of program impact. Collectively, results of these measures and interviews (*see Appendix B)* present student profiles describing the types of students who completed the program and indications of programmatic effectiveness toward impacting the academic self-conception system. Emphasis was thus placed on estimating the magnitude of the treatment effect from the beginning to termination of the program and identifying participant perceptions of meaningful program components.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided inquiry during this investigation:

1. To what extent do early adolescents self-rated reports of academic self-concept threat, as measured by SEQ, change across time?
2. To what extent does early adolescent academic engagement, as reflected by student rated Engagement vs. Disaffection with Learning: Student Scale scores, change across time?
3. To what extent does early adolescent academic behavior, as reflected by teacher reported Daily Progress Reports scores, change across time?

4. What constructs are evident in students’ academic self-concept reflections of how DAEP students perceive significant others (parents, teachers, and friends) as viewing them in school and how would they like to be seen by others, both as individuals and as a group?
5. What programmatic factors of the Self Affirmation Program (SAP) are most meaningful to early adolescents in the DAEP setting?

Sampling Procedure

All middle school students currently enrolled in school-based classroom guidance program at the district DAEP were eligible for participation in this study. Upon their registration for the school, students and parents attended an orientation wherein they received information about activities, procedures, and education policies in effect at the school. Student-parent pairs registered and attended a one-day orientation on Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout the academic year. This experience orients incoming and returning parents and students to the school culture, policies and expectations. During this time, parents and students received information and requests for consideration in participating in voluntary programs while attending the school. The principal researcher utilized this time to present the study to potential participants. Inclusion criteria for participation held that eligible students be registered in the DAEP, in the sixth, seventh, or eighth grade, and enrolling in the Character Education course. Over the course of 16 weeks, 79 parent and student pairs signed assent and consent forms to participate in the research study. Following orientation, students proceed to a daylong transition class (Bridge) where all students are grouped into a classroom while their information is processed by school officials (preparing daily schedules, assigning lunch schedule, etc.). Of the 79 students who expressed interest in participating in the research study, 34 students were enrolled in the Character Education course.

During Bridge, students typically complete a standardized packet and participate in guidance activities, designed to support their transition to the new school environment. All middle school students were instructed to complete study instrumentation during Bridge. Students completed four pre-intervention instruments (a demographic sheet, School Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ), Engagement vs. Disaffection with Learning (EvsD; Lloyd, 2014; Skinner & Belmont, 1993), and the Views of Me worksheet) (*see Appendix B*). While all students completed these instruments, data was only retained for students who met inclusion criteria. Furthermore, while all students enrolled in the Character Education classroom received access to the SAP classroom level guidance lessons, data was only retained for students who met inclusion criteria and completed all program requirements.

Participants

Participants in this study were 23 middle school children enrolled in a public school disciplinary alternative education program in the southwestern region, recruited using non-probabilistic and purposeful sampling methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Patton, 2002). These combined recruitment methods call for the selection of participants who are available and can be studied with an emphasis on information rich participants who have the ability to answer specific research questions and provide detail about a particular characteristic, population, or area of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Patton, 2002). Participant were 12 males (52.2%) and 11 females (47.8%) ranging in ages from 11 to 15 years (M = 12.52; SD = 1.16). Participants were predominately Hispanic (n = 19; 82.6%) with the remainder of participants identifying as mixed race (n = 2; 8.7%), Caucasian (n = 1; 4.3%), and Black (n = 1; 4.3%). Eleven participants were in the 6th grade (47.8%), 8 participants were in the 7th grade (34.8%), and 4 participants were in the 8th grade (17.4%). The majority of participants, at the time of the intervention, had been referred to the DAEP for the first time (*n* = 17; 73.9%). Participants in this study were referred for placement for 15 days (*n* = 6), 20 days (*n* = 1), 30 days (*n* = 9), 45 days (*n* = 3), 60 days (*n* = 1), 90 days (*n* = 1) and the rest of the year (*n* = 2). Pseudonyms were assigned to participants to protect their identity. Table 1 depicts descriptive information for participants.

Table 1

Demographic Data

	Gender	**Age**	**Grade**	**Ethnicity**	**Infraction**	**Placements at DAEP**	**Days Assigned to DAEP**
Christine	Female	15	8	Hispanic	Fighting; multiple referrals	1	30
Danielle	Female	13	8	Hispanic	Assault with a deadly weapon	1	180
Heather	Female	14	8	Hispanic	Assault	5	60
Sarah	Female	14	8	Hispanic	Terroristic threats	1	30
Jacob	Male	15	8	Hispanic	Unknown	1	45
Jeremiah	Male	14	7	African American	Multiple referrals	6	90
Jennifer	Female	14	7	Mixed Race	Fighting	1	15
Conner	Male	13	7	Hispanic	Sexual Harassments; Assault	1	45
Bradley	Male	13	7	Hispanic	Terroristic threats	3	30-45
Bobby	Male	12	7	Hispanic	Brought controlled substance to campus	1	15
Alex	Male	13	7	Hispanic	Under the influence; illegal substance on campus	1	15
Bryan	Male	13	7	Hispanic	Fighting; multiple referrals	1	20-30
Luke	Male	12	7	Caucasian	Fighting	3	15

Justine	Female	12	6	Hispanic	Fighting; multiple referrals	1	30
Ashley	Female	12	6	Mixed Race	Multiple referrals	1	20-30
Rodger	Male	11	6	Hispanic	Fighting; multiple referrals	1	15
George	Male	11	6	Hispanic	Multiple referrals	5	15
Alfredo	Male	12	6	Hispanic	Multiple referrals	1	15
Marie	Female	12	6	Hispanic	Bullying; terroristic threats; fighting	1	30
Sally	Female	11	6	Hispanic	Fighting	1	45
Fred	Male	11	6	Hispanic	Fighting	1	15
Lee	Male	11	6	Hispanic	Assault with a deadly weapon	1	180
Maxine	Female	11	6	Hispanic	Assault with a deadly weapon	1	20

Data Collection

Data was collected over the course of 16 weeks by the researcher. The intervention and data collection occurred in the school setting in order to promote external validity. Participants were solicited in person following approval from the Institutional Review Board and the school district. The researcher met with parents and students during orientation and provided them with information about the study and consent/assent forms. After orientation and having received consent/assent from parents and students, the researcher administered pre-intervention study instruments during Bridge. The researcher was provided information about student schedules and informed of which students met inclusion criteria (enrollment in the Character Education class) during Bridge. The researcher utilized time during Bridge to meet individually with students who had provided assent in the orientation meeting and confirm their interest in participating in the study. After assent was confirmed with participants, the researcher conducted the construct elaboration interview with students. The SAP was conducted over the course of two weeks in the Character Education classes. Following completion of the SAP, students were administered post-intervention study instruments by the principal researcher. Finally, a post-program interview was conducted by a counseling intern at the DAEP. The principal investigator met with core content area middle school teachers requesting their collaboration throughout the study. As part of their daily responsibilities, teachers rated student academic engagement and deportment on the Daily Progress Report form; teachers shared these ratings for the purpose of this study.

Instrumentation

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through a variety of instruments and methods (*see Appendix B*). Quantitative instrumentation included a demographic sheet, the researcher generated School Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ), Daily Progress Report, and the standardized Engagement vs. Disaffection with Learning Scale (EvsD; Lloyd, 2014; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Qualitative data was informed by the Views of Me worksheet and construct elaboration interview and a post program interview. The School Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) given to student participants was constructed by the principal researcher by merging three different subscales: Children's Automatic Thoughts Scale Social Threat subscale (10 items; CATS-ST; Schniering & Rapee, 2002), Children's Automatic Thoughts Scale Personal Failure subscale (10 items; CATS-PF; Schniering & Rapee, 2002), and the Control Beliefs subscale of the Student Perceptions of Control Questionnaire (6 items; SPOCQ-CB; Wellborn, Connell, & Skinner, 1989). The SEQ was compiled to measure three dimensions of psychological threat in the academic domain. The Engagement vs. Disaffection with Learning Scale (25 items; EvsD; Lloyd, 2014; Skinner & Belmont, 1993) was utilized to assess academic engagement and disengagement. Qualitative interviews and documents (i.e., Views of Me worksheet) were utilized to (1) explore students' interpersonal/intrapersonal based academic self-concept constructs and (2) program impacts. The researcher, additionally, maintained a reflexive journal throughout the data collection process, detailing technical and personal observations and reactions.

Academic Self-Concept Threat. Three subscales were combined by the principal investigator to assess the degree to which students felt psychological threat in the academic domain, forming the Student Experiences Questionnaire. Subscales and items were chosen based on the following moderators of psychological and stereotype threats: self-concept, stigma consciousness, and negative affect. Further, this questionnaire focused on assessing the extent to which students felt competent, capable of choice, and controlling important outcome in school (McNulty & Roseboro, 2009; Picho & Brown, 2010; Steele, 2010). The Personal Failure subscale of the Children's Automatic Thoughts Scale (CATS-PF; Schniering & Rapee, 2002) was utilized to reflect self-concept. Stigma consciousness, which refers to the extent to which students are persistently self-conscious and aware of their stigmatized status (Pinel, 1999), was evaluated using the Social Threat subscale of the Children's Automatic Thoughts Scale (CATS-ST; Schniering & Rapee, 2002). Negative affect, which refers to negative emotions, self-doubt, negative expectancies, dejection, and task-related worries that students hold, was measured by the Control Beliefs subscale of the Student Perceptions of Control Questionnaire (SPOCQ-CB; Wellborn, Connell, & Skinner, 1989). High scores in personal failure, social threat, and control beliefs indicate a vulnerability to stereotype threat in the academic domain (Picho & Brown, 2011). A high Cronbach's alpha coefficient for scores on the SEQ of .88 indicated strong reliability of the items and the questionnaire as a whole.

Personal Failure. The Children's Automatic Thoughts Scale Personal Failure subscale (CATS-PF; Schniering & Rapee, 2002) was utilized to explore the degree to which students experience negative thoughts of personal failure. The CATS-PF indicates the extent to which the student believes themselves to be a failure, disappointment, or attributed negative events to their own inadequacy (e.g "I can't do anything right" and "I am worthless") in the preceding week (Schniering and Lyneham 2007). The CATS-PF has been shown to discriminate between clinical and non-clinical samples of children and adolescents who have clinical depression, anxiety, and oppositional/conduct disorders (see Schniering and Rapee 2002, for details of factor analyses). Schniering and Rapee (2002) reported high Cronbach's alpha coefficients for scores on the CATS .95 indicating strong reliability of the items and strong convergent validity with related measures of cognition. Test–retest correlation coefficients for the subscale at one and three months, was acceptable at 0.80 and 0.74, respectively.

Social Threat. The Children's Automatic Thoughts Scale Social Threat subscale (CATS-ST; Schniering & Rapee, 2002) was utilized to explore the degree to which students experience negative thoughts of peer judgement. The CATS-ST indicates the extent to which the student has thought of themselves as a being judged negatively by their peers in the preceding week (Schniering and Lyneham 2007). Social threat items include "Kids will think I'm stupid" and "Other kids are making fun of me." The CATS-ST has been shown to discriminate between clinical and non-clinical samples of children and adolescents who have clinical depression, anxiety, and oppositional/conduct disorders (see Schniering and Rapee 2002, for details of factor analyses). Schniering and Rapee (2002) reported high Cronbach's alpha coefficients for scores on the CATS .95 indicating strong reliability of the items and strong convergent validity with related measures of cognition. Internal consistency of the subscales was high, with coefficient alphas of 0.92 for social threat. Test–retest correlation coefficients for subscale scores at one and three month were acceptable at 0.78 and 0.73, respectively for CATS-ST.

Control Beliefs. The Student Perceptions of Control Questionnaire Control Beliefs subscale (SPOCQ-CB; Wellborn, Connell, & Skinner, 1989) was integrated to assess student perceptions of locus of control in the academic domain. Locus of control has been demonstrated to be a moderator in psychological threat and was therefore incorporated to assess the extent to which students attribute academic outcomes to internal and external forces (Brown & Pinel, 2003; Cadinu, Maass, Lombardo, & Frigerio, 2006; Davis, Aronson, & Salinas, 2006; Inzlicht & Kang, 2010; Steele, 1997). The 6-item subscale utilizes a 4-point Likert-type scaling method to assess students' positive and negative control beliefs. Negative control belief scores were reverse coded. Items assessing positive control beliefs include "If I decide to learn something hard, I can" and "I can do well in school if I want to." Items assessing negative control beliefs include "I can't get good grades, no matter what I do" and "I can't do well in school, even if I want to." The SPOCQ manual does not include measurement properties for the control beliefs subscale. However, Wellborn, Connell, and Skinner (1989) state "Studies indicate the SPOCQ scales show satisfactory measurement properties, including internal consistencies, test-retest reliabilities, and theoretically predicted overlap with other control scales" (p. 3).

Academic Engagement and Academic Disengagement. The Engagement vs. Disaffection with Learning (EvsD; Lloyd, 2014; Skinner & Belmont, 1993) provided insight into students' academic engagement as self-reported by students (see Appendix B). The EvsD has been utilized with samples of elementary, middle, and high school students of diverse backgrounds (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012). The EvD measures academic engagement using five domains: behavioral engagement, behavioral disaffection, emotional engagement, emotional disaffection, and active classroom oppositional behaviors. The EvD includes 26 items scored on a 4 point Likert-type scale. The Behavioral engagement subscale includes items such as “I try hard to do well in school” and “In class, I work as hard as I can.” Behavioral disaffection subscale statements include “When I’m in class, I just act like I’m working” and “I don’t try very hard at school.” Emotional engagement subscale includes items such as “I enjoy learning new things in class” and “When we work on something in class, I get involved.” Emotional disaffection items include statements such as “When we work on something in class, I feel bored” and “Class is not all that fun for me.” Finally, the active behavioral disaffection subscale addressed classroom disruptive behavior and items included “When I’m in class, I talk a lot with my classmates” and “I argue with my teacher in class” (Lloyd, 2014; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). High scores on behavioral and emotional domains and low scores on behavioral disaffection, emotional disaffection, and active classroom oppositional behaviors domains indicate positive classroom behavior. Internal consistency of the EvsD has been found in the medium to high range with coefficient alphas ranging from .61-.85 (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009). For the current study, a Cronbach’s alpha of .86 was calculated for academic engagement subscales and .742 for academic disaffection.

Academic Behaviors. To assess the degree of change in student academic behaviors teachers’ reports of daily deportment, the Daily Progress Report (see Appendix B) was utilized. Teachers completed a daily record of student performance in their classrooms during the program. The Daily Progress Report (DPR) was designed by the school district to assess four domains of students’ academic behavior and was further utilized to evaluate academic behavior (see Appendix B). Teachers indicate whether students 1) complete daily assignments, 2) participate in class as required, 3) follow class procedures and expectations, and 4) use appropriate classroom behavior and/or language. Students receive marks for meeting domain requirements in each class period throughout the day for a total daily score of eight. Scores on the DPR range from 0 to 8, with the total weekly score ranging from 0 to 32, and higher scores indicating better overall academic engagement and deportment.

Academic Self-Concept Constructs. The Views of Me worksheet (*see Appendix B*) and a construct elaboration interview were utilized to discover constructs student participants utilized to make sense and create their academic self-concept. Academic self-concept refers to the constellation of personal beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and perception of ability of functional competence held by students in scholastic settings (Lent, Brown, & Gore, 1997). The Views of Me worksheet was developed by the researcher and is informed by the fundamental postulate of personal construct theory. As Kelly's first principal implies 'if you want to know something, why not just ask them? They might just tell you' (Kelly, 1955). Moreover, the construct elaboration and Views of Me worksheet were developed by the principal investigator to lend validity toward the study by utilizing participant voices to explore student academic self-concept. The interview and worksheet further serve to help students gain self-knowledge. Therefore, the Views of Me worksheet presented student participants with a straightforward method of identifying sets of constructs about their academic self-concept.

The Views of Me worksheet was structured utilizing a free response method (Klion, 1985) of Ravenette (1977) and Kelly (1955) self-characterization guidelines. Self-characterization techniques can be used, according to Kelly (1955), to "see how the client structures a world in relation to which he must maintain himself in some kind of role" (p. 324). Self-characterization invites clients to "lay down only those constructs with respect to which he identifies himself; not those which are irrelevant to the character of himself" (p. 325). The words individuals use to express their constructions and role construct poles may be shared by people who speak the same language. However, as individual realities differ, personal construal and constructions may carry different implication across participants (Kelly, 1955; Butler & Green, 2007). Research participants thereby indicate their unique role constructions and role construct poles when completing character sketches of themselves.

The Views of Me worksheet presented participants with the three blank lines to address the following prompts from four perspectives: (1) themselves, (2) parents, (3) teachers, and (4) friends. The prompts were to first, “describe yourself and the way you are at school” and second, “how would you like to see yourself and how you are at school.” Within this framework, constructs are elicited through self-evaluation as participants are asked to evaluate themselves as they think others see them (Raventte, 1977). In participants’ metaphorical attempt to take the perspective of others, they may feel less apprehensive about describing themselves and in their efforts to respond to the prompts, utilize their own construct systems (Butler & Green, 2007). Furthermore, the prompts “describe yourself and the way you are at school” in contrast to “how would you like to see yourself and how you are at school” invites students to supply contrasting constructs which supply context and enhanced understanding of the student academic self-concept construing system. Additionally, the free response method allows students to access and the most salient and immediately perceived contexts of constructs about their academic self-concept.

The construct elaboration interview was further utilized to assist in understanding important experiences and assumptions the student hold about their personal construals. Laddering questions as introduced by Hinkle (1965) are incorporated into the construct elaboration interview to find out more about what is implied by each participants’ response on the Views of

Me worksheet. Interviewers utilizing laddering procedures prompt participants to explain in deeper detail the reasoning behind their replies. Laddering questions which were used during the interview include: *"What do you mean by [descriptive phrase]"*; "*What makes you think they would they say that*?"; and "*Why would you say (parent/teacher) thinks [descriptive phrase] about you at school*?" The construct elaboration interview and worksheet served as an inferential tool for collecting data, allowing students to expound on the ways in they give meaning to their experience in school (Kelly, 1963). Furthermore, these methods assisted the researcher in understanding the unique context utilized by students in their construals. The Views of Me worksheet and construct elaboration interview took approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete collectively. The construct elaboration interviews were audiotaped and transcribed by the principal researcher. The principal researcher transcribed interviews by listening to the recordings at a slower speed to capture statements accurately, replaying the recording, and rereading the transcript as the audio plays. Furthermore, pseudonyms were used to identify each participant.

Individual Interviews. A semi-structured interview was conducted (see Appendix B) in the week after participants had completed the SAP. This post program interview lasted approximately 10 to 15 minutes and was held in a private counseling room on the DAEP campus. Interviews were conducted by a counseling intern at the DAEP. These interviews were audiotaped and transcribed by principal researcher. The principal researcher followed the interview transcription process utilized for the construct elaboration interview. Pseudonyms were retained for each participant.

Demographic sheet. A demographic sheet was used to provide detailed information for the results. Participants were asked to report their gender, age, ethnicity, grade, the reason they were sent to the DAEP, the number of days they had been assigned to the DAEP, and the number of times they had been referred to the DAEP.

Preliminary Intervention Procedures

All sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students were asked to complete preliminary assessments during Bridge, as a condition of RTI planning. However, only data from students who provided assent, had parental consent, and were enrolled in the Character Education course were included in the study. Preliminary SAP assessments in this program include a battery of items designed to assess academic self-concept beliefs and school engagement (School Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ), demographic sheet, construct elaboration interview, and the Engagement vs. Disaffection with Learning (EvD:S) Scale See Appendix B). Students responded to the SEQ, a 26 item questionnaire intended to assess academic self-concept threat and the 25 item EvD:S which measured academic engagement in school. High scores on SEQ personal failure, social threat, and control beliefs subscale domains reflect a vulnerability to stereotype threat in the academic domain. High scores on behavioral and emotional domains and low scores on behavioral disaffection, emotional disaffection, and active classroom oppositional disaffection domains of the EvD:S indicate positive classroom engagement. These assessments were delivered to students during Bridge in paper format and took approximately 25 minutes to complete, collectively. The principal investigator scored these assessments after students completed them.

The Views of Me worksheet was additionally administered during the preliminary assessment phase to explore student self-perceptions as well as perceptions of how others view them and how they would like to be viewed by others. During Bridge, the students were provided the Views of Me worksheet. After student participants completed this worksheet, the principal investigator meet with participants individually to conduct the construct elaboration interview. The Views of Me worksheet and construct elaboration interview took approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete collectively. Finally, teachers were asked to provide access to Daily Progress Reports on student academic engagement and deportment. In this way, an additional method of measurement of student academic behavior was available.

Session Delivery

The Self-Affirmation Program (SAP) was delivered over four sessions, each lasting approximately 25 minutes. As a part of the response to intervention (RTI) planning in the Character Education course all sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade students enrolled at the DAEP in the Character Education course were introduced to intervention materials, during regularly scheduled guidance lessons. However, only data from students who provided assent, had parental/guardian consent, and were present for all sessions of the intervention were included in the study.

During the second and third week students participated in the affirmation intervention program. The treatment phase consists of four sessions of the self-affirmation program emphasizing curriculum designed to make self-resources salient. Appendix C provides treatment protocol handouts and discussion questions. Sessions were delivered in the classroom twice weekly and lasted 25 minutes, for a cumulative total of 1 hour and 45 minutes. As testimony of the flexibility of the self-system, there exist countless strategies for self-affirmation (McQueen & Klien, 2006; Sherman & Cohen, 2006). Therefore, developmental assets, particularly internal assets (e.g., positive values, positive identity, and social competencies), as predictive of thriving and resilience among minority and adolescents, underscore the SAP curriculum (Alvarado & Ricard, 2013; Lerner et al., 2013; www.search-institute.org). This approach follows the trend of prior induction of self-affirmation through assentation of value, writing about central values, and giving positive personality feedback (McQueen & Klien, 2006; Schmidt & Canela, 2015). Furthermore, the curriculum was designed to support positive identity and strength of student participants (Bozic, 2013).

Value affirmation. SAP session one focused on encouraging students to recognize their values. During this first session, students were invited to participate in the value affirmation exercise developed by Steele (1988), wherein they select a value and write about why that value is important to them. Value affirming activities encourage individuals to be reflective and express important components of their self-system. Critcher and Dunning (2015) suggests the affirmation of values present a broad perspective through which students can view information and events in their lives, thereby decreasing focus on threatening identity information. Further, researchers have found value affirmation exercises to be supported by neural mechanisms and the activation of the ventral striatum, or rewards system, in the brain (Dutcher et al., 2016). During this session, students were asked to reflect on what values are, how they have acquired their values, and how their values can be reflected in their lives. Researchers have suggested the process of affirming values can reduce the impact of stereotype and identity threat by decreasing the tendency of individuals to heavily self-evaluate based on the focal threat (Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Masters, 2006; Critcher & Dunning, 2015; Sherman & Hartson, 2011). Value affirmations further boost awareness of coping resources that can be drawn on during threatening situations (Cohen et al., 2006). Value affirmation interventions have been supported in reducing the achievement gap between stereotyped and non-stereotyped groups (Cohen et al., 2006; Harackiewicz et al., 2014; Sherman, 2013).

The principal investigator began this session by playing a game of value lottery with students. During the value lottery, the principal researcher distributed flash cards to students and instructed them to randomly select six numbers between one and fifty. These numbers corresponded with a personal value on a bingo card sheet held by the principal researcher. The researcher then figuratively dictated the direction of students' futures based on the numbers they selected and the personal value bingo sheet. Following this game, the researcher held a discussion with students centered on processing their experience of the game and the importance of selecting and utilizing personally meaningful values to direct one's life. After this discussion, the researcher passed out a worksheet which guided students in a value affirmation exercise. During this exercise, students selected from a list three values that are the most important to them. They were then provided with space and time to reflect and journal about why and when one of those values are important to them.

Deemphasizing threated identity. SAP session two focused on assisting students in drawing on multiple parts of the self-concept in order to have a more positive outlook. Stereotype threat arises in situations where salience of stereotyped and stigmatized groups is highlighted (Gresky, Ten Eyck, Lord, & McIntyre, 2005). The researcher introduced students to this session by reading a short story. This story served as a reminder of the difficulty students may experience as a consequence of stereotype threat and threatened identity. After reading the story, the researcher discussed with students times when they may have felt like the main character of the story. Following this discussion, the researcher invited students to reflect on how they feel when they focus on aspects of themselves they like (positives) and don't like (negatives). The researcher then provided students a worksheet to complete. This worksheet provided students with a sample of descriptions (e.g., loyal, kind to people, good friend, and reliable) and asked them to write about times when they noticed themselves acting according to a positive trait they are proud of possessing. Encouraging students to consider themselves in ways that reduce the salience of a threatened identity can therefore reduce the impact of the focal threat (Ambady, Paik, Steele, Owen-Smith, & Mitchell, 2004).

Combating self-stigmatization. SAP session three focused on promoting empowerment and educating students on the context of self-stigmatization processes and self-fulfilling prophesies which may affect them. Self-fulfilling prophesies are a process by which a student's behaviors can be impacted by the expectations and unconscious attitudes and behaviors of others (Guyll, Madon, Prieto, Scherr, 2010). Students can become trapped within the context of repetitive interactions patterns of confirming negative stereotypes, which can lead to self-stigmatization (i.e., the awareness, agreement, and application of stereotypes) (Corrigan, Bink, Schmidt, Jones, & Rüsch, 2016). Therefore, this session was focused on empowering students by encouraging them to consider and unravel self-fulfilling prophesies which have affected them and internalized self-stigmatization beliefs. During this session, the principal researcher taught students about self-fulfilling prophesies. The researcher invited students to reflect on prophesies others have for them, self-stigmatizing beliefs they have for themselves, and the ways they have consciously and unconsciously fulfilled those beliefs. "People who determine their own goals and self-select from life opportunities as a result are likely to be more energized and hopeful about their treatment and personal aspirations" (Corrigan, Larson, & Rüsch, 2009, p. 77). The researcher, therefore, presented information regarding the malleability of intelligence, the importance of effort, and motivation during this session. Disconnecting students' ideas about performance from stereotyped and stigmatized beliefs can reduce the fear of confirming negative stereotypes about one's self (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008;

Sawyer & Hollis-Sawyer, 2005). In this regard, participants learned to combat stereotypically threatening thoughts.

Externalizing the threat. SAP session four was focused on external messages of worth that students may have encountered that pose a threat to their identity. Individuals affected by stereotype threat and self-stigma are vulnerable to anxiety, which distracts from important tasks and decreases performance and goal related outcomes. Externalizing the threat and exploring reasons why anxiety and distraction might be occurring for individuals experiencing stereotype threat and self-stigma consequences can provide awareness that does not implicate the self or validate the stereotype (Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003; Johns, Schmader, & Martens, 2005). Students were asked to reflect on explicit and implicit threat messages they may have received from others (e.g., “You are not good enough,” “Are you stupid or something,” ‘Let’s hope you grow out of that”). Students wrote about positive self-statements they can access when they encounter threatening information. The fourth session concentrated on reducing the tendency of students to evaluate themselves based on comparative judgments. In this regard, consequences of stereotype threat can be activated when individuals believe they were compared to another group (Cohen et al., 2009). Studies indicate that individuals who participate in psychoeducation about external attributions for stereotype threat consequences and effective strategies for regulating anxiety and arousal can disarm the threat (Mosley & Rosenberg, 2007).

Post Intervention Procedures

A week after the conclusion of the fourth session, all middle school students were asked to take the post-intervention assessments during the Character Education course, as a condition of RTI planning. Only data from students who had provided assent, had parental consent, and were present for all four SAP sessions were included in the study. Post-intervention SAP assessments in this program include the School Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) and the Engagement vs. Disaffection with Learning (EvD:S) Scale (See Appendix B). Following completion of the post-intervention SAP instruments, an interviewer (counseling intern) met with participants individually for an exit (post-program) interview. The purpose of this interview was to allow students to reflect on their experiences in the self-affirmation program and at the DAEP. Student participants and the interviewer also explored how the affirmation program might be applied within the DAEP environment. Students were asked:

1. How would you describe yourself as a student?
2. How, if at all, do you feel enrollment at the DAEP has affected the way you view yourself as student?
3. What was the experience like in the Self-Affirmation Program?
4. Tell me about any experiences you had in the self-affirmation program that were helpful to you during your stay?
5. Tell me about any experiences you had in the self-affirmation program that were NOT helpful to you during your stay?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Data Analysis

A variety of steps were taken to analyze, organize, and protect data in this research study. Prior to entry in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) a document scanner owned by the principal investigator was utilized to transform data into digital format for the purpose of analysis. This scanner was utilized to create electronic copies of study documents, which were stored on an encrypted, password-protected flash drive owned by the researcher. This encrypted, password-protected flash drive will be stored in a secured file cabinet in the home office of the principal investigator. Data on this flash drive will be maintained for a period of three years, following IRB protocol. Hard copies of program documents and study instruments will be kept in a locked file cabinet at the DAEP for one academic year. Audio recordings of the interviews will additionally be kept on the encrypted flash drive. Recorded interviews were furthermore transcribed by the principal investigator for the purpose of data analysis. Additionally, pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality of participants. Data collected from student participants were used to examine the impact of the SAP on (1) academic self-concept threat, (2) academic behaviors, and (3) academic engagement as well as (4) academic self-concept of adolescents in the DAEP. In this study, quantitative and qualitative research methods were performed in order to address each research question.

Quantitative Data Analysis: Comparison of Pre and Post-Intervention Effects

Paired-Samples T-Test

Paired samples t-tests were utilized to explore research questions one and two, assessing changes in students' academic engagement and academic self-concept threat perceptions using preliminary and post-intervention assessment scores of the School Experiences Questionnaire and Engagement vs. Disaffection Learning Scale: Student (EvsD:S) scale. Paired-samples *t*-test can be used to examine whether or not "the mean difference between paired observations is significantly different from zero" (Dimitrov, 2009; Green & Salkind, 2011, p. 162). Preliminary intervention measures were compared to post-intervention measures to evaluate for significant impact of the intervention on student self-report scores. To compensate for Type I error within the study, the Holms Bonferroni calculation was utilized to adjust alpha levels 0.01 per test (.05/8) (Dimitrov, 2009). Practical significance was additionally calculated to provide an indication of meaningfulness toward statistical significance.

Statistical power. Cohen's d was reported to assess for statistical power, or the effect size, of the paired-samples *t*-tests, and the computation of the magnitude of treatment effects (Parker & Hagan-Burke, 2007). The Cohen's *d* statistic assesses the degree to which "the mean of the difference scores deviates from 0 in standard deviation units" and can be computed using the equation: mean difference/standard deviation (Green & Salkind, 2011, p. 171). A Cohen's *d* value of 0 indicates the independent variable had no effect on the dependent variable. Cohen's *d* values of 0.20, 0.50, and 0.80 indicate small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively. Statistical power was calculated using the analytic program, G*Power 3.1.9.2 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2014). A priori power analysis was conducted to determine the number of participants needed to establish statistical power for the quantitative portion of this investigation at the .80 level given $\alpha = .05$. The results of the power analysis revealed that a sample size of 27 was necessary to detect a moderate effect. A post hoc power analysis was further conducted to assess actual statistical power level, given the number of participants, achieved means, and standard deviations.

Percentage Exceeding the Median

Research question three was analyzed using visual inspection of graphical illustrations of weekly aggregate data on student academic behavior. In particular observing for level (mean scores of participants within each phase of the study), trend (slope of the data points and the rate at which they are increasing, decreasing, or remain consistent across treatment phases), variability (degree of variation of data from around a mean score within each phase of treatment), and immediacy of treatment effect (magnitude of change in the data from one phase of treatment to the next phase) (O'Neill, McDonnell, Billingsley, & Jenson, 2011).

In addition to the visual inspection of academic behavioral changes, effect size was used to evaluate the magnitude of the treatment effect. Percentage of data exceeding the median (PEM) was calculated to identify effect size. PEM is computed by calculating the percentage of treatment phase data points exceeding the median baseline data point and then dividing by the total number of treatment phase data points (Ma, 2006). Effective interventions can thereby be identified by observing the data points resting on the therapeutic side of the median, whereas ineffective treatment interventions fall at or below the medium baseline point. PEM was utilized due to the presence of floor and ceiling data points and constrictions toward establishing a stable baseline trend (Ma, 2006). Accordingly, ineffectiveness is below 0.50, debatable effectiveness is 0.50 to 0.69, moderate effectiveness is 0.70 to 0.89, and significant effectiveness is 0.90 and above (Lenz, 2013).

Qualitative Data Analysis: Phenomenological Exploration of Academic Self-Concept and the Self-Affirmation Program

Qualitative analytic procedures were utilized to address research questions four and five, assessing student academic self-concept and exploring meaningful experiences in the Self-Affirmation Program (SAP). Data for qualitative analysis included student interview responses and the Views of Me worksheet gathered during the SAP.

Academic Self-Concept Construct

The Views of Me worksheet and construct elaboration interview provided student academic self-concept constructs (research question four). Furthermore, the researcher reviewed transcriptions of the construct elaboration interview to identify additional expressions of academic self-concept role constructions. Davis et al. (1989) as adapted by Anderson (1993) provided the framework by which the Views of Me worksheet and construct elaboration interview were analyzed. Anderson (1993) outlined the following steps:

> 1. List separately any word or phrase describing the research participant, his or her feelings, experiences or inferred behavior.
> 2. Do not repeat a description which is given more than once in identical, or almost identical, words, in the list. Indicate how many times each description is given in identical, or almost identical words (if more than once), in parentheses after the description.
> 3. Descriptions that are thought to be similar in meaning by the reader but expressed in different words by the research participant should be listed separately.
> 4. Do not include qualifying adjectives or adverbs unless these are necessary to convey the apparent meaning of a word or phrase. For example, in the case of the phrase, "lots of fun" the complete phrase is listed. However, in the case of the phrase "fairly driven" only the word "driven" is listed.
> 5. When two descriptions are implied, but only one is stated, the two descriptions should be written separately. Omitted words are indicated by the use of three ellipsis points (…). (Anderson, 1993, p. 113)

Constructs were therefore identified by seriously listening to the participants verbalizations in their own terms.

A second step toward analyzing academic self-concept constructs was classification. Touw, Meijer, and Wubbels (2015) state the diversity of constructs elicited from participants (Van Kan, Ponte, & Verloop, 2010) demonstrates a need to classify the content of the constructs.

Accordingly, Touw and colleagues outline classification of constructs is helpful for comparing different groups of respondents (2015).

Therefore, the principal researcher reviewed constructs utilized by students for categorization. Participant transcriptions were utilized to support understanding of construct context and to determine classification categories. This analysis indicated classification of students constructs could be justified by indications of engagement and disengagement (Fredricks et al., 2004; Skinner et al., 2008). Classification of student constructs by indicators of engagement and disengagement furthermore allowed for comparisons between engaged and disengaged groups of students and participants who benefit from enrollment at the DAEP and in the SAP and those who did not.

Constructs were sorted into classification categories based on inductive reasoning (Patton, 2002) into five categories. Engagement and disengagement indicator classifications included (1) affective engagement, (2) affective disengagement, (3) behavioral engagement, (4) behavioral disengagement, and (5) active disengagement. Affective engagement refers to a student's feelings toward school, learning, teachers, and peers (e.g., the student has positive feelings toward his teachers). Affective disengagement refers to constructs which show the presence of feelings of boredom, anxiety, frustration, and sadness within the academic domain. Behavioral engagement includes observable student actions or participation while at school and is reflected through a student's positive conduct, effort, and participation. Behavioral disengagement was indicated by student reports of negative behaviors which form a direct opposite to behavioral engagement (e.g., don't try in class). Active disengagement referred to a student's alignment with classroom disruptive behavior.

The principal investigator held a 30-minute consultation on the coding procedure and the meaning of the categories with an outside analyst before independently reviewing transcripts and coding samples of constructs. The principal researcher and outside data analysts used tacit and intuitive senses (Patton, 2002) to determine which data looked and felt alike in order to group constructs into classification codes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Saldaña, 2013) based on indicators of engagement or disengagement. To determine the reliability of the classification system with adolescent student constructs, inter-rater agreement was calculated. Cohen's Kappa formula for inter-rater reliability was calculated to support classification categories. Five participant transcripts were coded by the researcher and outside analyst following training. Across the five cases, 139 constructs were coded for reliability by the analysts. A kappa level of .80 was found, indicating substantial interrater reliability.

Open Coding

Research question five was analyzed using open coding for thematic analysis. Following transcription of the interviews, transcripts were provided to two outside analysts via email. "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 79). The principal researcher and two outside analysists identified themes utilizing guidelines provided by Braun and Clark (2006). Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model follows a recursive process involving: familiarization of the data through reading and re-reading the data, noting initial ideas. The principal researcher and two outside analysts individually performed line-by-line coding on each of the transcriptions in order to find units of meaning (step 1). The principal researcher and outside analysts then gathered together in the private home of the principal researcher to systematically generate initial codes across the entire data set (step 2). Words and small phrases were grouped into similar units (codes) and organized into potential themes (step 3). The principal researcher and two analysts reviewed themes in relation to the generated codes, discarding redundant codes and examing codes in context of their orgins in the data (step 5). This process was repeated until the researcher and outside anaylsts reached agreement, defining and creating clearly named themes. The researcher then produced the report (step 6). Recordings were used for ensuring member checking and reliability agreement.

Mixed Method Data Analysis

After quantitative and qualitative data have been analyzed, the principal researcher looked across both sets of results to assess how the information addressed the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The principal researcher followed Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011) seven-step guidelines for convergent parallel design mixed method data analysis. In accordance with step 1, quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently during the fall and spring semesters. Statistical analyses were then singularly applied to quantitative data sets. Qualitative data sets were analyzed through a phenomenological lens, wherein participants described their experiences of the phenomenon of academia and being in the SAP at the DAEP. Additionally, students' phenomenological academic self-concept constructs were analyzed secondarily through a lens of engagement and disengagement (step 2). Following guidelines for step 3, all results from quantitative and qualitative sets were specified as the dimensions to be compared. In regard to step 4, quantitative outcomes were compared with the qualitative constructs and themes. Comparison information was generated during step 5, during which time redefined data identified in step 4 were analyzed. Comparisons between quantitative and qualitative results were completed across the sample and time. In accordance with step 6, the results of data analyses and comparisons were represented in chapter 4. Finally, step 7 was addressed in chapter 5, wherein the combined results are interpreted.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in a qualitative study is to be the research instrument through which data are collected (Patton, 2002). The researcher, as an instrument through which data are collected and analyzed, is required to reflect on, deal with, and report potential sources of bias (Saldaña, 2013). In this regard, the role identified by the researcher is that of an insider, participant-observer. The researcher had facilitated psychoeducational and skills based group counseling sessions on the DAEP campus for over two years, building rapport with alternative education students and school staff and educators (insider position). Further, the researcher administered the self-affirmation program curriculum and observed participant responses in context, attending to the participants' eye contact, facial expressions, body language, and by listening to their narratives (participant-observer position). The researcher's prior experiences within the DAEP could influence interpretations of the observed behaviors of the participants. Therefore, the researcher attended to biases through bracketing, the inclusion of two outside analysts, and an independent interviewer (counseling intern).

Lens of the Researcher

In qualitative inquiry, researchers are the instrument through which data is collected and analyzed (Creswell & Miller, 2000). A study's credibility is, therefore, dependent on the competence and skill of the researcher. Thus, researchers should reflect upon and deal with any potential sources of bias (Creswell & Miller, 2000) to lend validity to the interpretation of their investigations. It is, therefore, important to note the lens through which my experiences might have impacted this study. My experiences shape the lens through which I viewed this study, including my status as a minority member who has persisted in the academic sphere and attained a provisional counseling license and as an individual who has experiences in diverse settings.

As a minority from a single parent, low-income household, from an early age, I have been aware of statistics and lowered expectations for students who meet my demographics. It is with no small amount of pride and perseverance that I have aimed to overcome and exceed the stigma associated with my identity groups. Furthermore, my experiences have motivated me to want to empower other students throughout their educational careers. I have experience working with adolescents in an alternative education setting, with children at a predominately black primary school, and with young adults at a Hispanic Serving Institution. Furthermore, I have attended and presented at conferences focusing on strategies for working with adolescents. My personal feelings about these stereotypical expectations of “at-risk” students may result in bias; it is, therefore, important that I bracket these experiences and beliefs about how stereotype threat is expressed by participants during the research process. During the study, I maintained a reflective journal wherein I reflected on my thoughts and feelings about the participants and the research process.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that validity in qualitative research refers to the trustworthiness or credibility of the data by those knowledgeable of the phenomenon. Trustworthiness as a measure of quality, as Tracy (2010) outlines, can be demonstrated through establishment of “(a) worthy topic, (b), rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibity, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence” (p. 837). The topic of this investigation was worth study due to its relevance, potential to inform practice, and examination of little-known phenomena. This investigation supported rich rigor through incorporation of a variety of theoretical constructs, data sources, data collection and analysis processes (Tracy, 2010). Patton (2002) suggested a similar process of establishing rich rigor through triangulation. This study incorporated three methods of triangulation, or richness, as identified by Patton: (1) triangulation of data sources (reflexive researcher journal, Views of Me worksheet, a construct elaboration interview, School Experiences Questionnaire, and Engagement vs Disaffection with Learning: Student Scale), (2) triangulation of analysists (two outside analysts and an independent interviewer), and (3) triangulation of methods (quantitative and qualitative; Creswell, 2014) (Patton, 2002). This study incorporated triangulation of data. Information was gathered through the use of two interviewers, the primary investigator and a counseling intern. The primary investigator conducted the first interview with participants in order to establish rapport and establish an understanding of context within students' academic self-concept constructs elicited from the Views of Me worksheet. A counseling intern served as an independent interviewer, conducting the post program interview, in order to reduce the likelihood of participants being influenced by the primary researcher.

Sincerity, the impression of authenticity and genuineness, was achieved within this study through "self-reflexivity, vulnerability, honesty, transparency, and data auditing" (Tracy, 2010, p. 841). Throughout the process of data collection, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal. Within the reflective journal, the researcher maintained commentary on her subjective feelings and experiences while collecting data, running the intervention program, and analyzing the results. Credibility, as Tracy (2010) described, is achieved through the practice of presenting results with thick plausible descriptions. The researcher furthermore attended rigorously to method within this study to enhance trustworthiness and credibility. The researcher was intentional in utilizing methodology which allowed participants an opportunity to reflect on their personal constructs as they related to academic self-perceptions. Incorporation of PCT techniques additionally assisted in establishing trustworthiness within the study as its procedures called for the researcher to recognize participants as experts and utilize participant words to describe constructs. Consideration and application of practices in compliance with procedural, relational, and exiting ethics were furthermore followed by the researcher in order to increase study quality (Tracy, 2010). By using a variety of data and being willing to be self-critical, considerate of stakeholders, and self-aware, researchers can attain a level of credibility and quality (Patton, 2002; Tracy, 2010).

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The primary aim of this study was to examine the academic identity constructs of students enrolled in a disciplinary alternative education program and the effectiveness of a Self-Affirmation program toward positively impacting factors which affect academic identity construction (i.e., academic behaviors, academic engagement, and self-concept threat experiences). A secondary purpose of this study was to contribute to the scholarly literature and provide a meaningful understanding of DAEP students and interventions which may be effective in moderating at-risk status. This section presents the results of data collected during the fall and spring 2016-2017 academic school semester. Data were visually reviewed by the principal investigator and participants at the time of collection; in this regard, no missing data were detected. Research questions are addressed in order, with analysis of quantitative data presented first followed by presentation of qualitative results. This section also presents comparisons of quantitative and qualitative outcomes.

Quantitative Results

Quantitative statistical analysis was performed using the statistical software IBM SPSS Statistics. Pre and post program scores of the School Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) and Engagement vs. Disaffection with Learning: Student Scale (EvsD; Lloyd, 2014; Skinner & Belmont, 1993) were compared across time to evaluate for significant effects. Non-directional, paired-samples *t*-tests were conducted to assess for the effect of participating in a self-affirmation program on academic self-concept threat, academic engagement, and academic disengagement across time (before-treatment and after-treatment conditions). To control for familywise error rate at the .05 level, the Holm’s sequential Bonferroni procedures were utilized

($\alpha = 0.05/8 = 0.01$). Visual analysis and PEM techniques were applied to the Daily Progress Reports to assess for immediacy of treatment effects.

Research Question 1: Academic Self-Concept Threat

Research question one concerned changes in reports of experiences of academic self-concept threat (personal failure, social threat, and control beliefs) of students in the SAP. Paired-samples *t*-tests were conducted to evaluate the effect of participating in a self-affirmation program on academic self-concept threat across time (before-treatment and after-treatment conditions). Normal distribution, homogenous variances, and equal sample sizes were observed in pre and posttest conditions. The means and standard deviations for pre and post intervention personal failure, social threat, and control beliefs subscales are presented in **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**.

For the personal failure subscale, statistically significant mean difference in scores were found between pretest and post test scores $t(22) = -4.31$, $p \leq .01$. A Cohen's effect size value ($d = 1.05$) suggested a large practical significance, indicating an increase in student perceptions of personal failure attributions of academic outcomes over time. Mean comparisons between pretest and post-test scores on the social failure subscale revealed a significant difference $t(22) = -4.60$, $p \leq .01$, indicating a noteworthy increase in student perception of social threat in academic settings after exposure to the self-affirmation program. A Cohen's effect size value ($d = 0.51$) suggested a moderate practical significance. Statistically significant results were also revealed to exist between pre and post control beliefs scores. This result indicated a statistically significant increase in student expectations of control over academic outcomes, $t(22) = -5.79$, $p \leq .01$. A Cohen's effect size value ($d = 0.87$) suggested a large practical significance.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for SEQ Subscales

	Time		
Subscale	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention	Mean Score Change
Personal Failure	8.91 (7.35)	16.60 (5.94)*	7.69
Social Threat	8.78 (8.7)	14.43 (7.7)*	5.65
Control Beliefs	8.63 (1.21)	10.46 (1.74)*	1.83

Note: Values represent significant changes in scale scores of the SEQ from pre-test to post-test: **p* ≤ 0.01.

Research Question 2: Academic Engagement and Academic Disengagement

Research question two concerned the degree of change in adolescent self-reported academic engagement and academic change across time as reflected by the Engagement vs. Disaffection with Learning: Student Scale. Five paired sample *t*-tests were performed to test for significant differences between domains of academic engagement and academic disengagement before and after participation in a SAP at a DAEP. The means and standard deviations for pre and post intervention behavioral disaffection, emotional disaffection, and active disaffection subscales are presented in **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**. Non-significant results were found for affective engagement ($t(22) = -1.33$, $p = 0.20$), affective disengagement ($t(22) = 1.45$, $p = 0.16$), behavioral engagement ($t(22) = -0.41$, $p = 0.69$), and active disengagement ($t(22) = 0.31$, $p = 0.78$). A statistically significant difference was found between pretest and post test scores of behavioral disengagement, $t(22)$ 3.25, $p \leq .01$, indicating a decrease in student academically disengaged behaviors. A Cohen's effect size value ($d = 1.14$) suggested a large practical significance.

Table 3

EvsD Mean Scores

	Time		
Subscale	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention	Mean Score Change
Behavioral Engagement	2.72 (0.69)	2.77 (0.58)	0.05
Behavioral Disaffection	2.72 (0.65)	2.19 (0.50)*	-0.53*
Affective Engagement	2.48 (0.78)	2.68 (0.61)	-0.20
Affective Disaffection	2.31 (0.49)	2.31 (0.67)	0
Active Disaffection	2.62 (0.80)	2.57 (.874)	-0.05

Note: Values represent significant changes in scale scores of the EvsD from pre-test to post-test: *$p \leq 0.01$.

Research Question 3: Academic Behavior

Research question three concerned the changes observed by teachers in student academic behavior before and during treatment, specifically, observing for level, trend, variability, and immediacy of treatment effects (O’Neill et al., 2011). Data from the DPR was analyzed using visual trend analysis and PEM procedures to examine for changes in student academic behavior as observed by teachers. Inspection of the data revealed minimal changes in slope for the vast number of participants. This seemed to be primarily due to ceiling effects at baseline and minimal variability in scores across observation and treatment phases. PEM was calculated for each student to evaluate the extent to which improvements could be found in academic behavior across the time of the intervention. PEM was calculated dividing the percentage of treatment phase data points over the median baseline by the total number of treatment phase data points (Ma, 2006). Individuals were categorized as either having benefitting from treatment or demonstrating no effects (ineffective, debatable effectiveness, moderate effectiveness, and significant effectiveness). Participant PEM scores are displayed in **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**. Data revealed that for 65% of participants (*n* = 15), the SAP was not effective in enhancing academic behavior at the DAEP (PEM ≤ 0.25) as observed by teachers. DPR scores for four participants (17%) demonstrated debatable programmatic effects, suggesting possible support towards the SAP in increasing student academic behaviors (PEM = 0.50). Four participants demonstrated moderate to significant effects treatment effects (PEM ≤ 0.75), supporting an increase in academic behavioral compliance and change.

Table 4

DRP Academic Behavior PEM scores

	DPR PEM	**Treatment Effectiveness Indication**
Christine	0.50	Debatable effectiveness
Danielle	0.50	Debatable effectiveness
Heather	0.00	Ineffective
Sarah	0.50	Debatable effectiveness
Jacob	0.00	Ineffective
Jeremiah	0.50	Debatable effectiveness
Jennifer	0.00	Ineffective
Conner	0.25	Ineffective
Bradley	0.00	Ineffective
Bobby	0.00	Ineffective
Alex	0.00	Ineffective
Bryan	0.00	Ineffective
Luke	0.75	Moderate effectiveness
Justine	0.00	Ineffective
Ashley	0.75	Moderate effectiveness
Rodger	0.25	Ineffective
George	1.00	Significant effectiveness
Alfredo	0.00	Ineffective
Marie	0.25	Ineffective
Sally	0.75	Moderate effectiveness

Fred	0.00	Ineffective
Lee	0.00	Ineffective
Maxine	0.25	Ineffective

Qualitative Data Analysis

Research Question 4: Academic Self-Concept

Research question four investigated the personal constructs students utilized in describing their academic self-concept. These constructs were collected using the Views of Me worksheet and construct elaboration interview and provide a description of students who are referred to DAEPs in their own voices. Constructs were further classified in order to provide meaningful information toward comparing participants. Students were classified based on indicators of academically adaptive behaviors which promote school completion (i.e., affective engagement and behavioral engagement) and non-adaptive classifications which are indicative of risk, drop out, and negative school outcomes (i.e., affective disengagement, behavioral disengagement, and active disengagement; see Table 5).

Table 5

Participant Construct Classifications as Percentage within the Case

	Non-adaptive Disengagement Classifications			**Adaptive Engagement Classifications**	
	Active *n* = 119	Affective *n* = 40	Behavioral *n* = 107	Affective *n* = 49	Behavioral *n*= 129
Christine	19%	26%	10%	19%	26%
Danielle	9%	32%	27%	5%	27%
Heather	20%	20%	23%	3%	34%
Sarah	22%	26%	30%	9%	15%
Jacob	39%	11%	11%	11%	33%
Jeremiah	52%	0%	36%	0%	16%

Jennifer	0%	23%	39%	0%	39%
Conner	36%	0%	32%	8%	16%
Bradley	21%	5%	0%	37%	37%
Bobby	8%	0%	0%	42%	50%
Alex	36%	0%	21%	14%	29%
Bryan	33%	0%	14%	10%	43%
Luke	12%	6%	29%	0%	47%
Justine	32%	4%	40%	12%	20%
Ashley	62%	8%	31%	0%	0%
Rodger	33%	7%	40%	0%	20%
George	28%	0%	12%	12%	36%
Alfredo	14%	0%	14%	14%	71%
Marie	64%	0%	0%	0%	21%
Sally	25%	0%	0%	0%	13%
Fred	0%	36%	0%	0%	64%
Lee	17%	4%	36%	36%	4%
Maxine	17%	17%	11%	11%	27%

Note: Affective engagement indicated positive feelings toward school, peers, and teachers (e.g., enjoyment and interest). Behavioral engagement indicated student action and participation in the learning environment (e.g., active listening, educational effort, or positive conduct). Affective disengagement indicated negative feelings toward school, peers, and teachers (e.g., boredom, worry, or frustration). Behavioral disengagement indicated passive defiance and noncompliance within the learning environment (e.g., not trying, distraction, or lack or persistence). Active disengagement indicated student disruptive behaviors which interfere with learning of others.

Participant Academic Self-Concept Profiles. As a result of the Views of Me worksheet and construct elaboration interviews, the following participant academic self-concept profiles emerged. The profiles represent a synopsis of how participants came to view themselves in the academic domain and how they perceived themselves to be seen by others as students. Participants were assigned pseudonyms for protection and confidentiality.

Christine. Christine was a 15-year-old Hispanic female in the 8th grade. She was referred to the DAEP for the first time due to aggressive, confrontational, and behavioral issues. During her interview Christine expressed that students who came to the DAEP are perceived as "not disciplined" and "crazy" and are expected "to get on a better level of what they were, before they came." Christine denied any perception of stereotyping due to her race but endorsed perceiving her parents as expecting her "to not be reckless and not to get in trouble" because she is a female. Constructs Christine used to describe her academic self-concept fell most predominately in the affective disengagement (25.8%), behavioral engagement (25.8%), and active disengagement (19.3%) classification categories.

Constructs in the affective disengagement classification concerned Christine's feelings of disinterest towards toward school and learning. Behavioral engagement classification constructs referred to her observable actions of school participations, such as participation in sports. Christine applied affectively disengaged classification constructs to describe herself as someone who "don't care about nothing," especially since she became ineligible to play basketball. Behavioral engagement construals described her as a student who was formerly active in school activities however, Christine concluded,

> since I can't play sports this year, I just stopped caring of what I do. Because, I mean, sports was everything, so I can't play sports this year. So, I stopped caring, cause I can't play sports… and gave up on trying to go to [alternative school (name redacted)] cause I would have to wait.

Academic self-constructs in the active disengagement classification category reflected Christine’s disruptive classroom behaviors such as “socialite”, “talks a lot”, and being “crazy.” Christine described herself as a student stating,

> I’m someone who takes the risk in getting in trouble . . . the person who is known to do the crazy stuff, like you say my name and they know who I am. There’s not nobody that doesn’t know me and like I’m known as someone who have skipped class, done drugs, I mean well smoked marijuana and pop pills. I had to go to court last year because I got into trouble at school and was on probation.

Christine perceived the DAEP and being in the SAP as a learning experience to grow as an individual. Contrasting construals of popularity and not caring Christine utilized to describe how she would like to be seen as school and at the DAEP were “pays attention” and “as myself.” She elaborated that she wanted to be seen as,

> someone who pays attention in school because, I mean, the more you pay attention, the more you focus more money you're making when you do get older, and finding a better job . . . not a type person, you know of, a cool girl, like everybody wants to be friends with, I just want the girl who pays attention in school and for people to know me, ‘she writes music and she's in love with basketball.’ I guess that's it. I don't wanna be the crazy popular girl anymore.

Christine expressed to me and the counseling intern she felt positive about her experience in the DAEP and the SAP. Christine demonstrated debatably effective improvements in her conduct, rule compliance, and increased academic efforts as indicated by the DPR and PEM scores.

Danielle. Danielle was a 13 year old Hispanic adolescent female in the 8th grade who was referred to the DAEP for a placement to last until the end of the school year for assault with a deadly weapon. Danielle denied having any prior knowledge of the DAEP or stereotypes applied to its students. This placement would be her first at the DAEP. She further denied having experienced stereotype or identity threat due to her race, gender, or other social group membership. While Danielle was a very bubbly young woman often laughing and making jokes and denying any stereotype threat perceptions she did become tearful when elaborating on academic identity constructs she had perceived from her parents. Danielle was greatly impacted by the perception that her parents viewed her as being "lazy, not trying- hard enough, and being a disappointment in P.E." She did not believe the DAEP or SAP would be helpful in allowing her to expand her academic self-construct, especially where her parents were concerned, stating "I'll just be like, I changed, you see? I'm not as lazy. And they're like, that's not called changing, that's doing what you should have been doing. It's pointless." Constructs Danielle used to describe her academic self-concept fell most predominately in the affective disengagement (31.8%), behavioral engagement (27.3%), and behavioral disengagement (27.3%) classification categories.

Constructs in the affective disengagement category reflected Danielle's lack of emotional connection to academic activities. Danielle described herself as a student who is "bored", "tired of learning", and "aggravated by other kids" at school. Danielle elaborated on her feelings of emotional disconnection stating,

> we're just learning how to take a test, which is the same thing, except there's different ways to take it. So, I'm just sick and tired of learning all these different ways, and I can just stick to one way.

Academic self-constructs in the behavioral engagement classification category reflected Danielle's positive classroom deportment "obeying rules", being "behaved", a "good student", and being “friendly.” Danielle described herself as a student who’s “helping the other students sometimes. And then I'm also doing my own work, too. And they're good grades.” Conversely, Danielle also construed herself in terms of behavioral disengagement with constructs such as “lazy” and “failing.” Danielle’s explained her behavioral disengagement “because I am failing PE cuz I didn't dress out and then because I also get in trouble for sleeping a lot in class.” Danielle told me she accepted having been referred to the DAEP; however, she did not feel as though she benefitted from it as she felt very different from the type of bad kids who need SSC. Danielle made debatable improvements in academic deportment and effort as a result of participation in the SAP at the DAEP. Danielle felt neutral about her experience in the SAP program.

Heather. Heather was a 14 year old female Hispanic student in the 8th grade. She was referred to the DAEP for the fifth time for 60 days due to assault. Heather felt most comfortable at the DAEP and perceived herself to be less judged at the campus than at her homeschool. Heather endorsed stereotype threat perceptions due to her identity as a lesbian and as a “bad kid.” She described experiences of stereotype threat and consequences of stereotypic threat stating,

> Everybody pictures me ‘Oh, look she's in a gang. Oh, look she's a bad kid’. Because that's how everybody thinks of me because I'm a bad one . . . I feel like they think I'm bad. I'm just lesbian. It's a combination because downright . . . I don't know. I just feel like people just judge me on my looks and that . . . Everybody just thinks like, ‘Oh she's bad, she's bad’. Just stop! You want to see bad, I'll give you bad. That's nothing.

Heather viewed her placement at the DAEP favorably reflecting on the opportunity to improve her grades, feelings of connectedness with the school and other students, and positive connections on campus with teachers and administration.

Constructs Heather used to describe her academic self-concept fell most predominately in behavioral engagement and disengagement classification categories (34.3% and 23%, respectively). Behavioral engagement constructs referenced Heather's view of herself as someone who participates positively in academic settings. Heather described herself as someone who gets along well with others in school, is "nice", "funny", "outgoing", a "good person" when given the chance, and "listening" during class. However, Heather described behaviorally disengaged academic-self construct as predominately coloring her interactions in school and people's perceptions of her. Heather reflected,

> I have meltdowns or I just don't want to listen because they don't break it down for me. They really don't so I'm always in I.S.S (in school suspension), walking out of class, walking off campus, because they don't want to help me.

Heather felt positive about her experience in the DAEP and mentioned the SAP was impactful in how she thinks about herself as a student. However, no changes were observed in Heather's academic effort or involvement in class activities by teachers as a result of SAP participation at the DAEP.

Sarah. Sarah was a 14 year old Hispanic adolescent female referred to the DAEP for making terroristic threats toward another student. She had been referred for a placement of 60 days at the DAEP. She had no prior history of placement at the DAEP and identified students who had been recommended for placement there as "bad kids." Sarah did not identify herself as a bad kid. However, she did recognize experiencing consequences because others interpreted her behaviors and actions through the lens of that construct. Sarah elucidated,

> I don’t even have to be doing anything but they're always nagging on me. Like this teacher I got sent here because she just started yelling at me while I was just sitting and so since she was yelling at me I started arguing with her, and I get referrals for stuff like that all the time.

Phrases and experiences she utilized to construct her academic self-concept fell predominately in the behaviorally, affectively, and actively disengaged categories (30%, 26%, and 22% respectively).

Constructs within the behavioral disengaged classification category referenced Sarah’s view of her academic self-concept as a student who does “not listen”, “don’t do work”, and “misbehaves.” Affective disengagement further expounded on Sarah’s disengagement in the classroom as Sarah elaborated on being emotionally disengaged at school, “I hate school” and “I just don’t feel like listening and doing what they say sometimes.” Constructs in the active disengagement classification category included “disruptive”, “argue with teachers”, and “troublemaker.” Sarah described herself as a student as someone who “always make trouble. I don't know, I try to pick fights with everybody I guess.” Sarah’s self-concept reflected a great deal of disengagement and disassociation in the academic domain. Sarah expressed neutral feelings about making changes to her academic views of herself, engagement, and behavior at the DAEP and as a result of participation in the SAP. This indecision towards change possibly contributed to the debatable effectiveness of the SAP and the DAEP in affecting academic deportment change. However, Sarah expressed she did not feel as though she benefitted from being in the DAEP as she felt very different from the type of bad kids who need SSC. Sarah felt neutral about her experience in the SAP.

Jacob. Jacob was a 15 year old Hispanic male in the 8th grade. He was referred for placement at the DAEP for 45 days. Jacob had never attended the DAEP prior to this placement and was greatly embarrassed by his referral. Jacob denied any perception of stereotype threat due to his race, gender, or any other social identity groups. He further denied any prior perceptions about the DAEP or the potential benefits of placement. Constructs Jacob used to describe his academic self-concept fell predominately in the active disengagement and behavioral engagement classification categories (38.9% and 33.3%, respectively). Active disengagement category constructs refer to actions and behaviors Jacob employs which disrupt and interfere with the learning environment and the engagement and learning of others. These constructs include "get into fights", "disrupt the class", and messing with friends." Jacob applied behaviorally engaged constructs to himself in reference to his positive interactions and participation at school. These constructs included being "funny", "nice", "listening", and "doing my work." Jacob expressed disinterest toward the SAP and his DPR scores were shown to be ineffective in supporting positive change in Jacob's academic behaviors.

Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a 14 year old African American male in the 7th grade. Jeremiah had an extensive history of referrals to the DAEP and estimated he had been referred to the site at least six times in the past. He had been referred to the DAEP for 90 days for disrupting class and use of inappropriate language. Jeremiah was very personable and polite willing to talk openly about his experiences and previous incidents of contention with school administration and officials. Jeremiah reflected on being referred to the DAEP as a more favorable event as "it helped me get my grades up and stuff. That way I know when I go back I don't have to worry about my grades.” In considering stereotype threat, Jeremiah was unable to distinguish if school administration or his peers judged him negatively because of his racial or gender identity.

However, Jeremiah did attribute stereotype threat perceptions tied to his past behaviors and reputation reflecting,

> my background, that's the reason. I think that's how they look at it. It's weird. Any little thing I do it's major to them. But if somebody did the same thing they really don't care. That's how I look at it.

He further confirmed role constriction and feelings of anxiety and worry concerning his ability to make changes to the ways in which others perceive him reporting “I know that's not me. It's like me being somebody else… and everybody's going to be like, ‘Dang!’ some of them will like it then some of them say they wish the old me.” Jeremiah’s constructions of himself as a student fall most predominately in the active disengagement (52%), and behavioral disengagement (36.4%) classification categories.

Constructs within the active disengaged classification category referenced actions and behaviors Jeremiah employs which disrupt and interfere with the learning environment and the engagement and learning of others. Jeremiah described behavioral construct patterns such as “disruptive”, “messing with others”, “using profanity and yelling in class.” Jeremiah expanded on his disengaged academic self-concept connecting behaviorally disengaged constructions such as “don’t do my work.” Jeremiah elaborated,

> I won't do any work and end up messing with somebody else that are doing their work. Then have them stop doing their work and then pretty much mess with the whole class. All eyes will be on me instead of them worried about the teacher.

Jeremiah had strong reflective skills and knew what he needed to do to be successful, and understood what his struggles were. Participation in the SAP at the DAEP was shown to have debate effectiveness in supporting positive change in Jeremiah's academic behaviors.

Jennifer. Jennifer was a 14 year old female of mixed races in the 7th grade. She was recommended for a placement of 15 days at the DAEP for fighting with another student. Jennifer had no prior history of placement at the DAEP. She denied any perception of stereotype threat due to her race, gender, or any other social identity groups. She further denied any prior perceptions about the DAEP or the potential benefits of placement. Jennifer's constructions of herself as a student fell in the affective disengagement (23.1%), behavioral engagement (35.5%), and behavioral disengagement (38.5%) classification categories.

Affective disengagement category constructs refer to Jennifer's negative feelings toward school, learning, teachers, and peers. Jennifer reflected affective disengagement, describing herself in school as someone with "a short tempter . . . if a teacher or student comes at me wrong, I'm going to come wrong back at you" and being "mean" towards others. Jennifer applied behaviorally engaged constructs to herself in reference to her positive interactions and participation at school. These constructs included being "helpful", and "follows directions." Behaviorally disengaged constructs Jennifer applied to herself indicated noncompliance, participation, and lack of effort in the classroom. These constructs include "don't listen", "get off track", and "don't pay attention much." Jennifer felt neutral about her experience at the DAEP and in the SAP. Moreover, Jennifer's participation in the SAP at the DAEP was shown to be ineffective in supporting positive academic behavioral change and effort.

Conner. Conner was a 13 year old Hispanic male in the 7th grade; he had not been to the DAEP prior to this placement. He was referred to the DAEP for 45 days for sexual harassment and assault. Conner was excited to be able to come to the DAEP and work on improving his behavior. Conner stated,

> There, a lot of the students here. They're here for a mistake they made, a major mistake but, I mean, we all gotta learn from our mistakes. And there are some students who come here who will be really bad students, and bullies, and stuff like that but trying hard again like giving them chances stuff like that, they do that here . . . So I think it is possible that I can just sit down and learn and focus and listen and actually make something of myself.

Conner denied any experiences with stereotype threat due to his race, gender, or any other social identity groups. Conner construed himself with terms that fell in all five classifications, with constructs in the active disengagement (36%) and behavioral disengagement (32%) categories being the most predominant.

Conner’s constructs in the active disengagement classification category indicated classroom disruptive behaviors which impact academic engagement and the learning environment. Examples of Conner’s active disengagement constructs include “really annoying”, “horrible”, “having outbursts”, and class clown.” During the interview Conner disclosed he had attention deficit hyperactive disorder and attributed problems with being disruptive in class due to “outbursts, yelling, saying things that I should not say, and not doing my work, stuff like that.” Behavioral disengagement construct examples Conner employed in his academic self-concept included “not doing good behaviorally or academically”, “not doing my work”, and “difficult to do work.” Conner felt supported by the teachers and staff at the DAEP and felt upset about returning to his home school. However, the SAP at the DAEP was not effective in supporting positive academic behaviors and change for Conner.

Bradley. Bradley was a 13 year old Hispanic male in the 7th grade; he was recommended to the DAEP due to making terroristic threats at his home school. This was Bradley’s third referral to the DAEP. He had most recently been referred for placement for 30 days with a review of conduct for earlier dismissal to his home school at 20 days. Bradley was very motivated to complete his referral period at the DAEP and perceived other students as having an inaccurate understanding of the DAEP and its function. Bradley stressed,

> It’s [the DAEP] not really good. It's very stricter than home school and like the other students they're real bad and act bad, but I don't. I don't think that I need to prove something to them and . . . just being myself, like I could just learn and get education, I just came here to get it over with.

Bradley denied any perception of stereotype threat due to his race, gender, or any other social identity groups. Bradley defined himself by constructs which fell into the academic engagement (36.8%) and behavioral engagement (36.8%) classification category. Affectively engaged constructs by which Bradley construed his academic self-concept included affective feelings of positivity within the scholastic domain such as “calm”, “chill”, and “want to learn.” Behaviorally engaged constructs referenced to Bradley’s positive observable participatory efforts as a student such as “work a lot”, “doing my work”, and “listening.” As Bradley elaborated on his view of himself as a student, difficulties with other students became an apparent reoccurring theme with Bradley making statements such as “if they get me mad or they not minding their business I won’t be calm and I get in trouble.” Over the course of his placement at the DAEP Bradley discussed the SAP program as being helpful in dealing with his emotions and seeing himself as capable of avoiding interpersonal conflict. However, the SAP at the DAEP was not effective in supporting positive academic behaviors and change for Bradley.

Bobby. Bobby was a 12 year old Hispanic male in the 7th grade. He was referred to the DAEP for the first time for bringing illegal substances onto his home school campus. Bobby was recommended for a placement of 15 days. He construed the DAEP as a place for “bad kids.” Initially, Bobby was very critical of himself for having been referred to the DAEP and was distressed as he felt being at the DAEP made him a bad kid, too. Bobby was very fearful of the DAEP and concerned about conflict with other students. He denied any personal stereotype or identity threat experiences due to his race or gender. Bobby further viewed himself very positively and engaged within the scholastic setting. Constructs he utilized to construe his academic self-concept fell predominately in the behaviorally engaged category (75%). Behaviorally engaged classification constructs include “learning”, “don’t talk back to the teachers”, “do my work”, “good kid”, and “helpful to other students.” Bobby had had no prior history of disciplinary action at his homeschool. However, over time at the DAEP, Bobby’s actions and behavior became incongruent with these constructs, as he acted in more behaviorally and actively disengaged patterns. The SAP at the DAP was not effective in supporting positive academic and behavior change based on DPR scores for Bobby.

Alex. Alex was a 13 year old Hispanic male in the 7th grade, admitted to the DAEP for the first time. Alex was recommended for placement at the DAEP for being under the influence of alcohol and possession of illegal substances at his home campus. Alex was referred to the DAEP for 15 days. Alex perceived students who attend the DAEP as “bad kids who like to fight” and while he told me he was nervous, he was also hopeful that he could learn to get in less trouble as a result of placement. Alex denied any stereotype threat experiences as a result of his racial or gendered identity. However, he stated he has experienced stereotype threat as a result of his troubled past and identity of a “bad kid.” Alex reflected,

> people expect me to be a lot of trouble, because of my past behavior, teachers don't wanna put up with me. And then I get mad and get in trouble and have to go to I.S.S. cuz they don’t give me a chance.

Alex construed himself with terms that fell most predominately in the active disengagement (35.7%) and behavioral disengagement (28.6%) classification categories. Constructs within the active disengaged classification category referenced actions and behaviors Alex employed which disrupt and interfere with the learning environment and the engagement and learning of others. Alex described actively disengaged construct patterns such as “disrupting the class”, “arguing with the teacher”, “class clown.” Behaviorally disengaged constructs Alex applied to himself demonstrated refusal to participate and lack of effort in the classroom. Constructs such as “don’t try”, “bad student”, and “in trouble all the time” were reflective of Behavioral disengagement. Alex recognized in order to have a more positive academic self-concept he would need to change his behavioral patterns. However, Alex did not demonstrate positive changes in academic behavior or effort as a result of participation in the SAP at the DAEP.

Bryan. Bryan was a 13 year old Hispanic male in the 7th grade admitted to the DAEP for the first time. He was recommended for placement due to issues concerning fighting and having multiple disciplinary referrals. Bryan was recommended for placement for 30 days with a review of conduct and potential dismissal to his home school at 20 days. He denied any experiences of stereotype threat as a result of his gender or racial identity. However, during our time Bryan discussed feelings of worry and anxiety about dealing with people thinking he is “bad” because he got sent to the DAEP. Bryan discussed feeling as though he learned a great deal to help him in the SAP program. However, Bryan did not demonstrate positive changes in academic behavior or effort as a result of participation in the SAP at the DAEP.

Bryan's construals of himself fell most predominately in the active disengagement (33.3%) and behavioral engagement (42.9%) classification categories.

Bryan's academic self-concept included constructs in the active disengagement classification category which indicated classroom disruptive behaviors that impact academic engagement and the learning environment. Examples of active disengagement constructs used by Bryan include "not getting along with other kids", "bad", and "talking too much." Bryan characterized himself as someone who has had occasional problems with interpersonal relationships at school. During the interview he described himself as always "getting in trouble, for like cussing, or not showing respect to teachers and students and stuff like that." Behaviorally engaged constructs referred to Bryan's positive conduct, effort, and interactions at school. Bryan's behaviorally engaged characterizations of himself included being "funny", "good", and "take my time on work."

Luke. Luke was a 12 year old Caucasian adolescent male in the 7th grade. Luke had been placed at the DAEP three times previously. Luke was most recently referred for placement for 15 days due to fighting. Luke denied stereotype experiences as a result of his gender and attributed individuals as making stereotypical judgements against him based on his race and behavioral past. Luke told me he has had to cope with people calling him "white trash." Luke stated he has attempted to combat stereotypic threat by "just go along with it, I laugh. Cuz that's the thing about bullies, you laugh, and it takes their power." Luke was indifferent about being referred to the DAEP and the potential of the alternative program to assist students in improving academic outcomes. Luke stated he did not feel like coming to the DAEP affected him and though he was skeptical of the program being able to impact change, he did mention that he found participation helpful in dealing with judgements and learning about himself. Luke was observed to have made moderate significant positive changes in academic behavior or effort as a result of participation in the SAP at the DAEP.

Luke construed himself with terms that fell most predominately in the behavioral engagement (47%), and behavioral disengagement (29%) classification categories. Behaviorally engaged constructs referenced to Luke's positive participatory efforts as a student such as "do work" and "energetic." Behavioral disengaged constructs Luke used to categorized himself as a student included "rude", "a dick", and "obnoxious." Luke spoke in great detail about being antagonistic and being trapped in a recursive pattern of problems with other students and teachers. Luke stated "if they're rude to me, which they usually are, because I'm rude to them. We just wind up not getting along."

Justine. Justine was a 12 year old Hispanic female in the 6th grade. She was recommended for placement due to issues concerning fighting and having multiple disciplinary referrals. Justine had no prior history of placement at the DAEP. Justine felt she may be able to benefit from being at the DAEP and described herself as someone who is only marginally invested in school stating "I do care but, it's just that I don't listen and I kinda wanna work on that." She was very motivated to leave the DAEP. Subsequently, she did not demonstrate positive changes in academic behavior or effort as a result of participation in the SAP at the DAEP. Justine construed herself with terms that fell most predominately in the active disengagement (32%) and behavioral disengagement (40%) classification categories.

Constructs within the active disengaged classification category referenced actions and behaviors Justine's engages in which disrupt and interfere with the learning environment. Within this context Justine characterized herself as a student as "bad", "talk a lot", and "arguing with other students.” Behaviorally disengaged constructs Justine applied to herself indicated non-disruptive actions which demonstrated lack of effort in the classroom. These constructs include “don’t listen” and “not paying attention.” Notably, while characterizing herself Justine stated,

> I’m in trouble a lot for like either laugh and talking, talking back to the teacher, or drama. Like everyone talks to me so I always wind up in drama. So, a lot of times someone is talking to me and I’m not paying attention to the teacher, or I’m doing something else.

Ashley. Ashley was a 12 year old female of mixed races in the 6th grade. She was recommended for placement due to issues concerning having received multiple disciplinary referrals from her home school. Ashley had no prior history of placement at the DAEP and perceived the DAEP to be a place for “bad kids” she therefore “expected there to be way more fights”, and to possibly “get picked on” by other students. Ashley denied experiencing stereotype threat due to race or gender and endorsed having experienced stereotype threat as a result of past delinquent behaviors. Ashley described the shadow being stereotyped as a “bad kid” has had on her thusly,

> . . . people have seen me like the bad girl, disrespectful, mean, no all there yet and I don't want them to see me like that. I was good. I've been good but even when I try and be good they still just treat me like I’m doing something wrong. They need to think of me as what I'm going through. Instead of just thinking I'm bad and stuff like that.

Ashley was recommended for placement for 30 days with a review of conduct and potential earlier dismissal to her home school in 20 days. Ashley construed herself with terms that fell most predominately in the behavioral engagement (61.5%) classification category.

Constructs within the active disengaged classification category referenced actions and behaviors Ashley engages in which disrupt and interfere with the learning environment and the engagement of herself and others. Within this context Ashley characterized herself as someone who is “always in arguments”, “disrespectful” and “funny.” Ashley elaborated on these constructs and her disengagement in school reflecting,

> like, when they tell me to do something, I don't want to do it, so I don't do it and I just ignore them, and then I walk out of class and then other times I'm being funny, like goofing and doing something bad so the teacher calls on me and my friends start laughing.

Ashley was observed to have made moderately significant positive changes in academic behavior or effort as a result of participation in the SAP at the DAEP.

Rodger. Rodger was an 11 year old Hispanic male admitted to the DAEP for the first time. He was recommended for placement of 15 days due to issues concerning fighting and having multiple disciplinary referrals. Rodger denied perceptions of stereotype threat as a result of his sex or gender. Rodger construed himself with terms that fell most predominately in the behavioral disengagement (40%) and active disengagement (33.3%).

Behaviorally disengaged constructs Rodger applied to himself indicated disobedience, and lack of effort and participation in the classroom. These constructs include “chooses not to work”, “distracted easily”, and “give up when I don’t get it.” Constructs within the active disengaged classification category referenced actions and behaviors Rodger’s employs which disrupt and interfere with the learning environment. Within this context, Rodger characterized himself as “acting up”, “bad”, and “talking.” Rodger was hopeful he could begin to make changes in his behavior and his academic self-concept as a result of placement at the DAEP. His attitudes toward the SAP in the DAEP were neutral. Rodger did not demonstrate positive changes in academic behavior or effort as a result of participation in the SAP at the DAEP.

George. George was an 11 year old Hispanic male in the 6th grade committed to 15 days at the DAEP. He was recommended for placement due to issues concerning having received multiple disciplinary referrals from his home school. George had an extensive history of placement at the DAEP, having been referred there five times in the past. George felt indifferent towards having to attend the DAEP and summarized the experience thusly,

> [DAEP] is where all the kids come for getting in trouble and you just get sent here. And it’s basically, it's like [the DAEP] like they took away some of your privileges, kind of. But its ok cuz like here they'll talk to you, sit down and try to give you like another chance and just tell you like you've done wrong and not to do it again.

George construed himself with terms that fell most predominately in the behavioral engagement (36%) and active disengagement (28%) classification categories. Behaviorally engaged constructs George used to characterize himself indicated compliance, participation, and effort in the classroom. These constructs include “being chill”, “paying attention”, and “listening in class.” George characterizations of behaviorally engaged and actively disengaged were representative of problems he has with peers and teachers at school. George expressed,

> whenever I'm doing work and somebody just start talking, and like I said, like somebody they'll just tell you something for no reason. Trying to start something. You know, like you are not even paying attention to them, you're doing your work, and then they tell you something. You try not to think about it, but you're there like, "should you tell them something?" And that’s why I keep getting in trouble because the other person tried to start something and I get mad and wind up just yelling at everyone.

Constructs within the active disengaged classification category therefore referenced George’s actions and behaviors that interrupt and interfere with the education process and engagement for himself and others. These constructs included “talk back”, “loud”, and “disruptive.” George expressed to me and the counseling intern he felt positive about his experience in the DAEP and the SAP. George was observed to have made significant positive changes in academic behavior and effort as a result of participation in the SAP at the DAEP.

Alfredo. Alfredo was an 11 year old Hispanic male in the 6th grade committed to 15 days at the DAEP. He was recommended for placement due to issues concerning having received multiple disciplinary referrals from his home school. Alfredo had no prior history of placement at the DAEP and was shocked to learn he would be referred to the alternative program. Alfredo denied any experiences with stereotype threat as a result of his gender or racial identity. Alfredo construed himself with terms that fell most predominately in the behavioral engagement (71%) classification categories. Behaviorally engaged constructs by which Alfredo construed his academic self-concept included positive conduct, effort, and interactions at school and included constructs such as “paying attention”, “good behavior”, and “ask for help when I need it.” Patterns of positive engagement were further represented in Alfredo’s DPR scores which contributed to the program not having any demonstrably effects.

Marie. Marie was a 12 year old Hispanic female in the 6th grade committed to 30 days at the DAEP. She was recommended for placement due to making terroristic threats toward another student, bullying, and fighting by her home school. Marie had no prior history of placement at the DAEP. Marie felt positively about being referred to the DAEP as she had several friends at the alternative program and had heard it was “better than regular school because you can improve your grades.” Marie denied any experiences of stereotype threat due to her race, gender, or other social identity. Marie construed herself with terms that fell most predominately in the active disengagement (64%) classification category.

Constructs within the active disengaged classification category referenced actions and behaviors Marie employs which disrupt and interfere with the learning environment and the engagement and learning of others. Marie described behavioral construct patterns such as “talkative”, “loud”, and “laughing 24/7.” Marie elaborated on actively disengaged constructs stating “like teachers and my friends all tell me I’m loud, and teachers they're always telling me to be quiet. What they say is that they could hear me from across the room or whatever.” Marie was neutral towards the SAP and did not demonstrate positive changes in academic behavior or effort as a result of participation in the SAP at the DAEP.

Sally. Sally was quiet and shy 11 year old Hispanic female in the 6th grade committed to 45 days at the DAEP. She was recommended for placement for fighting at her home school. Sally had no prior history of placement at the DAEP. She denied any perception of stereotype threat due to her racial, gender, or other social identity group. Sally construed herself with terms that fell most predominately in the behavioral disengagement (75%) classification category. Behaviorally disengaged constructs she applied to herself were indicative of refusal to participate and lack of effort in the classroom. Constructs by which Sally characterized herself included “not doing work”, “not paying attention”, and “doesn’t try.” Sally was observed to have made moderately significant positive changes in academic behavior and effort as a result of participation in the SAP at the DAEP.

Fred. Fred was an 11 year old Hispanic male in the 6th grade committed to 15 days at the DAEP. He was recommended for placement for fighting at his home school. He had no prior history of placement at the DAEP or any other disciplinary actions. When asked about the DAEP Fred stated,

> I know that it was like a school that was different from other schools. I want to say like I.S.S. or like that but I've never been in I.S.S either. I expected it to be like, you never talk, you're not allowed to. Just basically you just sit there and do your work.

Fred construed himself with terms that fell in the behavioral engagement (64.3%) classification category. Behaviorally engaged constructs by which Fred construed his academic self-concept referenced positive conduct, effort, and interactions at school and included constructs such "good grades", "helpful", and "count on person." At his home school Fred mentioned he was in Pre-Advance Placement courses and "was a risk taker in a good way. I take the risks that are good, like risk that will help out." Consistent with his constructions falling most predominately in the behaviorally engaged classification category and lack of problematic school conduct, Fred received high marks in academic behavior throughout his tenure at the DAEP. Thus he did not demonstrate positive changes in academic behavior or effort as a result of participation in the SAP at the DAEP.

Lee. Lee was an 11 year old Hispanic male in the 6th grade. He was committed for placement at the DAEP until the end of the school year for assault with a deadly weapon. He had no prior history of placement at the DAEP. Lee perceived the DAEP to be a place for "bad kids" who "fight a lot, argue a lot, yell at teachers a lot, and do stuff like that" a characterization he did not apply to himself. Lee denied any perception of stereotype threat due to his race or gender and told me "I don't really think about that kind of stuff. I think positively. I like to think of myself positive. I have a lot of self-confidence."

Lee construed himself with terms that fell in the behavioral disengagement (42%) and affective engagement (33%) classification categories. Affectively engaged constructs by which Lee construed his academic self-concept included feelings of positivity within the scholastic domain such as “care about my work”, “love to read”, and “caring toward friends.” Behaviorally disengaged constructs Lee applied to himself were indicative of refusal to participate and lack of effort in the classroom. These constructs included “act dumb”, “slacker”, and “don’t do my work.” Lee said of himself, “I will make zeroes because I'm a slacker. I don't like doing my homework. I mean, I don't like to label myself as a slacker, but my homework is just one of those things that you don't wanna do.” Lee did not demonstrate positive changes in academic behavior or effort as a result of participation in the SAP at the DAEP. However, Lee noted to myself and the counseling intern he felt the SAP was helpful in motivating him to work harder.

Maxine. Maxine was an 11 year old Hispanic female in the 6th grade committed to 20 days at the DAEP. Maxine was recommended for placement at the DAEP for assault with a deadly weapon. This placement would be her first at the DAEP. Maxine reported feeling positively about the DAEP because it would be a smaller school. Maxine construed herself with terms that fell most predominately in the behavioral engagement (27%) and behavioral disengagement (27%) classification categories. Behaviorally engaged constructs by which Maxine construed her academic self-concept referenced positive conduct, effort, and interactions at school and included constructs such “getting good grades”, “quiet”, and “volunteer to answer questions.” Behaviorally disengaged constructs Maxine applied to herself were indicative of lack of effort in the classroom. Within this context, Maxine characterized herself as a student who is “sleeping”, “drawing”, and “not interested” in some of her studies. Maxine indicated she enjoyed the SAP however, she did not demonstrate positive changes in academic behavior or effort as a result of participation in the SAP at the DAEP.

Self-Concept Profile for DAEP Students. DAEP students in this investigation were characterized by a mix of engaged and disengaged actions and emotions within the learning environment (see Table 6). DAEP students rarely utilized affective descriptors in their constructions, characterizing themselves primarily in terms of behaviors and actions. These students largely construed themselves as behaviorally engaged (29.3%) and making attempts toward demonstrating effort, participation, and compliance within the learning environment. These efforts, DAEP students described as being undercut and interrupted by instances of active disengagement and behavioral disengagement. 27% of DAEP students' constructs fell into the actively disengaged classification scheme and 24.3% into the behavioral disengagement category. A final profile of DAEP student academic self-concept profiles is revealed by the median percentage of individual construct classifications.

Table 6

Group Academic Self-Concept Profile

Classification		**Cumulative Percentage**	**Percentage of Medium**
Adaptive Engaged Functioning	Affective Engagement	49 (10.4%)	5%
	Behavioral Engagement	129 (29.3%)	23%
Maladaptive Disengaged Functioning	Active Disengagement	119 (27%)	22%
	Behavioral Disengagement	107 (24.3%)	9%
	Affective Disengagement	40 (9.1%)	29%

Research Question 5: Themes.

Research question five pertained to programmatic factors of the SAP students found most meaningful within the DAEP setting. The principal researcher followed a six-phase model to identify, generate, organize, and define themes and subthemes (Braun & Clark, 2006). The following section is organized around the three core themes and sub-themes derived from the interview data. The three themes include subjective experience of the Self-Affirmation Program, subjective experience of the disciplinary alternative education program, and being on track.

Table 7, provides an organized representation of each theme and the associated subthemes. The first theme was subjective experience of the SAP and its four sub-themes which include the activities, feeling better about myself, dealing with judgment, and the researcher. The second theme was subjective experience of the DAEP and its two sub-themes which include when I got here and better here. The final theme was changes and getting on track.

Table 7

Intervention Themes

Themes	**Subthemes**
Subjective Experience of the SAP	The researcher Dealing with judging Feeling better about myself Activities
Subjective Experience of DAEP	When I got here Better here [at DAEP]
Changes and getting on track	

Subjective experiences of the SAP. This theme reflects participants' experiences of the SAP and was a major theme identified in the data. Participant described notable aspects of the programs and this theme included data related to dealing with others judging (combating stereotype threat), feeling better about myself (self-system impacts), program activities, and the researcher.

Feeling better about myself. This theme reflects participants' feelings toward participating in the SAP. Each participant was invited by the counseling intern to give their impression on what it was like to be in the program. Twenty-one of the participants iterated some derivative of the program being “fun”, “interesting”, “helpful”, and affecting their views of themselves. Bobby stated being in the SAP was “really fun and really helped me a lot cuz it was like I got to take a break from just thinking about what I did to get here and focus on good stuff.” Bryan espoused the view that the SAP had “affected me in good ways by teaching me things I can think about to focus on the positive.” This theme is underscored by participants’ desire to be seen and recognized for favorable characteristics. Students at the DAEP described threated identities at being perceived as “bad” (n = 15). Participants indicated the SAP and the DAEP provide them with a boast in confidence and esteem as they were recognized for their uniqueness and individuality. Christine described this saying “people thought we were bad and she helped us about our confidence.” Heather felt the SAP helped her to “think more positive about myself and got me to believing in myself more”, likewise, Danielle stated the program “made me feel better about myself.” Danielle expressed the opinion the SAP could “really help people with low self-esteem, because you get to focus on good things about yourself and not just what you did wrong.” In a similar vein, Alex discussed the SAP as helping him to recognize:

> I made a bad choice, so this is my consequence [being at the DAEP], but don’t mean I’m bad. She really helped me to see I still can be good at school and it’s not always like I am bad at school, I just sometimes get stuck.

Dealing with judging (combating stereotype threat). For the purposes of this study, dealing with judging refers to participants experiences of stereotype threat and the strategies they gathered from the SAP to combat stereotypic threat. Participants were primarily impressed with strategies which deemphasized the threatened identity and externalizing the threat. This theme was vocalized especially strongly by Marie, Jeremiah, Alfredo, Christine, Fred, Bryan, Bobby, and Heather, as they each discussed strategies to strengthen their academic self-identity when they perceive themselves to be judged negatively by others. George summarized the SAP as helping him learn to:

> channeling your mind. Teachers at my homeschool might think of my badly because of some of the stuff I've done, but I know better what to do know. Like when they assume something, I gotta try not to react to that and like channel my mind to stay focused. And if a teacher starts assuming something about me I can just tell them so that they won't be assuming.

Heather found empowerment in "telling myself I'm not mean, I'm a nice person, I'm a good hearted person." Fred further stressed when it comes to labels and judgements "as long as you know you're not that person you can still do great things."

Bryan, Alex, Heather, Alex, Fred, Alfredo, Jeremiah and Marie iterated similar messages of needing to be selective about which messages and perceptions they react to and apply to their academic self-concept. When it comes to labels and stereotypes Bryan stated you have to "pick out what's important" and Alex reported needing to "focus on what we want to be or where we want to go, not what other people say", while emphasized the importance of "watching my thoughts and actions so I stay focused on stuff I think about me and not what other people think." Christine expressed this point as the importance of "knowing that's not who we really are, it's just what they say we are" is crucial in rejecting stereotypes and ascription of labels. Heather articulated the directive:

> Remember how I want people to see me and focus on that. I want my friends, my teachers, and my mom and dad to think better about me so I want to change to be what I want people to think of me, not judging me. Because it's just putting a label on you and it doesn't really describe who you are.

In her interview, Marie iterated a similar message of not blindly applying the labels and stereotype others assign to you stating “what people label you as that’s not really who you are.” Alfredo endorsed the statement saying “if people tell you mean comments or judge you for things like coming here or getting in trouble, you can ignore the comments.” Maxine’s reflected,

> I like when she taught us that we don't have to live up to people's predictions about us. That just because people put a label on me you don't have to live up to that label. It kind of made me feel happy because lots of people say I'm gonna be like my mom. I'd say I'm more motivated to live up to my own goals than other peoples’ now.

The researcher. This subtheme described a tendency of participants to distinguish qualities held by the principal researcher and from the SAP. Data revealed for several participants, the SAP was impactful because of how I delivered the guidance curriculum and my therapeutic presence and approach. Participants (*n* = 11) did not interpret the SAP as a curriculum guidance or systemic intervention and instead focused on how I as the researcher impacted them. These participants attributed helpfulness to me and not to the program specifically. During their post intervention interviews, for example, many participants were prompted and asked by the counseling intern if they remembered me because they could not recall the proper name of the self-affirmation program. Fred, for example, reflected that I,

> was very helpful. It's like it was therapy. It was like . . . she was obviously trying to do is steer you into the right direction, which it was very helpful because she would, how does this make you feel? She was warning you of what can happen.

Bradley further appreciated my therapeutic background and patience as being impactful as he stated “She’ll make us write down stuff that bothered us and everything and she would teach us how we could use it at different times. She’s very good at explaining stuff.” Similarly, Christine reflected,

> She took the time to know each and every one of the kids, actually taught us, and not just pushed us of because we’re supposed to be bad kids. She saw more of us and you could tell she wanted us to think better about ourselves too.

Activities. This subtheme gave voice to information about participants’ perceptions of the guidance curriculum and self-affirmation interventions, including the exercises they found especially enjoyable and those they did not particularly enjoy. Some participants voiced disaffection towards the SAP, specifically the written reflection activities, Sarah noted “we just filled a lot of papers out. I don't like that . . . it was too much things, because some ask the same question, like the same question.” Jacob also voiced disinterest in the program stating “nothing was really helpful, it was just work.” Danielle also voiced indifference toward the program as she stated “I don’t think I’m on the same thinking level as the other kids, so some of the stuff wasn’t for me.” Conner and Luke held complaints about the timing of the program, as it occasionally meant a disruption to classroom activities like watching movies. Luke expressed,

> I mean I liked the program but sometimes I didn't really care cuz she kept coming in and like cuz we were watching a movie. . . Like it was still good but sometimes I just wanted to finish the movie.

When considering activities of the SAP that were enjoyable and helpful many student participants ($n = 15$) discussed learning about self-fulfilling prophesies and the expressive activities. Alfred and Maxine were enticed by activities were they got to express their creative sides. Alfredo specifically reflected “we drawed and colored most of the time and I liked that” and Maxine echoed a similar statement elaborating,

> I want to go to art school, so I liked the flipbook activity. We got to draw our feelings and how we people see us and then on the inside I drew things to help me keep motivated and focused.

Value bingo was also well received by participants (*n = 11*). Bryan noted he enjoyed “the values game, like we picked out numbers and talked about how I can pick out my future, and not let someone else tell me how I’m gonna be.” Bradley also reflected back on how it was “fun to talk about values and stuff like our good values, that was one of the good ones” when reflecting on the SAP. Several participants (*n = 13*) additionally discussed how helpful it was to learn about mechanisms of self-fulfilling prophesies. Fred stated,

> we talked about prophecies, and she was just like, how weird prophecies can do this or that if you believe them and they can make you see stuff that might not be true but you have a prophesy so you think it’s true and that was a really helpful.

Subjective experiences of the DAEP. This theme has to do with perceptions about the DAEP. The participants discussed the DAEP expectations and beliefs they held about alternative program, comparisons with their home schools, the teachers, and perceptions of fit.

When I got here. This subtheme gave voice to participants’ initial expectations and perceptions of the DAEP. Participants were largely scared or worried about attending the DAEP because of the presumptions they held about “bad kids.” Participant utilized the phrase bad kid to describe themselves in the academic domain. The bad kid identity was a spoiled identity which contributed to students’ experiences at the DAEP. For example, three participants felt they did not belong at the DAEP because they were not “bad kids” like other students. Although Jennifer identified herself as a “bad kid” when it came to making comparisons of herself against other students she stated “I don’t belong here because I see the way kids act.” For other participants, the DAEP being “a place for bad kids” transformed the alternative program into a place to be feared and approached with caution. Bobby stated he thought it was going to be “kind of scary because there’s a lot of people who fight there.” This sentiment was affirmed by Jacob who said he expected it to be “mostly more dangerous, like more fights, and more conflicts” and Fred who “expected it to be scary, like really bad, and horrible like the worse place, but it's been all right, the weirdest thing about being here is search.” Participants uniformly mentioned “search” while describing their perceptions of the DAEP. Search is a process that occurs in the morning wherein students are examined and scanned by metal detectors for contraband and other banned substances. Search contributed to several participants likening the DAEP to “being like prison.” Sally notably made this comparison saying “it feels like prison, especially during search. But it feels like prison because there’s cops and stuff too, you have less choices and stuff, you can’t even pick out foods during lunch like at regular schools. You just have less choices here.”

Better here [at DAEP]. Several students indicated they “liked it better” at the DAEP than their home campuses (*n* = 18). Participants expressed feelings and statements of positivity toward the DAEP such as “feel better at this school”, “it’s better than my home school, and “don’t like my home school.” Students like Bradley reflected the DAEP is “good for you to learn, teach you right and what’s wrong that’s what it’s good for.” Conner iterated a similar statement: “it’s more stricter here and people are here to help you learn to act differently so you can go back to your home school and be good.” Alex noted, “it’s good here cuz they hold you to a higher standard.” All the participants discussed the “smaller classes” and “getting better grades” as being significant contributor to the DAEP being “better.” Participants (*n = 13*) discussed the teachers at the DAEP as being impactful to a positive experience at the DAEP. Lee specified the DAEP was “better than my homeschool because of the teachers.” George noted, "teachers at regular school they don't work with you or nothing, but here since the classes are small teachers take time with you. Like I get along better with teachers here because they actually help you and give you a chance to work with you." Alex also mentioned appreciating the DAEP and having "teachers pay more attention to you." Fred described his experience with teachers in the DAEP by saying, "it's easier here because you always have teachers helping you out with stuff, teachers are very nice they make me feel comfortable here." Alfredo made a similar point when he said, "the work feels easier because you get so much help, you don't got to overthink the work here like at home school."

Participants additionally discussed perceiving having better relationships with teachers at the DAEP (*n* = 7). Sarah stated,

> Some of the teachers at my regular school are mean like they get rude to you. They'll say something to you and then just start yelling at you before you get a chance to do anything they asked, that's why I'm here. But the teachers at here they're not like that, they're more nice and not rude and I don't get into as many arguments with them because they don't just yell at you for no reason.

Several other participants (*n* = 7), reported having a better relationship with teachers and confrontations with teachers contributing to their view of the DAEP being better than their homeschool. In addition to describing a pattern of less interpersonal conflict with teachers, participants (*n* = 6) also described the DAEP as being "better because there is less drama," as indicated by Justine.

For Marie, Justine, Heather, Sally, Christine, and Jennifer, "drama" at their home schools with other students was a pervasive issue affecting the quality of their engagement and disengaged interactions with the academic domain. Christine said,

> When I go back to my home school people are going to WANT to have drama. I'll probably come back here there's a lot of drama at my home school but here it's not as much of a problem that's why I like it better.

Coincidently, school officials at the DAEP promote a message of "minding your own business" that many of the participants described as having adopted, which improved their ability to be successful at the DAEP. Bobby, Fred, and Bryan noted "it's really good here if you just mind your own business", "you can be chill here because you just mind your own business", and "as long as you mind your own business its super easy and you can just focus on getting good grades."

Changing and getting on track. As a result of being in the DAEP and the SAP, participants discussed a number of positive effects including improved behaviors and school functioning. All of the participants reported having changed to some degree as a result of their experience with the SAP and DAEP. Justine and other participants discussed experiences at the DAEP like the SAP "kept me on track" and reflected on "attitude changes" (*n* = 7), changes in "behavior" (*n* = 17), and "thinking differently" (*n* = 4). Sally stated "at my old school I constantly fought and argued with my teacher but being here I learned to just be more focused." Jennifer discussed attitude and behavioral changes saying "since I came here, I follow direction better and listen well, and not get into any more fights or anything, my whole attitude has changed with teachers." Heather similarly discussed changes in her behavior and attitude stating "I'm just chilling, don't get in fights, don't really argue with the teacher. Not once been in I.S.S. or been suspended or nothing." Bobby supported having made behavioral changes as a result of enrollment in the DAEP and SAP. Bobby reflected,

> Everything is helpful for me, just about thinking positively and watching my thoughts. Like if you want to be something just put your mind to it and you'd be successful but you have to make sure you stay changed to be whatever it is you are going to be and you can't get to believing what other people say about you.

Heather further stated the DAEP and SAP allowed her to "think more positive about myself. Like here I can do really well and I know it, and like coming here and listening to her really got me to thinking about how I can be like a good person." Marie stated being at the DAEP and in the SAP program helped her to be "more focused and keep trying, and not give up because you did bad or because somebody labels you as something, cuz that's not really what you are and only you get to decide who you are." Alex expressed the experience of the SAP and DAEP encouraged him to think more he stated "I wasn't really thinking at all about things, now I'm thinking about my future and how I want to be and how I want to live." Jeremiah attributed his behavioral improvements at the DAEP to the DPR and the relationship the alternative program staff have developed with his mother. He reported "I know I have to do good here, cuz either she's gonna ask for my DPR or they gonna show her, but either way Ima be in trouble if I don't change my behavior and do good."

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The personal beliefs students hold about their academic competence (attitudes, feelings, and perception of ability) are central to positive youth development and overall self-concept (Brown, Kanny, & Johnson, 2013; Lent, Brown, & Gore, 1997; Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach & Rosenberg, 1995). The possession of self-affirming academic beliefs are essential to motivation and investment in academic achievement (Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach & Rosenberg, 1995). Students with maladaptive academic self-concept beliefs and who have internalized stereotyped messages of performance face vulnerabilities in the academic domain. These students may acquire decreased self-esteem and self-efficacy beliefs, alter their goal related behaviors and aspirations, or disengage from academic activities (Cohen & Garcia, 2008; Corrigan, Larson, Ruesch & 2009). Disciplinary alternative education programs (DAEP) are formative and therapeutic environments wherein students address academic, emotional, and behavioral issues are ideal settings for intervention (Hosley, 2003; Geronimo, 2011; Mathur & Nelson, 2013; Tsang, 2004). Students attending DAEPs are likely to face a number of ongoing inter and intrapersonal stressors related to maintaining a positive academic self-concept in the face of stereotype threat which may interfere with academic performance (Farrally & Daniels, 2014; McNulty & Roseboro, 2009; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Researchers have questioned the ways in which the needs of students at DAEPs are met (Brown et al., 2013; Darling & Price, 2004; de la Ossa, 2005; Farrally & Daniels, 2014; McNulty & Roseboro, 2009). Quantitative studies have focused on standardizing practical definitions, identifying program policies, and identifying programmatic trends (see Aron, 2006; Mitchell et al., 2011; Cox, 1999; Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009). Qualitative investigations, on the other hand, have focused on summarizing policy, curriculum, and the school milieu of DAEPs from the perspective of teachers, parents, administrators (Hoge & Rubinstein-Avila, 2014; Lehr & Lange, 2003) and high school students (Brown et al., 2013; Darling & Price 2004; de la Ossa, 2005; Loutzenheiser, 2002). Within the previous research, there had been a dearth of in-depth investigations which jointly explored student outcomes and quantitative results with detailed self-reported perspectives provided by middle-school adolescent students (Farrally & Daniels, 2014; McNulty & Roseboro, 2009).

In this investigation, middle-school students (*n* = 23) at a DAEP were selected using non-probabilistic and purposeful sampling methods to participate in a four session strength-based program. This program was based on self-affirmation interventions and was developed to combat stereotype threat effects, increase student academic engagement and academic behaviors (see Appendix C). This investigation sought to combat stereotype threat effects in the educational domain and improve student academic self-concept through the introduction of a self-affirmation intervention. The results of this investigation were in general consistent with empirical literature about alternative education programs, stereotype threat intervention, and self-affirmation and provide information toward future study. Findings from qualitative and quantitative data were summarized in regard to the research questions of the current study and supported by prior research.

Academic Identity Threat Perceptions

Students who internalize stereotyped messages and are exposed to stereotype threat are vulnerable to decreased self-esteem and self-efficacy beliefs in the academic domain and subsequently may alter goal related behaviors (Corrigan, Larson, Ruesch & 2009). This investigation sought to combat stereotype threat effects in the educational domain and reduce student perception of academic identity threat through the introduction of a self-affirmation intervention. Quantitative and qualitative data from this investigation provided information regarding DAEP students' perception of academic identity threat when exposed to a self-affirmation program. Quantitative data from this study indicated an increase in students' perceptions of academic self-concept threat. Paired samples *t*-tests revealed an increase in mean scores for the personal failure ($t(22) = -4.31$, $p \leq .01$), social threat ($t(22) = -4.60$, $p \leq .01$), and control belief ($t(22) = -5.79$, $p \leq .01$) subscales.

Following exposure to the self-affirmation intervention, students reported an increase in thoughts of personal failure and social threat. These results indicate reductions in general self-concept at school and an increase in students' stigma consciousness. This finding was particularly unexpected, as SAP intervention and DAEP RTI implantation were expected to assist students reducing vulnerability to academic identity threat. This finding is consistent with prior research, wherein ironic effects are initiated by calling attention to an individual's stigmatized status (Bigler, Jones, & Lobliner, 1997; Pinel, 1999). As students participated in the SAP, they were tasked with reflecting on their academic identity, the manner in which others perceive them, and patterns of behavior and thoughts which mitigate these factors. Participant awareness of stigma and stereotype threat thereby increased as students confronted their identities and stereotype labels. Bigler, Jones, and Lobiner (1997) observed children's adeptness, recognition, and tendency to categorize themselves and others according to stereotyped identities increased as educators make those differences salient. The results of this study were further consistent with the results of Cadinu, Mass, Rosabianca, and Kiesner (2005). These researchers similarly found women under stereotype threat conditions reported increased negative thoughts of self-doubt that were mediated by a stereotype threat manipulation experiment (Cadinu et al., 2005).

Students’ increased awareness of the intervention can impact results (Cohen et al., 2009; Yeagar & Walton, 2011). Cohen and colleagues (2009) noted informing participants of the purpose of a value affirmation exercise and making direct persuasive appeals regarding social-psychological interventions can reduce their effectiveness. “Nevertheless, when different interventions target different psychological barriers to learning, combining interventions may produce additive effects” (Yeagar & Walton, 2011, p. 288). This study was conducted in a therapeutic and formative setting designed to address and intervene with academically at risk students. While students were made aware of the intervention’s purpose, they were additionally exposed to multiple lessons which combat stereotype effect. Researchers have additionally promoted the idea that DAEP settings in their attempt to correct student maladaptive behaviors make student deviant and stereotyped identities more salient (McNulty & Roseboro, 2008; Farrally & Daniels, 2014). Likewise, the SAP increased students’ awareness and vulnerability to their stereotyped identities in its attempt to combat academic identity threat. Yeagar and Walton (2011) summarize social-psychological interventions as supporting change for students through “(a) targeting students’ experience in school from the students’ perspective and (b) deploying powerful yet stealthy persuasive tactics to deliver the treatment message effectively without generating problematic side effects, such as stigmatizing recipients” (p. 288).

Quantitative results also revealed an increase in students’ expectations of ability to control academic outcomes following participation in the SAP. This finding was consistent with findings of prior research (Cohen et al., 2009; Schmeichel & Vohs, 2009). Researchers have supported self-affirmation as bolstering control (Cohen, Aronson, & Steele, 2000; Cohen et al., 2009; Schmeichel & Vohs, 2009). Schmeichel and Vohs (2009) proposed self-affirmation assist in improving control by “moving mental construal to a higher level” (p. 776). Affirmation interventions, researchers indicate, are effective in breaking the recursive cycle of psychological threat. Cohen and colleagues (2009) suggested that affirmation interventions increase control perceptions by assisting individuals to uncouple predictive beliefs about their current performance abilities from prior or stereotyped performance opinions. Students faced with repetitive disciplinary action and failed school interactions may lose confidence in their ability to perform well in academic settings. These students may subsequently feel frustrated, hopeless, disengage, and devalue academic outcomes as a result. Investigations on the impact of value affirmations have supported the exercise as breaking this recursive pattern of threat through enabling participants under stereotype threat conditions to forgo the impulsive predisposition to defend themselves from psychological threat (Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Masters, 2006; Critcher & Dunning, 2015; McQueen & Klein, 2006; Sherman & Hartson, 2011). The ability to access personal resources, to reduce defensive and self-protective reactions, and to expand construction of events are key processes in self-affirmations valuable effects on control (Schmeichel & Vohs, 2009). Although brief, the SAP produced interesting effects on students' experience of academic self-concept threat.

Qualitative data provided inconclusive connection and support for quantitative results. Student scores on the control belief subscale, additionally, alluded to students' reports of increased confidence in controlling academic outcomes and increased feelings of confidence in their ability to "stay focused" and "avoiding reacting" to stereotype and identity threatening situations.

Academic Engagement and Disaffection

Alternative education programs are designed to serve students labeled at-risk (Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009). At risk status typically references academic disengaged students who are liable for academic failure, school drop out, and contact with the juvenile justice system (NCLB, 2002, § 1432). It is therefore a mission of DAEPs to intervene and encourage student engaged behaviors and actions within the classroom. However, the social psychological dilemma of stereotype threat potentially obstructs this goal. This notion reflects, in situations where a stereotype about ability or performance is relevant (e.g. intervention and placement at a DAEP), individuals contend with cognitive and emotional burdens of anxiety, stress, and disengagement (Aronson et al., 1995; Aronson et al., 1999; Steele, 197; Steele & Aronson, 1995). This investigation, therefore, aimed to address this process of disengagement through the implementation of a SAP. This study reported statistically significant changes in student reports of behavioral disengagement ($t(22)$ 3.25, $p \leq .01$), a component of academic engagement, following participation in the SAP. The SAP was found to have no significant impact on other components of academic engagement, affective engagement ($t(22) = -1.33$, $p = 0.20$), affective disengagement ($t(22) = 1.45$, $p = 0.16$), behavioral engagement ($t(22) = -0.41$, $p = 0.69$), or active disengagement ($t(22) = 0.31$, $p = 0.78$).

This finding is supported by theoretical and practical literature on the effects of self-affirmation on engagement. Psychometricians contend students' thoughts about intelligence have powerful effects on their academic engagement and ensuing academic achievement (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007; Dweck, 1999; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Students with constricted and fixed views of their intellectual abilities show preferences for "performance goals" and tasks which will verify they are smart and capable (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). These students may respond by disengaging, or with disaffection, when presented with challenging tasks (Dweck, 1999). Behavioral disengagement, which is marked by negative conduct, reduced effort, and lack of participation, was found to decrease in this study. Interestingly, this was the only measure of change in academic engagement reported by participants in this investigation. However, this intervention was not found to impact participants’ feelings toward school and learning, positive effort and conduct, or disruptive behaviors. These results did not support the work of Aronson, Fried, and Good (2002) who found African American and White students encouraged to interpret intelligence as flexible reported increased affective engagement, behavioral engagement, and higher grade point averages.

Academic Behavior

Self-affirmation interventions have been implicated in eliciting positive academic behavioral change in students by enhancing their levels of control (Inzlicht, McKay, & Aronson 2006; Schmeichel & Vohs, 2009; Schmidt & Canela, 2015). However, changes in academic behavior were poorly reflected by the Daily Progress Report (DPR) scores across treatment phases as observed and reported by teachers. This may be due in part to DAEP teachers advanced knowledge and experience in reducing disciplinary problems through effective classroom management, de-escalation, and redirection skills and reduced classroom sizes (Cortez & Cortez, 2009). Teachers indicated participants generally completed daily assignments, participated in class as required, followed class procedures and expectations, and used appropriate classroom behavior and/or language throughout their placement at the DAEP and during data collection phases, lending toward low variability on DPR scores. The DPR as a measurement for tracking treatment effects and adolescent academic behavioral change are potentially poorly aligned. Furthermore, the researcher was unable to identify factors contributing to academic behavioral change of participants. Review of student characteristics, self-construals, and other study constructs revealed no discernable patterns.

Academic Self-Concept

This study sought to provide a profile of academic self-concept for DAEP students. Qualitative and quantitative data collected from students ages 11 to 15 provided a focal point through which to understand this population. Participants of this study were referred for a variety of reasons. Similar to characterizations of DAEP and at-risk adolescent reported within the literature, participants were recommended to the alternative education program due to academic concerns, conduct problems, interpersonal difficulties, aggressive behaviors, and experiences of repeated disciplinary action (Farrally & Daniels, 2014; Johnson et al., 2013; Nelson & Eckstein, 2008). Participants of this study were referred for a variety of concerns including assault, possession of controlled substances, fighting, multiple referrals, making terroristic threats, and sexual harassment. Researchers have noted minority students and males in particular are more likely to be referred for placement at DAEP (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Pang & Foley, 2006; Nelson & Eckstein, 2008; Simonsen & Sugai, 2013; Tobin & Sprague, 2002). The majority of participants in this study held minority status (Hispanic, $n = 17$). Twelve participants in this study were males.

Adolescent participant voices were further provided to add to the descriptions and characterizations of DAEP students. Participants were found to construct their academic self-concept predominately through maladaptive terms of negative social identities. Descriptions of passive, active, and affective behavioral disengagement dominated many of the participants' academic self-concept. Participants regularly imparted being a “bad kid” as a central academic identity self-concept construction through which they experienced identity threat (Cohen & Garcia, 2008). “Bad kid” identities were elaborated upon and explained by students as “not listening”, “arguing with the teacher”, “don’t try”, “give up”, and “disruptive.” This finding was consistent with Sagor (2006) and McNulty and Roseboro (2009), who argued that alternative education school students maintain negative social identities which impede school engagement.

Participants of this study most commonly supported experiences of stereotype threat, not for their minority status or gendered identities, but for their at-risk status (e.g., being a “bad kid”). This finding may be due in part to the identity development stages and status of adolescent participants. Erikson argued adolescents face crisis as they explore and create a more complete identity (Miller, 2002). Developing adolescents must negotiate an appropriate identity that meets their needs, skills, and goals; this process is referred to as “Identity vs Identity Diffusion” (Miller, 2002). Race, gender, and other social identity groups therefore become increasing relevant toward the development of a healthy self-concept (Wang, Willett, & Eccles, 2011). Phinney (1990) proposed ethnic identity development as a three stage model which reflects progression from an unexamined ethnic identity through a period of exploration to an achieved or committed ethnic identity. Middle school students are often in the diffusion stage, where they may be accepting of the identity prescribed by authority figures, lack commitment to a specific identity group, or avoid the exploration of identity altogether (Akos & Ellis, 2008; Marcia, Watterman, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky, 1993). Nineteen of the participants in this study described themselves using maladaptive behaviorally disengaged constructs formulated through negative interpersonal interactions with important school others. These constructions reflect a consistency with literature about early adolescents’ identity development (McNulty & Roseboro, 2009).

Researchers have suggested early adolescents negotiate their identity using external clues (Akos & Ellis, 2008; Bem, 1972; Liberman, Kirk, & Kim, 2014). In this study, participants’ descriptions of themselves as students reflected initial stage identity development as they made identity decisions based on interactions with authority figures and societal ascriptions of deviance (Akos & Ellis, 2008; Liberman, Kirk, & Kim, 2014).

According to the literature, minority students often contend with low expectations, increased anxiety, dejection, and frustration at school which impact academic self-concept (Cohen, & Sherman, 2014; Cohen & Garcia, 2008; Yeager & Walton, 2011). Participants' reflections, experiences of stereotype threat, and stigmatized identities as students of the DAEP were consistent with the lived experiences of alternative education students presented by McNulty and Roseboro (2009). Research on counseling interventions and/or programs for interrupting mechanisms of academic identity threat, increasing student academic engagement, and decreasing academic disaffection were reviewed to develop and evaluate the self-affirmation program.

Meaningful Programmatic Themes

Qualitative studies involving the experiences of DAEP students are limited and often approach investigation from the perspective of older stakeholders (i.e. high school students, teachers, parents, and administrators) (Brown et al., 2013; Darling & Price 2004; de la Ossa, 2005; Hoge & Rubinstein-Avila, 2014; Lehr & Lange, 2003; Loutzenheiser, 2002). In addition, there exists a dearth of qualitative exploration of the impacts and processes involved in self-affirmation interventions (Huggard & Goldrick, 2013). However, there are relationships between prior research and the present study.

Subjective Experience of the Self-Affirmation Program

Participants in this study discussed activities, effects to self-esteem, dealing with judgment, and the researcher in describing program impacts. The results of this study are unique in terms of age and environment of participants. However, student descriptions of self-affirmations processes and mechanisms which impact academic experiences were similar to a previous qualitative intervention by Huggard and Goldrick (2013). The researchers explored a continuum of self-affirmation processes which influenced Computer Science students' achievement and success (Huggard & Goldrick, 2013). Participants of Huggard and Goldrick's (2013) study described self-affirmation interventions as assisting them to (1) boost their ego during difficult classroom tasks, (2) access positive feedback they had previously received, and (3) address negative feelings through affirmation of values. In addition, participants described the frustration and incongruence of recognizing a subject is challenging and they are trying their best (Huggard & Goldrick, 2013).

The principal researcher's skills at rapport building and therapeutic presence were discussed by participants as meaningful to program helpfulness. Lambert and Barley (2001), describe the therapists' ability to convey empathy, understanding, and affirmation to clients as central themes found in successful counseling relationships and therapeutic progress. It is the therapists' ability to engage and focus on the client's problems and emotional experiences that are highly related to successful therapeutic outcomes (Lambert & Barley, 2001). This finding is further consistent with research supporting the importance of engaging adolescent in the therapeutic process (Oetzei & Scherer, 2003). Karver, Handelsman, Fields, and Bickman (2006) additionally support the counselor's interpersonal skills and therapist direct influence skills as best predictors of youth outcomes.

Subjective Experience of the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program

The theme subjective experiences of the DAEP concerned beliefs participants held about the alternative program, comparisons with their home schools, and teachers. This theme appeared to reflect the participant's experience of the DAEP as a pleasant, supportive, and welcoming environment wherein students could shed bad kid identities. These reports are reflective of literature and findings of practices at effective alternative education programs (Aron, 2003; Cortez & Cortez, 2009; Tobin & Sprague, 2000). Researchers have listed: (1) low ratio of students to teachers, (2) student-centered atmospheres, (3) caring and committed teachers, (4) cultivation of empowering teacher-student relationships, (5) structured classrooms, (6) acknowledgement of acceptable behavior and school compliance, (7) social skills instructions, and (8) involving parents as being key to successful alternative education programming (Aron, 2003; Cortez & Cortez, 2009; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Tobin & Sprague, 2000).

In addition, participant experiences in this investigation align with student experiences of stigma at alternative education programs and in traditional education settings (McNulty & Roseboro, 2009). The results of this study are therefore encouraging in terms of their implications for altering stereotype threat experiences of alternative education students. For example, participants in McNulty and Roseboro's (2009) investigation reflected heavily on their experiences of stereotype threat and stigma being exacerbated while at their alternative education program. Deficiencies in the alternative education program contributed to student's awareness of their bad kid status. McNulty and Roseboro (2009) presented this excerpt from Bradley, who opined,

> It's a piece of crap. This whole school. It looks like a dumpster in here. The library is the only part of the whole school that looks halfway decent. Someone should build a new one. Somebody should burn it down. It is just ugly. I didn't mean to say that [someone should burn it down] because if someone burns it down, it ain't gonna be me! (p. 419)

Participants' in this investigation conversely, reflected on enjoying being at the DAEP, the availability, patience, and respect they developed working with teachers, and their desire to stay at the facility. Participants furthermore observed and reflected on their increased ability to get along with teachers, which allowed them to participate more fully in classroom tasks.

On Track

Participants discussed personal changes in motivation, academic engagement, and behavior as a result of being in the DAEP and the SAP. All of the participants reported having changed to some degree as a result of their experience with the SAP and DAEP. This study was found to affirm behavioral engagement and making attempts toward demonstrating effort, participation, and compliance within the learning environment that were vastly challenged by their ascription of "bad kid" identities and behavioral and active disengaged actions. This study reported a large practically significant decrease in academically disengaged behaviors. Students attributed the SAP program and DAEP teachers and structure as assisting them in "changing a lot" in terms of getting "on track" with appropriate academic behaviors and reducing instances of disciplinary infractions resulting in being sent to in school suspension or getting referrals. This finding is similar to those which promote self-affirmation interventions and effective DAEP settings as being impactful for at risk students experiencing stereotype threat (Aron, 2003; Cortez & Cortez, 2009; Huggard & Goldrick, 2013; Lange & Sletten, 2002; McNulty & Roseboro, 2009; Tobin & Sprague, 2000)

Limitations

Limitations of this study relate to the transferability and generalizability of the results. The inclusion of non-probabilistic sampling procedures limits the ability to make claims about causality of the SAP. Characteristics of this study's participants may not be reflective of the demographics of other student populations. While there appeared to be homogeneity with respect to participant demographics and the rationale for their recommendation for referral to the DAEP, researchers and school counselors should use their clinical judgement in interpreting results to their populations. Also, students and their parents who volunteered to participate in the SAP may have been more motivated or impacted by a desire to combat stereotype and identity threat than expected from random assignment.

Methodological limitations may also be found in data collection procedures. The psychological phenomenon of stereotype threat is mediated by a vast array of underinvestigated moderators (Picho & Brown, 2011). Researchers have not developed or validated a comprehensive measure of stereotype threat for adolescents (Picho & Brown, 2011; Smith & Cokley, 2016). This investigation, therefore, followed the trend of previous research by evaluating stereotype threat through assembling a scale of its moderators (DeVellis, 2012; Picho & Brown, 2011). Additionally, the number of questions asked by the instrumentation of this investigation may have affected students' responding tendencies and reliability (DeVellis, 2012). Students may have been disengaged or disaffected during the administration of the investigation and blindly answered questions, affecting the results of the investigation. Future research should consider a more brief measure of stereotype threat. Additionally, while the researcher provided consistency of delivery and instruction for all assessments during administration, result reliability might have also been affected by student comprehension of the materials. Furthermore, while it is assumed participants were truthful in their responses, the presence of the researcher may have affected the subjects' responses (DeVellis, 2012). The use of self-reported data can also be considered a limitation in that it is difficult to independently verify (Brutus, Aquinis, & Wassmer, 2013).

Limitations can also be found in the implementation of the program. The SAP was implemented as a part of response to intervention (RTI) planning in the Character Education courses; as such, all students in the class were exposed to the intervention curriculum. Students who did not elect to participate in the program and actively disengaged in the classroom could have affected variability in the response to the intervention. In addition, placement and attendance in the DAEP may be considered an intervention in itself. Therefore, this investigation was compounded by effects of participants being exposed to multiple treatments.

Considerations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research relate to exploring the efficacy of a more structured and refined self-affirmation intervention program. As previously noted, investigation of stereotype threat interventions with early adolescents in DAEP is limited. Researchers are encouraged to develop greater understanding of methods to facilitate student success and the removal of barriers to educational achievement. Implications for the integration of self-affirmation program exercises into a therapeutic school environment hold potential across education settings. Furthermore, further development and refinement of measures for stereotype threat, academic engagement, and academic behavior are needed to aid future inquiry. Researchers may find benefit in utilization of methods of assessment which are concise, brief, and reliable when working with academically disengaged students. With regard to the SAP, recommendations are to condense the program into a singular period of intervention, provide participants more time for activities, and allow for increased data collection time and follow up. Additionally, future research may consider randomized controlled trials and single case design to evaluate treatment effects and the program’s ability to impart change in student outcomes.

Conclusion and Implications

The SAP intervention was effective for affecting experiences of academic identity threat in a sample of adolescents in a DAEP setting. The students benefited from a structured intervention that targeted stereotype and identity threats which negatively impact school success. Given the dearth of efficacy studies in DAEP and school settings, these results add to the literature in ways which stimulate future research in these settings. This study expanded on the work of Schmidt and Canela (2015), finding strong practical significance for reductions in behavioral disengagement as reported by students. This project illustrates a model integrating guidance curriculum for affecting positive change in student academic identity and combating “bad kid” identity threat experiences. School-based mental health professionals and school counselors must work toward collaboration and positive relationships with students, teachers, and administration (Zirkelback & Reese, 2010). School and mental health personnel hold congruent missions in promoting and supporting the scholastic and psychosocial needs of early adolescents, therefore, cooperation is necessary (Rogers, Murrell, Adams, & Wilson, 2008). The implications for counselors in DAEP settings are evident in that this pilot approach demonstrates how interventions may be adopted as a part of a therapeutic environment within the educational curriculum.

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APPENDIX A

Letter of Facility Authorization

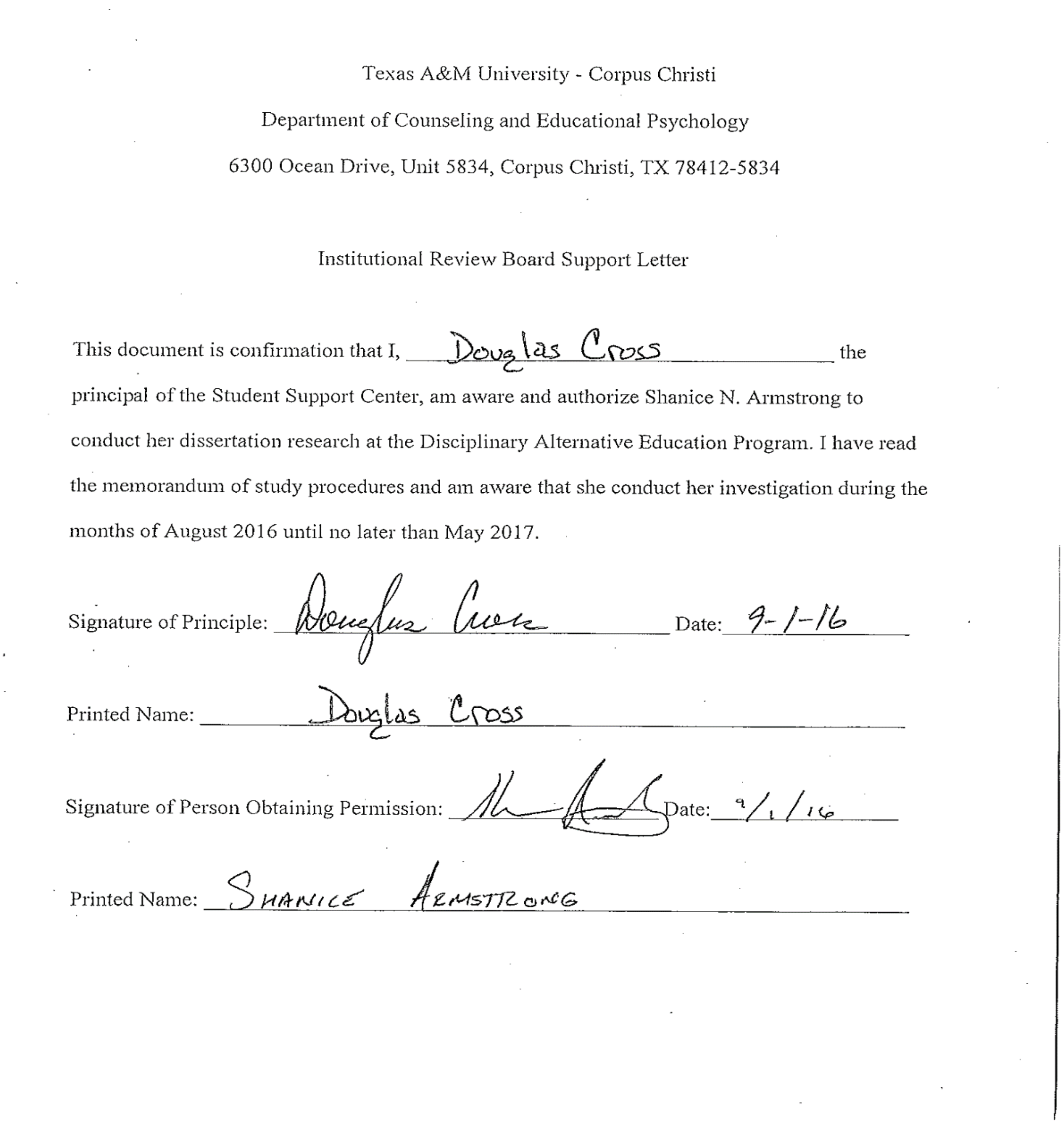
Institutional Review Board Approval

Outside Research Approval

Parental Consent Form

Child Assent Form

Letter of Facility Authorization



Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi
Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology
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Institutional Review Board Support Letter

This document is confirmation that I, Douglas Cross the principal of the Student Support Center, am aware and authorize Shanice N. Armstrong to conduct her dissertation research at the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program. I have read the memorandum of study procedures and am aware that she conduct her investigation during the months of August 2016 until no later than May 2017.

Signature of Principle: Douglas Cross Date: 9-1-16

Printed Name: Douglas Cross

Signature of Person Obtaining Permission: Date: 9/1/16

Printed Name: SHANICE ARMSTRONG

Adolescents’ Academic Self-Perceptions in a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program: The Impact of a Self-Affirmation Intervention Program.

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you (as the parent of a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to let your child participate in this research study. This form will also be used to record your consent if you decide to let your child be involved in this study.

If you agree, your child will be asked to participate in a research study evaluating your students perceptions of how others see them, how they see themselves at school, and the impact of a self-affirmation program at the Student Support Center. The fear or anxiety a person has about being judged and seen as holding a negative characteristic of their social group can cause decreased academic performance, increased use of self-defeating behaviors, disengagement, and altered professional aspirations. Self-affirmation is a strategy which can be used to protect an individual from these negative outcomes by encouraging people to think about characteristics, skills, values, or roles that they value or view as important. The purpose of this study is explore student experiences of judgement and to monitor the effects of self-affirmation strategies. Your child was selected to be a possible participant because he/she is in middle school and currently enrolled at SSC.

What will my child be asked to do?

If you allow your child to participate in this study, he/she will be asked to attend two 30-45 minute interviews sessions on campus with me. As part of your child’s participation, he/she will be asked to complete two short rating scales (which take about 20 minutes) asking about any of the academic thoughts and beliefs they have encountered during the previous week. These rating scales will be used to measure the changes in your child’s thinking and behavior before and after attending a self-affirmation program. The self-affirmation intervention will be delivered over four sessions, each lasting approximately 25 minutes, as a part of the Character Education course.

Your child will be audio recorded.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated with this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks your child ordinarily encounters in daily life. Potential risks involved in this study could include some emotional discomfort and anxiety arising from self-disclosure and self-reflection regarding various aspects of your child's experiences of stereotype threat while participating in the study. If emotional discomfort and anxiety are severe and beyond what normally experience in a typical classroom guidance curriculum, your child will be referred to individual counseling provided by a school counselor at SSC or other community agencies to process any discomfort as appropriate.

Academic interference could also happen in this study. Because your child will be taken from the classroom, his/her academic schedule may be affected. Based upon researcher/teacher agreement in regards to timing, your child will be asked to participate in situations that minimally interfere with his/her work assignments. Your child will have the opportunity to make up any missed work when he/she returns to the classroom.

There is a minimal risk of breach of confidentiality associated with this study. Because your child will be taken of his/her classroom, other students not participating in the self-affirmation program could possibly question this and therefore find out about participation in the study. Limitations of confidentiality such that in any disclosure related to self-harm, other harm, or abuse will be reported to the appropriate authorities. The potential for breach of confidentiality will be addressed with your child throughout the study. Your child will be provided with pseudonym that either may be selected by the researcher or one of his/her own choosing when completing activity worksheets and the rating scale.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

The possible benefits of participation are as a result of participation in the study your student may gain skills in strengths recognition and self-awareness, and increased resiliency in the face of stereotype threat. The potential benefit to you as a parent/guardian could be an increased satisfaction regarding the improvement of your child's self-worth. The possible benefit to society includes more efficient strategies in assisting school children on disciplinary alternative education campuses to recognize their strengths and resources and improving their behaviors and/or emotions.

Does my child have to participate?

No, your child doesn’t have to be in this research study. You can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty. If you do not want your child to participate, he/she will receive a regular classroom guidance curriculum.

What if my child does not want to participate?

In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study. If your child does not want to participate he/she will not be included in the study without penalty. If your child initially agrees to be in the study he/she can withdraw at any point during the study without penalty.

Who will know about my child’s participation in this research study?

This study is confidential. The researcher and teachers at SSC will know about your child's participation in this study. However, this study conforms to procedures to ensure that details of your child’s participation will remain strictly confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you or your child to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher, Shanice Armstrong, will have access to the records.

If you choose to allow your child to participate in this study, he/she will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the researcher, Shanice Armstrong will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for 3 years and then erased.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Shanice Armstrong at Armstrong.shanice@gmail.com and/or a faculty advisor, Richard J. Ricard, Ph.D. at (361) 825-3725 or richard.ricard@tamucc.edu.

Whom do I contact about my child’s rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Research Compliance Office and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact Caroline Lutz, Research Compliance Officer, at (361)825-2497 or caroline.lutz@tamucc.edu.

Signature

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to allow your child be audio recorded and to participate in this study.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: ___________________ Date: ______________

Printed Name: ____

Printed Name of Child: **____**

Signature of Person Obtaining Permission: _____________________ Date: __________

Printed Name: ____

Child Assent Form

Adolescents’ Academic Self-Perceptions in a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program: The Impact of a Self-Affirmation Intervention Program.

Introduction

My name is Shanice Armstrong and I am a student at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi. I am doing a research project about students at Student Support Center and techniques used to encourage self-esteem with adolescents. Research is a way to test new ideas. Research helps us learn new things.

I would like you to help with my study because you are in middle school and currently studying at the Student Support Center. This research can help you recognize your strengths and address negative thoughts that might occur.

What will I be asked to do?

If you want to help with my study, I will ask you to think about your experience at school and in particular, about materials learned in the character education program. If you want to help my study, I will ask you to participate by filling out a few surveys, a personnel information sheet, and talking with me over the course of your time at the Student Support Center. You will be asked to speak with me individually, two times during your placement at the SSC, these interviews will take place on campus, last 30-45 minutes and will be recorded. Interviews will be conducted during the week of enrollment and the week after you finish the intervention program.

What are the risks to me?

The risks to you are no bigger than the risks you have each day. You will decide how much you want to talk about yourself in the interviews. If you ever feel uncomfortable or worried, you can decide to participate in the study anymore. You may not finish your schoolwork during the interview sessions because you will be taken from the classroom. However, I will talk to your teachers, and you will have a chance to complete your work when you return to the classroom. You need to know that what you say in sessions will be kept between you and me. However, other students in your class who are not helping with my study could possibly find out that you are helping. This can happen because you will be taken of your classroom. You also need to know that I am here to help you feel safe and comfortable. However, I have to report to school officials and other professionals if you tell me that you are being hurt or planning to hurt yourself or someone else. This way I can keep you and others as safe as possible.

What good can happen?

There are some good things that could happen to you as a result of being in this study. You will have a chance to learn about your values and positive characteristics. You can also voice your thoughts and concerns about your experiences.

Do I have to be part of the study?

No. You do not have to be part of the study. Even if your parents say you can be in the study, you do not have to participate if you don’t want to. You should only be part of this study because you want to.

Who will know I am part of the study?
Your name will be kept secret from everyone except your teacher and your parents. You can stop being part of the study whenever you want to. You can tell your parents, your teacher, me, or any adult that you would like to stop, and it is OK.

Signature
You have been told about the research study. You had a chance to ask questions. You can ask

questions at any time. You can stop being in the study at any time.

If you sign your name below, it means that you agree to be part of this research study.

____________________________________ ____ _______________
Your Name (Printed) Age Date

____
Your Signature

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide

Instrumentation

Interview Guide

Preliminary Interview Guide Script.

Good afternoon. Thanks for agreeing to take part in this study, and for reading and signing all of the appropriate consent forms. Before we begin, did you have any questions or concerns about the forms you have signed? Please be aware that you should feel free to raise questions that you might have at any point during the study. If you have no questions now, then we may continue.

The research that you have agreed to be a part of is designed to help learn more about how you see yourself in school and how you see yourself as being seen in school.

Over the course of the next 15 minutes or so, we will be talking more your answers on the questionnaire you answered earlier.

Review answers to Views of Me Worksheet

Ask students to elaborate on responses:

a. Follow-up questions:
    i. *"What do you mean by [descriptive phrase]"*
    ii. "*What makes you think they would they say that*?"
    iii. "*Why would you say (parent/teacher) thinks [descriptive phrase] about you at school*?"
    iv. "*Can you tell me more*?"

Ask student about question 5 and 6.

1. What do you think people expected from/of you because of your gender or race?

Ask about other times students have experienced or perceived stereotype threat. Note any recurring descriptions they use in the Views of Me worksheet

1. Can you tell me more about any times, if at all, when you have felt people expected you to behave *[Note any reoccurring description used*]?
2. Why do you believe others expected or believed that about you?
3. Can you tell me about how you feel when you think about people judging you as [*reoccurring description*]?
4. *How often, if at all, do you worry or think/worry about being judged by others? Can you tell me more about those worries/thoughts?*

Finally ask about students beliefs about/for students at SSC

1. How do you believe students who come to SSC are seen at your home school?
2. What kind of expectations do you think people have for students who come to SSC?
    a. Follow-up question:
        i. *Can you tell me more*?

Thanks for taking time to do the interview. Remember if you have any questions about the study you can ask me and if you do not wish to continue you can drop out of the study at any time.

Post Interview Guide Script.

Good afternoon. Thanks again for agreeing to take part in this study. Before we begin, did you have any questions or concerns? Please be aware that you should feel free to raise questions that you might have at any point during the study. If you have no questions now, then we may continue. Over the course of the next 30 minutes or so, I will be asking you to think about some of the experiences and interactions you have had while enrolled in the self-affirmation program.

Now I would like to talk to you about the Self-Affirmation Program.

1. How would they describe themselves as a student?

2. What was the experience like in the Self-Affirmation Program?
3. Tell me about any experiences you had in the self-affirmation program that were helpful to you during your stay?
4. Tell me about any experiences you had in the self-affirmation program that were NOT helpful to you during your stay?
5. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Instrumentation

Demographic Sheet

Please do not write your name on this form. It were stored separately from other information during the study and not be linked with your identity in any way. The information allow us to provide an accurate description of the sample.

For the following items, please select the one response that is most descriptive of you or fill in the blank.

Student ID: ________________________ Grade: 6th 7th 8th

Age: ____ Gender: Female Male

Ethnicity:

Asian or Pacific Islander Latino/Hispanic Caucasian/White

Black/African American Native American Asian Indian

More than one race (specify) ____

Describe the reason you were sent to Student Support Center?

____

____

How many times have you been to the Student Support Center? __________________________

How many days have you been assigned to the Student Support Center? ___________________

Views of Me Worksheet Preliminary Assessment

Student ID #: ____________________ Grade: _____________ Gender: ___________

Please read the following questions and directions carefully and answer the questions to the best of your ability.

1. How would you describe yourself and the way you are at school?
   - ____
   - ____
   - ____

   How would you LIKE to see yourself and how you are at school?
   - ____
   - ____
   - ____

   Do you think you will begin to see yourself more like you want to during your time at SSC?

☹	😐	☺
No, I don't think I will see myself differently	Maybe	Yes, I will definitely see myself differently

2. How would your PARENT describe you and the way you are at school?
   - ____
   - ____
   - ____

   How would you LIKE your PARENT to describe you and the way you are at school?
   - ____
   - ____
   - ____

   Do you think you your PARENT will begin to see you as you would like to be seen during your time at SSC?

☹	😐	☺
No, I don't think they will see me differently	Maybe	Yes, they will definitely see me differently

3. How would your TEACHERS describe you and the way you are at school?

•
•
•

How would you LIKE your TEACHERS to describe you and the way you are at school?

•
•
•

Do you think your TEACHERS will begin to see you as you would like to be seen during your time at SSC?

☹	😐	☺
No, I don’t think they will see me differently	Maybe	Yes, they will definitely see me differently

4. How would your FRIENDS describe you and the way you are at school?

•
•
•

How would you LIKE your FRIENDS to describe you and the way you are at school?

1.
2.
3.

Do you think your FRIENDS will begin to see you as you would like to be seen during your time at SSC?

☹	😐	☺
No, I don’t think they will see me differently	Maybe	Yes, they will definitely see me differently

5. Do you think your race has anything to do with the way the people above think about you in school?

Yes No

6. Do you think your gender has anything to do with the way the people above think about you in school?

Yes No

Views of Me Worksheet Post-Assessment

Student ID #: ____________________ Grade: _____________ Gender: ___________

Please read the following questions and directions carefully and answer the questions to the best of your ability.

1. How would you describe yourself and the way you are in school?
   - ______________________________
   - ______________________________
   - ______________________________

   How would you LIKE to see yourself and how you are at school?
   - ______________________________
   - ______________________________
   - ______________________________

   Do you think you will begin to see yourself more like you want to after your time at SSC?

   ☹ No, I don't think I will see myself differently

   😐 Maybe

   ☺ Yes, I will definitely see myself differently

2. How would your PARENT describe you and the way you are at school?
   - ______________________________
   - ______________________________
   - ______________________________

   How would you LIKE your PARENT to describe you and the way you are at school?
   - ______________________________
   - ______________________________
   - ______________________________

   Do you think your PARENT will begin to see you as you would like to be after your time at SSC?

   ☹ No, I don't think they will see me differently

   😐 Maybe

   ☺ Yes, they will definitely see me differently

3. How would your TEACHERS describe you and the way you are at school?
   - ________________________________
   - ________________________________
   - ________________________________

   How would you LIKE your TEACHERS to describe you and the way you are at school?
   - ________________________________
   - ________________________________
   - ________________________________

   Do you think your TEACHERS will begin to see you as you would like to be seen after your time at SSC?

☹	😐	☺
No, I don’t think they will see me differently	Maybe	Yes, they will definitely see me differently

4. How would your FRIENDS describe you and the way you are at school?
   - ________________________________
   - ________________________________
   -

   How would you LIKE your FRIENDS to describe you and the way you are at school?
   - ________________________________
   - ________________________________
   -

   Do you think your FRIENDS will begin to see you as you would like to be seen after your time at SSC?

☹	😐	☺
No, I don’t think they will see me differently	Maybe	Yes, they will definitely see me differently

5. Do you think your race has anything to do with the way the people above think about you in school?

   Yes No

6. Do you think your gender has anything to do with the way the people above think about you in school?

   Yes No

School Experiences Questionnaire

ID #: _______________ Age: ________ Grade: ________ Date: ______

Instructions: Listed below are some thoughts that children and adolescents have said pop into their heads. Please read each thought carefully and decide how often, if at all, each thought popped into your head over the past week.

Place a mark in the box for: not at all; sometimes; fairly often; often; or all the time, according to how often you have had the following thought.

		Not At All	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Often	All The Ti
1.	Kids will think I’m stupid					
2.	I can’t do anything right					
3.	I’m worried that I’m going to get teased					
4.	Kids are going to laugh at me					
5.	I am worthless					
6.	Nothing ever works out for me anymore					
7.	I’m going to look silly					
8.	It’s my fault that things have gone wrong					
9.	People are thinking bad things about me					
10.	I’m afraid of what other kids will think of me					
11.	I’ve made such a mess of my life					
12.	I look like an idiot					
13.	I’ll never be as good as other people are					
14.	I am a failure					
15.	Other kids are making fun of me					
16.	Life is not worth living					
17.	Everyone is staring at me					
18.	I’m afraid I will make a fool of myself					
19.	I will never overcome my problems					
20.	I hate myself					

Please read each statement carefully and rate how true each of the following statements is for you.

		Not at all True	Not Very True	Sort of True	Very True
21.	If I decide to learn something hard, I can.				
22.	I can do well in school if I want to.				
23.	I can get good grades in school.				

24.	I can't get good grades, no matter what I do.				
25.	I can't stop myself from doing poorly in school.				
26.	I can't do well in school, even if I want to.				

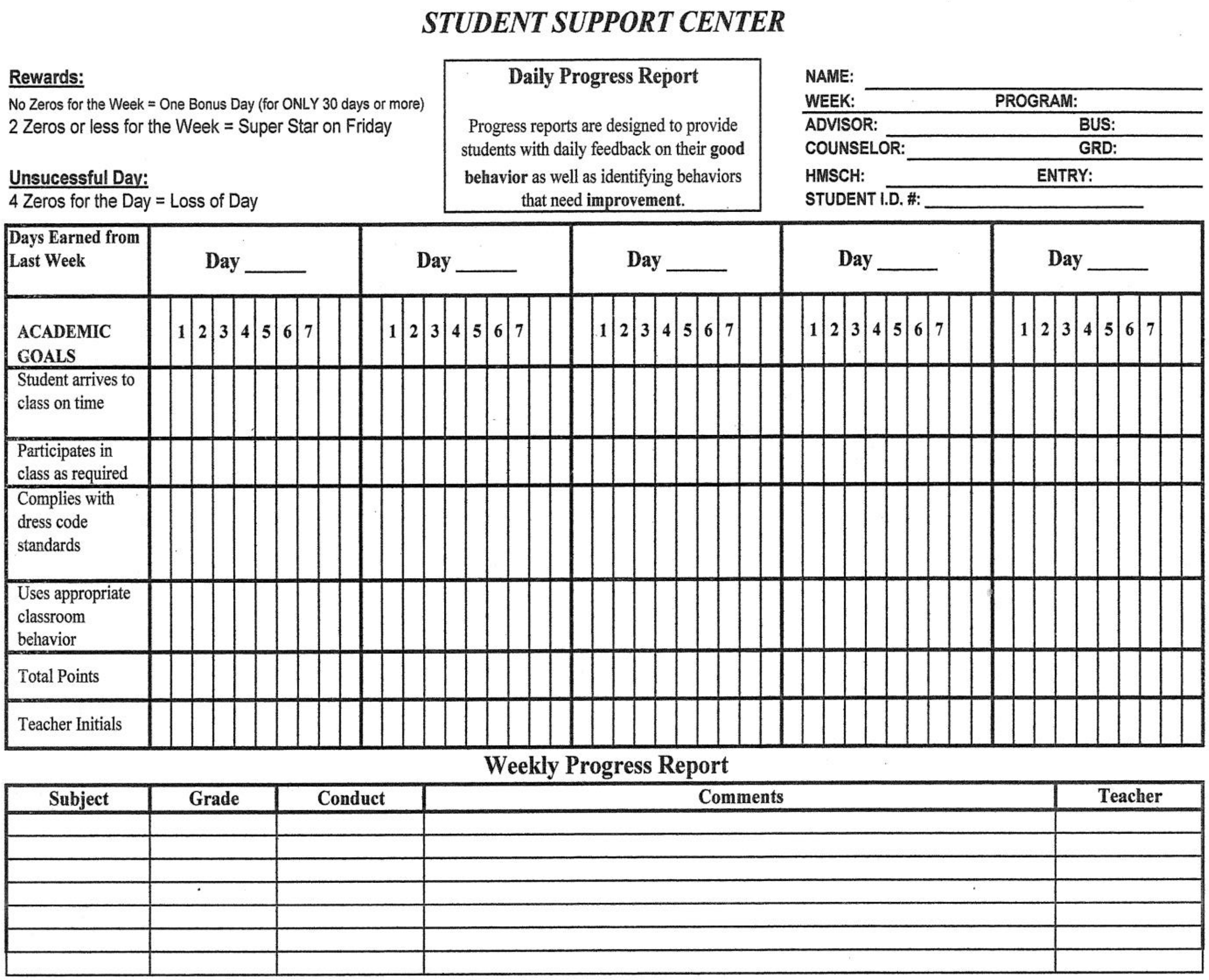
Engagement vs. Disaffection with Learning: Student version

Please read each statement carefully and rate how true each of the following statements is for you.

		Not at all true	Not very true	Sort of true	Very true
1.	I try hard to do well in school.				
2.	I enjoy learning new things in class.				
3.	When we work on something in class, I feel discouraged.				
4.	In class, I do just enough to get by.				
5.	Class is fun.				
6.	In class, I work as hard as I can.				
7.	When I get stuck on a problem, it really bothers me.				
8.	When I’m in class, I listen very carefully.				
9.	When I’m in class, I feel worried.				
10.	When we work on something in class, I get involved.				
11.	When I’m in class, I think about other things.				
12.	When we work on something in class, I feel interested.				
13.	Class is not all that fun for me.				
14.	When I’m in class, I just act like I’m working.				
15.	When I’m in class, I feel good.				
16.	When I’m in class, my mind wanders.				
17.	When I’m in class, I participate in class discussions.				
18.	When we work on something in class, I feel bored.				
19.	I don’t try very hard at school.				
20.	I pay attention in class.				

21.	When I’m in class, I don’t sit still and I get out of my seat.				
22.	When I’m in class, I talk a lot with my classmates.				
23.	When I’m in class, I disrupt the class work of others.				
24.	I get in trouble for not following classroom rules.				
25.	I argue with my teacher in class.				

Daily Progress Report



STUDENT SUPPORT CENTER

Rewards:

No Zeros for the Week = One Bonus Day (for ONLY 30 days or more)
2 Zeros or less for the Week = Super Star on Friday

Unsucessful Day:

4 Zeros for the Day = Loss of Day

Daily Progress Report

Progress reports are designed to provide students with daily feedback on their **good behavior** as well as identifying behaviors that need **improvement**.

NAME: ____________________
WEEK: __________ PROGRAM: __________
ADVISOR: __________ BUS: __________
COUNSELOR: __________ GRD: __________
HMSCH: __________ ENTRY: __________
STUDENT I.D. #: ____________________

Days Earned from Last Week	Day _____										Day _____										Day _____										Day _____										Day _____									
ACADEMIC GOALS		1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Student arrives to class on time																																																		
Participates in class as required																																																		
Complies with dress code standards																																																		
Uses appropriate classroom behavior																																																		
Total Points																																																		
Teacher Initials																																																		

Weekly Progress Report

Subject	Grade	Conduct	Comments	Teacher

APPENDIX C

Treatment Protocol

Treatment Protocol

Life Values: Lesson 1

Your values are the beliefs that define what is most important to you. They guide your choices in life and are sometimes difficult to figure out. For example, Jeremy values family and loves to spend his extra time at home, Erica values success in school and spends many hours studying and reading, and Mehmet values creativity and spends a lot of time drawing and looking at pictures.

Group Activity

Pass out flash cards to the group. Have students write 6 numbers on the flashcard between 1 and 50.

Show students chart. These numbers represent your values and life.

1. Travel	2. Achieve greatness in sports	3. Find success in a career	4. Still stay with your parents	5. Be well respected
6. Be unemployed	7. Graduate college	8. Be honest	9. Have a lot of debt	10. Be wealthy
11. Hate where you live	12. Have a family	13. Be creative	14. Be angry	15. Be sad in your old age
16. Work hard	17. Get rejected	18. Be brave	19. Drop out of high school	20. Lots of friends and great relationships
21. Find happiness	22. Hate your job	23. Lead others	24. Gamble and lose lots of money	25. Own a big business
26. Be a criminal	27. Be a positive influence in your community	28. Invent a popular phone app	29. Be poor	30. Be a famous celebrity
31. Try new things	32. Help others	33. Get married, live happily	34. Become a comedian	35. Fight for peace
36. Have wisdom	37. Have no friends	38. Live alone	39. Lie a lot	40. Go on many adventures
41. Get fired	42. Be happy in your old age	43. Smell bad	44. Be mean	45. Go into politics
46. Get a PhD	47. Find love	48. Live alone	49. Have fun	50. Get divorced

Discussion Questions:
How did it go? Did you end up rich or in ruins? Would you have preferred to have some choice in your life?

Lesson 1 Worksheet

Place a check mark next to the THREE values that are MOST IMPORTANT to you.

Being creative	Traveling and experiencing new things	Going into nature and being in the outdoors	Being a member of a group (community, race/ethnic group, or school club)
Being "real"	Taking care of your appearance	Living a long and healthy life	Helping others and being a leader of others
Learning and gaining knowledge	Being independent	Religious beliefs	Making money
Strong relationships with friends and family	Finding success in a career and accomplishing tasks	Being funny and fun	Being respected
Being honest	Being good at a sports	Enjoying food, music, and entertainment	Other

Based on your responses above, please do the following:
First, look at the values you picked as most important to you.
Second, select one value and think about times when that value was important to you.
Third, describe in a few sentences why that ONE values was important to you. Focus on your thoughts and feelings—don't worry about spelling, grammar, or how well written it is.

List the top two reasons why the values you selected is important to you.

Deemphasizing Threatened Identity: Lesson 2

Know This

It doesn't matter who you are, where you have been, or what you have or do not have. It doesn't matter what you have done or not done, said or not said, thought or not thought. Today, right now, you have positive qualities. Discovering them, acknowledging them, and embracing them are steps toward healthy self-identity.

Terri's life seemed to get worse daily. She felt like all her teachers hated her. Her classes were hard and she couldn't keep up. It seemed like her teachers yelled at her every day. Her brother was doing well in all his classes and her parents constantly compared her to him. She felt stupid, like everyone was getting "it" except her. Terri felt like such a loser, like she didn't fit in anywhere. That day Terri went to her grandma's house and spoke with her grandma about what was going on at school. Terri's grandma told her she was worried about her. She said that Terri was really hard on herself, that she often heard her put herself down, and said mean things about herself. Terri's grandma told her she deserved to celebrate all the wonderful things about herself instead of always focusing on the things she didn't like or did wrong. "But there is nothing good about me. All I do is mess up over and over again." said Terri. Terri's grandma responded "If that's what you want to believe, you'll never be happy. Do you ever think about what a good artist you are or how much your mom and I love you? About your friends who have stuck by you since grade school? About why the Smith's ask you to babysit so often or how helpful you are to Mom when she has to work weekends? You have wonderful, positive qualities, Terri. You just don't see them because you're so busy focusing on what you don't like about yourself."

Discussion Questions:

1. Describe a time when you may have felt like Terri did. What was going on in your life?

2. Sometimes our brains play tricks on us and try to tell us our positives aren't real or that someone who gives us a compliment is lying. Does this every happen to you? If so give an example.

3. Person after person can point out your positive qualities, but no one can make you believe. Describe how you feel when you focus on things you do like about yourself.

Lesson 2 Worksheet

Positives aren't all about what you win or achieve. They are also about what you attempt, think, and who you are. Trying in class is a positive. It means you are optimistic and willing to learn new things.

Circle any of the following positives that are true about you.

Good listener	Loyal	Honest
Good with animals	Talented at a sport	Reliable
Good sense of humor	Hardworking	Smart
Patient	Kind to people	Good friend
Real	Loving	Brave
Attractive	Helpful	Talented at a hobby
Responsible	Friendly	Respectful

Give an example of one of the positives you circled; for example if you circled "patient" describe a specific time when you expressed patience, or tell about the circumstances when you have acted with patience.

Describe why one of the positives you circled are important to you; for example if you circled “patient” describe why patience is important to you.

Externalizing the Threat: Lesson 3

Know This

How you feel about yourself today has partly to do with the messages you receive from important people in your life. The way you interpret those messages and the importance the message deliverer plays in your life can help you feel good or bad about yourself. By evaluating those messages, you can decide which messages you want to keep believing and which messages to let go.

Michael felt stressed, angry, and confused. He knew other kids had situations worse than his and more reason to feel bad than he did, but he couldn't help feeling miserable. He kept having thoughts about things he has heard and things he told himself that made him feel bad about himself. The negative thoughts came often, affected his day, and were ruining his life it seemed. He felt embarrassed to talk with his friends and family; one day he told Ms. Rodriguez the school counselor.

"I keep hearing this voice in my head telling me I'm not good enough and I won't ever do well" he said. "These thoughts drive me crazy. No matter what I do, or if I try to change, I always feel like it won't matter or make a difference, because, I will just fail."

Ms. Rodriguez asked Michael "Has anyone ever told you those things before?"

Michael responded that his Dad and a few of his teachers have told him things along those lines before. "They always tell me if I don't change my behavior I won't graduate; even when I have been doing well, they still tell me to do better or they wait for me to do something wrong. I feel like I can never be good enough" said Michael.

"Your current thoughts make sense then," said Ms. Rodriguez. "The messages we receive stick with us. They are especially powerful when they come from important people in our lives, and they go a long way toward shaping our view of ourselves as able individuals able to control our lives. Ideally, we are raised and surrounded by supportive people who send us positive messages. In reality, however, everyone is doing the best they can and at any given moment may not be able to give us the healthy loving and positive messages we need. What's most important to understand is that negative messages don't reflect our true worth or value. You have the ability to look at messages carefully and determine which are helping you create a heathy self-image. You have the power to let go of any messages that aren't serving you well."

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Michael's teachers and Dad might have repeatedly told him to improve himself?

2. To create healthier self-image, what could Michael do about the continued thought that he isn’t good enough?

Judgements and Comparisons Worksheet

Circle any of the negative messages you may have received.

You're not trying hard enough.	You're not good enough.	You'll never be able to do that.
Why can't you be more like your brother/sister/other student?	You drive me crazy.	Why are you doing this to me?
When you going to grow up?	Are you stupid or something?	It's your fault I'm like this.
How will you ever get anywhere in life?	Can't you do anything right?	You are going to jail.

Write any messages you "hear in your head" that affect your view of yourself but are not listed above.

____

____

____

Describe how these messages affect how you feel about yourself today.

____

____

____

____

Write new messages to yourself to encourage a positive self-view and replace the negative messages that you might hear in your head.