TEENAGE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS: Effect on Social Adjustment

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Abstract

High school female students often have challenges transitioning to high school. There are many possible obstacles that exist but some female students may experience difficulties with maintaining interpersonal relationship with their female peers. It is very common for high school settings to have various types of social cliques that exist. In some instance it is difficult for female students to gain acceptance within these particular social groups. This challenge leaves some female students feeling socially isolated and can have various effects. For some students the idea of being popular or part of the "in crowd" is paramount. The inability to successfully develop healthy peer relationships can also involve instances of relational aggression. Professional school counselors can work to address these areas of concern through the development of small group counseling with strategic goals for the female students. Overall, the goal is to help the high school female students improve their overall self-concept and improve peer relationships.

Introduction

In many high school settings, various social groups exist that may often be referred to as adolescent cliques. These cliques may have a deeper meaning which essentially may represent a hierarchy of the social status within the culture of the school. One of the popular groups has been termed as "Queen Bees" this name was popularized by Rosalind Wiseman. Wiseman is a former teacher and wrote this provocative book entitled "Queen Bees and Wannabees" in 2002. She addressed the concern many girls face in seeking social acceptance in the school setting.

As a result of the female cliques that are formed it often creates an environment that fosters relational aggression in the young ladies. Some of the females face ostracism from the very girls that they are trying to befriend because of their style of dress, hair and makeup. Due to the mean girl behavior exhibited some girls might find it difficult to develop healthy and appropriate peer relationships leaving them feeling socially isolated in the school environment.

This social isolation hinders the development of establishing friendships and experiences such as attending the high school dances and participating in clubs and extra-curricular activities. Many students are not learning the proper social skills needed for relating to their peers. In order to identify the problem is first imperative to ascertain what types of social cliques that exist within the school setting. Lakeside High School serves 2335 students in grades 9-12 and is located in a predominantly upper middle class suburban community serving students from the Northlake area of the DeKalb County School District. The student body is composed of 34% White, 27% Black, 32% Latino, 7% Asian and 1% other racial groups including Native Americans. The subjects of this particular study are 9th and 10th grade female students. The advisory committee consists of the administrators over discipline, social worker and the professional school counselor. The counselor will be responsible for running the small group. The study is important because it is vital to try and improve female peer relationship dynamics and thus reducing potential disciplinary actions that may occur.

There exist various social cliques within the school setting and the female cliques are prevalent and at times difficult which lead to some challenges. The challenges that exist within the girls may often lead to disagreements and at times fights. The bad behavior is often addressed by the administrator of discipline and often consults the professional school counselors to help mediate the conflicts between the girls. This is done as an effort to practice restorative justice.

Literature Review

High school females often maintain friendships they developed in elementary and middle school. They continue these friendships in high school and at times these bonds may be closer than their immediate family relationships. Often at this age, many high school age students have some type of conflict with their parents as they seek independence and acceptance. Indeed, adolescents report engaging in at least one disagreement with close friends every day (in contrast to three to four daily disagreements with parents; Laursen & Collins, 1994). Higher levels of conflict in friendships have been linked to greater loneliness (Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1996; Parker & Asher, 1993) and greater aggression (Adams & Laursen, 2007; see also Burke & Laursen, 2005, for similar findings). However, similar to studies of parent-adolescent conflict, several studies have failed to find connections between conflict between friends and various indicators of adolescents' social adjustment (e.g., Demir & Urberg, 2004). Due to these particular research findings, other factors should be considered when determining possible traits that might exist within high school female students and maintaining positive social adjustment.

It is a normal behavior and expectation to see high school females having at least one peer friendship with another female student. Participant perceptions are a strong predictor of individual well-being, but friends may have differing views about positive and negative features of their relationship (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998). Unfortunately, high school females may unwillingly engage in friendships that may be deemed as harmful and negative. Often these friendships are riddled with what is considered "girl drama" and

jealousy and betrayal. On the other hand a positive friendship would be defined by the exact opposite qualities. The traits exhibited are often loyalty, trust, support, encouragement and other positive traits. There is considerable overlap in friends' perceptions of these relationship qualities. Children report the greatest congruence in perceptions of positive friendship qualities, whereas adolescents report the most congruence in perceptions of negative friendship qualities (Furman, 1996; Parker & Asher, 1993).

There is evidence that positive friendship qualities are associated with adolescent school involvement and academic achievement, and that negative friendship qualities are associated with adolescent behavior problems (Berndt & Keefe, 1992; Loeber, Farrington, Stouthamer-Loeber, & Van Kammen, 1998). These findings have focused exclusively on self-reports of predictor and outcome variables, raising concerns that shared reporter variance may inflate the magnitude of associations between friendship quality and adolescent adjustment. Although there is general agreement that shared perceptions of friendship should promote individual adjustment (Buhrmester & Prager, 1995), outcomes associated with positive and negative views of adolescent friendship have yet to be identified.

Females that have expressed at least one good friendship may also have very low behavioral problems. Friendships are critically important to adolescent development, providing validation and camaraderie, insight and emotional support, instrumental assistance and social skills training (Vitaro, Boivin, & Bukowski, 2009). All friendships should not be considered to be the same or

viewed as all being equal. Friends differ along dimensions such as notably, by adolescence, friends are common recipients of disclosure and central sources of social support (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011; Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006).

In fact, research on friendships has identified a variety of ways that friends respond to one another's talk about personal problems (see Glick & Rose, 2011; Leaper, Carson, Baker, Holiday, & Myers, 1995; Rose & Asher, 2004).

Many of the possible responses to friends' disclosures can be conceptualized as positive engaged responses. For example, responses such as offering support or agreement, asking a question, sharing a related experience, offering relevant information, giving advice, or simply acknowledging the friends' statements all indicate positive engagement in the conversation. However, not all responses are supportive, and some can be classified as negative responses, such as changing the subject, minimizing the problem, saying something explicitly nonsupportive, or even remaining silent. Companionship, aid, security, and closeness (Bukowski, Hoza, & Boivin, 1994). In fact, considerable research indicates that girls disclose to friends more than do boys (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). Although fewer studies specifically focus on talking about problems, the studies that do also indicate that girls disclose to friends about problems more than boys (Glick & Rose, 2011; Rose & Asher, 2004).

Moreover, research regarding co-rumination in friendship, or friends extensively discussing and rehashing problems, indicates that girls communicate more than boys (e.g., Hankin, Stone, &

Wright, 2010; Jose, Wilkins, & Spendelow, 2012; Rose, Carlson, & Waller, 2007; Smith & Rose, 2011; Stone, Hankin, Gibb, & Abela, 2011). Both sexes form social structures that lead different members to assume specific roles and characteristics. For example, in a female group (as seen in the movie) the one with the power is like the "Queen Bee" with a contingent of followers. Her friends do what she wants, she is charming when she wants to be, she's manipulatively affectionate, and she takes no responsibility for hurting another's feelings, and defines right and wrong by the loyalty or disloyalty shown to her. She is usually the one who decides who should be the victim. Relational aggression negatively impacts "mirroring" - a peer group's reflected reaction to an individual. Caught in the web of punishing aggression by peers, a young person's internal sense of self becomes diminished and felt as being "a loser" - "a reject" and "not as good". Self-esteem is low and feelings of insecurity may persist throughout life. What is also affected is the ability to trust as an adult and to be free to be open to close relationships. A recent development in social aggression is cyber bullying, acted out by both sexes. In this type of aggression, the perpetrator uses social networking tools - email, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat - to inflict damage, particularly the spreading of socially harmful rumors of others.

Recent reports of several suicides by young adolescents who were targeted speak to the damaging power of this kind of aggression. Adolescent girls often perpetrate aggression by gossiping and spreading rumors about others, attempting to ruin relationships and manipulating and excluding others. For the past few decades, research has also looked at the differences

between people who use physical forms of aggression and those who use more indirect or relational forms of aggression (Marsee, M.A.; Frick, P.J.2007). Although girls and boys may not differ in the overall use of relational aggression they may differ in how damaging this use of aggression is to their peer relationships (Card, N.A.; Stucky, B.D.; Sawalani, G.M.; Little, T.D., 2008) Girls who used high levels of relational forms of aggression showed the worst adjustment problems; this was notwithstanding the level of physical aggression they displayed (Marsee, M.A.; Frick, P.J.; Barry, C.T.; Kimonis, E.R.; Centifanti, L.C.M.; Aucoin, K.J. 2014). For girls, then, a high use of relational aggression for multiple purposes (retaliatory and for personal gain) may demarcate girls who have problems maintaining satisfying and prosocial relationships with others. For example, girls who used high levels of relational aggression showed low levels of caring and empathy toward others, characteristics associated with a callous-unemotional (CU; i.e., lack of remorse or empathy, callous use of others, shallow or deficient emotions) interpersonal style (Stickle, T.R.; Marini, V.A.; Thomas, J.N., 2014) Adolescent girls who gossip and work to ruin relationships by freezing people out may show adjustment problems, but also, this may depend on their reasons for using relational aggression. Relational aggression, on its own, may be particularly important to look at in girls, because these aggressive tactics appear to negatively affect girls more than they affect boys.

Relational bullying can be harmful to an adolescent girls' mental health. According to Fanning (2002), and Muscari (2002), relational bullying has been proven to harm girls' mental health and future emotional

welfare and can lead to anxiety disorders and depression. Recent studies reveal that bullies and victims have poor psycho-social health. Craig (1998) and Smith (1991) state that bullies are more aggressive, antisocial, and impulsive. On the other hand, victims are more passive, anxious, and mistrustful (Craig, 1998; Olweus, 1993; Schwartz, McFayden-Ketchum, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1998).

Relational aggression is more prevalent in girl adolescents than boy adolescents. There has been a growing awareness that aggression in relationships can be a compelling concern for girls in the past few years (Arts, 1998; Hoyt & Scherer, 1998). Aggressive behavior is prominent among the complicated interactions of social, cognitive, emotional and biological factors (e.g., Boxer & Dubow, 2002; Tisak et al., 2006).

A number of studies have shown that the most common form of aggression among girls is relational aggression. According to Cummings, Hoffman, and Leschied (2004) relational aggression is defined as: …manipulation of other with the goal of causing harm to the relationship and the victim through behaviors such as: (a) excluding a girl from a social group, (b) gossiping about another girl so that other girls will reject her, or (c) threatening termination of a friendship unless a girl does what the aggressor wants (p. 286). According to Horne, Stoddard and Bell (2007) the effects of aggression is no less dangerous as those effects of physical violence. Research and statistics indicate female aggression is on the rise. There is not extensive research or information readily available on female bullies.

Researchers of aggression and bullying research rarely reviewed females because the original thought was that only males were aggressive (Gomes, 2007). Snyder, Sickmund, & PoeYamagata's (1996) study shows that in the United States, girls under 18 years of age being arrested for violent crimes have increased 125% between 1985 and 1994. This reflects a consequential rise in rates for girls being arrested for aggravated assault (134% for girls versus 88% for boys) and "simple" assault (141% for girls versus 102% for boys), (Moretti, Holland, & McKay's, 2001). This research is built from studies of relational versus overt aggression in girls and boys and gender differences in aggressive behavior. Teenage girls who have aggressive behavior tend to use aggressive acts as a way to get revenge or to relieve boredom. In Paquette & Underwood's (1999) study, adolescents were asked to reflect why they might have been the victim of relational aggression and the answer mentioned most was that the aggressor was trying to get revenge or make them mad. Two more broad answers appeared when they asked teenage girls why a fictional character described in a story engaged in relational aggression. The teenage girls said that it was something fun to do to ease boredom, and the second answer had to do with creating jealousy, seeking attention, revenge, self-protection, and inclusion in a group involving friendship (Reynolds & Repetti, 2010). Relational aggression can be both overt and subtle.

Many high school females begin forming friendships that begin as early as elementary or middle school. Although the friendships are meaningful they often involve some type of internal conflict. There are times when the friendships

that high school females engage in are not necessarily healthy or beneficial. The friendships either involve negative or positive traits such as loyalty and trust as well as negative traits such as "girl drama" which can negatively impact the friendship. Moreover there is some evidence to support the idea that positive friendship qualities enhance a female's school experience. This evidence is mainly based on student's self- reporting of this information. Females report if they are able to maintain at least one good friendship are more likely to have very few behavioral problems within the school setting. It is important to note that not all female friendships should be considered the same. According to the research, a major component of female friendships is the ability to disclose. Another key characteristic of some female friendships is corumination. Corumination is considered a relatively new term that describes a frequent and obsessive discussion of a problem or negative opinions.

Relational aggression is also prevalent among some female friendships. Generally, some females will assume a power role in the relationship and this causes an imbalance because the aggressor will target the victim. The victim will offer suffer with low self-esteem. Social media has played a major role in relational aggression. The aggressor may post mean comments about the victim or spread false rumors about the victim. This behavior often causes conflict within the school setting. Various cases of cyberbullying have been directly linked to young people committing suicide some of which who recorded the event on social media. Overall, relational aggression may be displayed more in females than their male counterparts. Research has shown that

females that display aggression is now on the rise. Researchers also suggest that there is a correlation to aggression and violent crimes. Interestingly, females who were the victims of relational aggression seemed to have justified the unhealthy behavior that was displayed towards them. Overall, it is very imperative for high school females to learn how to properly developed and maintain positive female social relationships.

Method
There are a number of young ladies who have expressed social isolation and the inability to make friendships with the other female students. This leads to sadness, insecurity and low self-esteem for the students. These students often become withdrawn and may even develop absenteeism as a method of escape and avoidance. The most severe cases are those young ladies who develop social anxiety and lack of desire in school attendance. In seeking efforts to support these students the professional school counselors have discussed developing an intentional small group to address the challenges of social adjustment and to encourage the girls to develop the necessary tools in cultivating and maintaining healthy peer relationships.

The professional school counselors will review their caseload for potential female students to target and also seek the referrals from the teachers as well. The administrators will also be allowed to refer female students that they deem suitable to participate in the small group.

It has been agreed upon that the small group will run in two sessions. The group will be composed two groups which include one for 9th and 10th grade girls. The group

will be held during 4th period which is the longest period of the day. The students will be given a permission form which must be signed in order to participate. The group will run for 6 weeks at a time and will rotate new girls upon the completion of the group as deemed necessary. The title of the girls group will be called CHICK Chat.

All potential subjects will be issued a parent/guardian consent form to participate in the group. Students are required to return the signed consent form in order to participate in the group. A copy of the letter will also be emailed to the parent/guardian. If the form is not returned within a few days a follow up phone call will be made to the parent/guardian to ensure that the forms are returned in a timely manner.

There are 16 female participants who will participate in the small group CHICK Chat. The participants were selected based on counselor and administrative referral. The participants all returned the parent/guardian permission form and agreed to participate in the small group. The participants' ages range from 14 – 16 years of age. The ethnicities of the girls are Caucasian, African American and Mexican. The participants in this group can not necessarily be used as a generalization of female friendships as well as the results. The female participants that were selected for the small group but did not participate were solely those female students who did not return the required permission form for participation. "The use of these referred students as participants in this study greatly restricts the generalizability of the results."

Table 1
Select Demographic Characteristics of 9th Grade Female Participants

Student	Age	Ethnicity	Behavior/Attendance
1	14	African American	No referrals
2	15	Hispanic	One referral
3	15	Caucasian	5 unexcused absence
4	14	Hispanic	3 unexcused absences
5	15	African American	Two referrals
6	16	Hispanic	7 unexcused absences
7	15	Caucasian	None
8	14	Multiracial	None

Table 2
Select Demographic Characteristics of 10th Grade Female Participants

Student	Age	Ethnicity	Behavior/Attendance
1	16	Hispanic	2
2	15	Caucasian	4 absences
3	15	African American	None
4	15	African American	1 referral
5	16	Caucasian	None
6	16	Hispanic	3 absences
7	15	African American	1 referral
8	15	Hispanic	4 absences

Measure
Attitudes towards overall female friendship was measured using a questionnaire developed by the professional school counselors for this particular study. The pre assessment survey includes 12 questions. The survey measures the female participants' attitudes and thoughts about friendships. The survey measure also contains questions about overall self-concept. Lastly, the survey measure the females' attitudes about handling conflict with others. The survey was created using a Likert scale with answers that range from strongly agree – strongly disagree. The responses could possibly range from all strongly agree to all strongly disagree. Female participants were allowed to complete the initial pre data survey. The survey was completed in the computer lab. All participants were notified that the survey would be completed via google docs and all responses would be anonymous. The questionnaire is listed below in table 3.

Table 3 Pre-Survey Items

CHICK Chat Pre-Survey
1. I have a positive attitude towards myself.
2. I often experience loneliness.
3. I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am a good friend.
5. I am happy with the number of friendships that I have.
6. I am happy with the quality of friendships that I have.
7. I trust my friends.
8. I am able to express my feelings without hurting others.
9. Social media has an impact on my friendships.
10. I am able to effectively communicate and express myself to others.
11. I know how to effectively handle conflict with my female peers.
12. It is important for me to develop female friendships in high school.

During the initial session of the groups the professional school counselor will discuss the purpose of the group. The professional school counselor will allow the female participants to introduce each other and complete an initial icebreaker. The students will take the letters of their first name and use each letter to describe themselves. The icebreaker is devised to help establish a rapport for the members. The professional counselor will allow the female participants to establish group ground rules that will be used during each session of the group. The ground rules will be written down and posted in the group sessions. The professional school counselor will also review the importance of confidentiality and situations or scenarios in which other adults may have to be informed.

During the second session the group will review the ground rules established in the first setting. The group will discuss the topic of the session which is friendships. The female participants will be allowed to write down and discuss a recipe for a good and bad friendship. The friendship recipe for both friendships will be discussed. The participants will be allowed to discuss how either friendship has had an impact on them. The professional school counselor will encourage the participants to focus on selecting positive traits such as honesty, loyalty, trust, respect and other traits when both choosing and becoming a friend.

During the third session of the group there will be a discussion on communication and how to communicate effectively to others. Female participants will be allowed to journal write about a situation where they disagreed with a friend if possible. The students will be given 10 minutes. The female participants will be allowed to discuss journal writings. During the fourth sessions the professional school counselor will review positive traits and qualities that the participants have agreed upon as important in developing friendships. The students will also discuss how gossip and

rumors may have an impact on female friendships. The female participants will be introduced to "Think before you speak or post." Think – is an acronym True – Helpful- Important – Necessary- Kind. The female participants will review 4 scenarios related to gossip and rumors and discuss the importance of the Think acronym. The female participants will view social media posts and how words have the power to hurt others and cause conflict.

During the fifth session of the group student will focus on how to deal with conflict in a positive manner. The students will learn how to use I feeling statements. The students will also focus on how to listen to others and how to coping mechanisms when anger is triggered. Female participants will watch brief clips of female reality shows which displays negative behaviors. Female participants will discuss clips and how to effectively resolve conflict.

During sixth and final session – the female participants will take the post survey same survey at the end of the session. Female participants will discuss self- esteem and overall self-concept. The female participants will discuss the importance of thinking positive of themselves as well as speaking positive words about themselves. The female participants will also review the definition of empathy and kindness towards others. The students will go to the white board and allow the other female participants to write at least one positive word or trait that they observe about one another. Each of the participants will complete the activity. The female participants will review all of the components of each session. Each participant will be given

a small box (friendship tool box) and they will use index cards to create friendship tools to put in their tool box. The tools will include items they have learned from the group sessions.

The intentional intervention is to offer the group as a means to help 9th and 10th female grade students in developing at least one healthy friendship. It is also important as an intervention to reduce possible incidents of relational aggression displayed that may result in discipline referrals. The female participants will be monitored while participating in the group and afterwards. Data on the female participants overall grades, attendance and behavior will be monitored and reviewed while the group is occurring and also once the group ends to see if there is a long term effect of participation. Teacher and administrator observations will also be taken in to consideration in determining group effectiveness.

Under the ASCA Model, when collecting data for running a small group is important to assess data from the process to perception and then outcome data. The goal is to enhance the perception of female friendships and thereby assessing the outcome data to determine if an overall change has occurred in female participants developing and maintaining at least one healthy female friendship.

Results

Overall, the development of the small group for girls has been considered positive. The young ladies benefited from the intentional interventions and appeared to have enjoyed the new connections formed with their peers within the small group. As discussed earlier, the young ladies were selected based on referrals and the

students' willingness to return the required permission forms. The administrators were concerned with developing strategies and interventions that would be able to improve school attendance and also reduce possible conflicts that exist within females.

The group participants were initially given a pre-test survey. The results are as follows:
1. I have a positive attitudes towards myself. Yes – 72 % no 8% and maybe 20%
2. I often experience loneliness. Yes – 42% no 15% and maybe 43%
3. I have a number of good qualities. Yes 91% no 9% maybe.
4. I am a good friend. Yes 74% maybe 26%
5. I am happy with the number of friendships that I have. Yes 78 % no 13% and maybe 9%
6. I am happy with the quality of friendships that I have. Yes 81% no 4% and maybe 15%
7. I trust my friends. Yes 51% no 6% maybe 43%
8. I am able to express my feelings without hurting others. Yes 51% maybe 15% no 34%
9. Social media has an impact on my friendships. Yes 56% maybe 44%
10. I am able to effectively communicate and express myself to others. Yes 50% no 20% maybe 30%
11. I know how to effectively handle conflicts with my female peers. Yes 45% no 25% maybe 30%
12. It is important for me to develop female friendships in high school. Yes 85% maybe 15%

The pretest survey was insightful and necessary to gain initial data of the thoughts and perceptions of the female participants. Some of the females reported

negative attitudes towards themselves. The other survey responses that presented areas of concerns were the ability or inability to express their feelings without hurting others.

The initial session of the group allowed the girls to meet one another and to establish ground rules to be used within the group. All of the participants displayed a positive attitude towards the other girls. Although some of the girls were aware of one another no one in the group considered themselves to be friends with one another. In general, the participants chose qualities that they believe are necessary for friendships. Such qualities included honesty, trust, loyalty and respect. The group participants openly discussed some of the challenges experienced with their respective friends. One particular participant openly discussed her anger issues and how it affected her friendships at times. The young ladies listened attentively and showed support towards the participant and offered suggestions for improving future challenges.

The next session involved the participants examining both ineffective and effective communication techniques that females may use with one another. The participants viewed a couple of YouTube video clips from the movie Mean Girls. The movie provides relative content for the group's discussion and focus. The participants were introduced to journal writing which is an effective way to express and process their feelings and experiences. The participants were encouraged to use the journals on a daily basis and would be allowed to share their entries with the group if they desired. The participants also shared various challenges that they experienced with social media. The participants discussed

the most popular social media apps used were Instagram and Snapchat. Many of the participants discussed the conflicts that arose as a result of what could be considered mean or inappropriate posts.

The fifth session began as a review of the topics that were discussed in the group. The participants presented as receptive and eager. One of the participants disclosed that she blocked several of the people she had been connected with on Instagram and her "IG drama was over." The participants viewed a brief clip about the negative effects of reality TV and its depiction of women. Most of the participants agreed that they don't like the violence amongst females that they see on TV. However, all of the participants report that they have seen at least one reality show involving women and some enjoy watching shows such as Love and Hip Hop. The viewed clip involved a conflict with two of the characters. The participants discussed how this could have been better handled. The participants were introduced to "I" statements as a strategy. The participants were able to practice scenarios with a partner using the "I" statements." They were encouraged to continue to add these new tools to their journals.

The final session of the group was a review of the various topics that were discussed previously. Overall, the participants stated that they felt the group was worthwhile. The results indicated, the females felt they felt better about themselves through the discussions and also that their conflicts had decreased. The participants were led in an exercise about Positive Affirmations that they can utilize. The participants were enlisted to take turns going to the smart board and having the other young ladies choose positive words about the individual.

Initially, the young ladies seemed a little nervous and apprehensive. The girls used positive words such as brave, beautiful, nice and funny. The girls all seemed to be empowered by the affirmations and were encouraged to write daily affirmations.

Summary

The goal of the particular group was to address possible relational aggression that was being displayed with certain females. The Advisory committee comprised of administrators and professional school counselors met to discuss ways to combat potential discipline referrals and overall conflict that was occurring with targeted students. It was important to demonstrate and emphasize the importance of the female students displaying positive regard towards one another, and also placing emphasis on improving their overall academic performance. It is vital that the young ladies realize the importance of maintaining a good academic standing and its relationship to post-secondary goals.

The participants were allowed to have a brief discussion about the lessons from each of the sessions. The girls created their friendship box of the attributes they required for positive friendships including how to be good to yourself. The celebration of the six week experience including pizza and cupcakes. The girls enjoyed the ending of the group. The girls were encouraged to seek out support when needed for themselves. Initially, it was undetermined how the young ladies would respond to participating in the group. One of the major dynamics of a small group is ensuring that the girls would develop a positive rapport with one another in order to work on the determined goals.

At the start of the group there appeared

to be some hesitancy on the girls feeling comfortable to discuss the topics with one another. However, after ground rules were established and the girls completed the ice breakers they seem to become more comfortable with one another.

Overall, the pre survey seemed to be honest and reflective about the initial responses based on the mindsets of the young ladies. Early on it appeared there were some young ladies who were more comfortable than others in disclosing or discussing the various topics. It took some others a little longer to feel comfortable. Interestingly enough the girls appeared to be eager to support one another and at times encouraging as well.

The results of the post survey appeared to be valid as well. The advisory team seemed to be in agreement that the development of the small group displayed some effectiveness. The group sessions allowed the young ladies to discuss an array of topics which was very revealing and telling about their overall self-concept and the need to feel affirmed in a safe space. Many of the young ladies exhibited individual and collective struggles in their own identity. There was a common thread of the need for acceptance and also the importance of seeing themselves in a positive light. The challenges lie in the negative effects of social media and the relationship it now has on one's self esteem. The young ladies became aware of the alarming statistics about the increasing rates of depression in young ladies as a result of social media.

There were a lot of interesting points that came out as a result of the group discussions. The young ladies were given an opportunity to have more one on one attention which resulted in a positive

regard overall. The young ladies seemed to have benefited from the additional support of setting goals to improve their behavior as well as their academic performance. They were now exposed to various college options and how disciplinary actions may be brought to question when they apply to college.

The committee felt that ongoing support to these young ladies could be addressed by participating in either a mentorship program or joining My Sister's Keeper which is a newly formed group for young ladies. During President Barack Obama's presidency, the group My Brother's Keeper was established. It was designed to address opportunity gaps that young men may face and ensure that the young men reach their full potential. The female component is My Sister's Keeper both groups were established in my school district. This group has been established this year for girls and it was suggested by the committee for the young ladies to gain participation in the group. The groups allow students to participate in college visits and fairs and helps guide them to develop short and long term goals for academic success.

In general the committee was pleased with the outcome of the small group and believe that the girls showed progress from the initial meeting to the final session. It was suggested that there could possibly be rotating groups for female students identified as in need of additional support. It might be also beneficial to establish or gather incentives for the young ladies who make sufficient progress and to reward them for improvement in behavior or academic progress. In speaking with some of the faculty members they agreed to take on the role of mentors for students who were in need. This will also help to support

the needs of the students.

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