

**THE EFFECT OF HOPELESSNESS  
ON STUDENTS ENGAGED IN  
PATTERN MISBEHAVIOR  
– A REPLICATION**

**by**

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**ABSTRACT**

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The purpose of this study is to see whether high school students who have a pattern of misbehaving show higher levels of hopelessness than students who are largely well-behaved, using the Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS) as a measurement of hopelessness. This study is a replication of a study done by former University of Wisconsin-Stout student, Dean O. Hintz (1997). It was his contention that professionals in education need to do a more extensive job of diagnosing causes of student misbehavior. He stated that by recognizing that hopelessness is a contributor to misbehavior, educational personnel

could effectively show students how to change their self-perceptions and how they view the future. This would be an important step toward addressing the core of the problem (Hintz, 1997). The results of his study conducted in a small town in southern Minnesota indicated that those students who engaged in patterned misbehavior showed elevated scores of hopelessness. The study was replicated in the island of New Providence (N.P.), in the Bahamas, to see if this pattern would occur in a different cultural setting.

Two groups of students with varying levels of behavior problems at a public high school in N.P. were identified. The BHS was administered to both groups. The BHS was scored by summing the keyed responses of hopelessness for each of the 20 items. Scoring was facilitated by use of the BHS scoring key (Beck & Steer, 1993). Analysis of the data was conducted through obtaining frequency counts, percentages and an independent groups T-test. The results varied, but overall, students who were identified with behavior problems were not more hopeless than students who were not identified with behavior problems. In the discussion section, the researcher offers possible explanations for why the results occurred by delineating certain developmental, cultural and economic factors which may have contributed. Recommendations for any future study are identified.

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As I pause to reflect upon all of the people I would like to thank for helping me, I am somewhat overwhelmed at the thought that I have actually made it this far with this assignment. The production of this work has been a long and arduous, somewhat painful, yet infinitely rewarding process.

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## **Chapter One**



## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

If one were to meticulously examine the administrators' records of those students in an unnamed high school who had been placed on detention in a given semester, one would detect a certain trend beginning to emerge. There would be a select few names on the list that would reoccur periodically on a consistent basis. If one were also to investigate the disciplinary histories of these particular students, one would find that many of them have an established pattern of misbehavior that has existed for years and continues to flourish. They seem to practice behavior requiring disciplinary sanctions being placed on them over and over again, day in day out, year after year – seemingly to no avail. Bearing this in mind, the logical progression of thought is to ask “Why?” Why are these students compelled to repeat this behavior and to refuse to allow their punishment to act as a deterrent? Why don't they “straighten up and fly right” (as the adage goes)?

The subject-matter in a thesis written by former University of Wisconsin-Stout student Dean O. Hintz (1997) makes quite a strong case providing a possible answer to the above issues. In his thesis, he explores the following questions: Is hopelessness an underlying factor in the way that some students behave in a structured setting like a public high school? Are students who have a history of behavior problems having those problems as a result of hopelessness? Why are there some students who show consistent negative patterns of behavior, while other students show consistent positive patterns of behavior? What is it that motivates students to act in the ways they choose to act (Hintz, 1997)?

Hintz notes that it is widely accepted that with hope, human beings act, move, and achieve, and he quotes Stotland (1969) as saying that without hope, we are often dull, listless, and moribund. He cites Swindoll (1990) in saying that he is convinced that life is 10% what happens to us and 90% how we react to it; we are in charge of our attitudes (Hintz, 1997, p. 2). Hintz's approach and point of view seem to make sense.

Glasser (1992) states that boss-managers – who can be equated with teachers and administrators in the school system – firmly believe that people can be motivated from the outside. It is Glasser's contention that they fail to realize that all of our motivation comes from within ourselves. Paraphrasing Glasser, Hintz (1997) states that the only way that students will change their behavior is if they choose not to act that way because it is beneficial for them at that given time and place. It is always what we want at the time that causes our behavior (Glasser, 1992). This suggests that in order to get the students to cease their delinquent behavior and replace it with more appropriate forms of behavior, it must be positively or negatively reinforcing for them to do so (Nye, 1992).

In his study, Hintz's premise was that if it could be shown that with some students, a high level of hopelessness is directly related to their behavior, then that student's behavior plan could be approached differently than if it was thought that the student was misbehaving out of spite or disrespect for the school and the people who work there (Hintz, 1997). His contention was that if it could be shown that a student had an above average score on a hopelessness scale, it might be found that the student was getting detentions because he felt that he was in so much trouble at that present time that it wouldn't matter whether or not he got another detention. The student might believe that

getting another detention would not alter the negative experiences he is having and that whatever he does, nothing will improve the outlook for his future.

If delinquent behaviors in adolescents in a high school can be linked with hopelessness as an underlying problem, then the possibility exists that ways of counteracting the hopelessness could be designed with the objective of reinforcing a positive self-concept and a sense of hope for the future. Accomplishing such a task would fall under the responsibilities of a guidance counselor. In order to become fully prepared to undertake a project of this nature successfully, one would first have to be fairly positive that such a link *does* exist between hopelessness and the type of behavior that usually results in students obtaining detentions. When one is reasonably convinced that there *is* a link then one can begin trying to ascertain why the child might be feeling so hopeless, on an individual basis, and thereafter begin the process of building hope where there previously was none. This would hopefully reduce the student's incidences of problematic behavior. Appropriate behavior and outlook would have to be positively and/or negatively reinforced with a vengeance.

If it were established that there is a link between hopelessness and unsuitable behavior, it could provide healing and restoration to a group of children whose symptoms previously went unnoticed. Armed with conclusive data of this nature, it may be possible to hypothetically prevent destructive outbursts from occurring by recognizing the signs of a troubled student before his or her desolation drives him or her out of control. Precise results from such research could perhaps make the unreachable reachable.

This researcher has replicated Hintz's study in a setting that differs vastly from his. That is what comprises the subject-matter of this study. The replication occurred in the

island setting of New Providence (or N.P.), in the Bahamas. The Bahama islands are located off the southeast coast of Florida, at the northern end of the Caribbean ([www.haiti.com](http://www.haiti.com), 1999). Though geographically relatively close to the United States, there are numerous cultural differences between the two places (particularly between N.P. and that of southern Minnesota where Hintz's study was conducted) that may lead to a difference in the results that are obtained.

For instance, the Bahamas is a predominantly Black nation under Black leadership since receiving its independence in 1973 ([www.haiti.com](http://www.haiti.com), 1999). This factor may or may not contrast the self-concept of the average Bahamian teenager with that of the average Afro-American or other U.S. minority teenager who may have institutionalized societal variables negatively affecting his/her self concept because of the racism that is so prevalent in U.S. society (Transnational Racial Justice Initiative [TRJI], 2001). This is something the average Bahamian teenager has not had to contend with, thus it could present a difference in the results between the two studies.

Bahamian students attending public schools may not have racism being a contributing variable in the production of their hopelessness, as it can be inferred that many students of color in the U.S. often do (TRJI, 2001), but they are often victims of a systemic lack of opportunity, especially economically (Nowak, 2001). As it stands, the Bahamian economy may not offer Bahamian children much promise in terms of future employment opportunities. According to Worrell (as cited in Nowak), there are a number of factors that contribute to the constricted employment opportunities facing Bahamian youth. In the Bahamas, 60% of the gross domestic product is contributed by tourism, and it employs more than 50% of the labor force, reports the Consultative Committee on

National Youth Development (as cited in Nowak). Seeing that employment is so heavily dependent on tourism, states Worrell, global occurrences such as the U.S. recession have quick and damaging effects on the local economy (Nowak, 2001, Socioeconomic Response to Del. section, ¶ 3).

Other factors affecting tourism and investment and thus the Bahamian economy include the blacklisting of the Bahamas' financial sector by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) ([www.bahamasb2b.com](http://www.bahamasb2b.com), 2002) and the tragic terrorism-related events that occurred on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 ([www.CNN.com](http://www.CNN.com), 2001). There were also the ravages of Hurricane Michelle to contend with ([www.usatoday.com](http://www.usatoday.com), 2001). All of these incidents have taken their toll, and the country is still trying to recover economically.

In a televised address, James Smith, Minister of State for Finance (as cited in Godfrey, 2002), placed the fiscal deficit at more than \$140 million. He commented:

The setback to tourism as a result of September 11, has been estimated by a regional organization to cost the Bahamas some \$200 million so far in lost growth tourism revenue. Other damaging setbacks were the impact on the financial services sector of the uncertainties generated by the initiatives taken by the OECD . . . and of course there was the impact of Hurricane Michelle.

He also stated that the Bahamian economy had been brought to a virtual stand still in 2001 (Godfrey, 2002).

Nowak (2001) discusses how employment rates have been negatively affected by policies or incentives implemented by the cruise line industries. She states that rather than come on the island to sample the native restaurants, stay in one of the luxury hotels,

or give local taxi-cab drivers some business by shopping and exploring, many passengers increasingly prefer to just stay on board the all-inclusive cruise ship, docked in the harbor. Resultantly, aforementioned factors considered, there is an inevitable decrease of jobs for young people, and elevated unemployment levels for the adults on whom they are dependent upon for financial and emotional support (Nowak, 2001, Socioeconomic Response to Del. section, ¶ 3).

Also of considerable note is the observation that a large percentage of the government ministers in the Bahamas send their children to private schools or abroad (Hendricks & Redlhammer, 1980, p. 89). It raises certain questions: Is this a commentary on the standard of education at the public level? Is there a subtle message being transmitted? What are impoverished parents and students who utilize the public school educational system (Brezina, 1995) to infer? For those who are aware that this is the case, it has the potential to impact them emotionally.

Speculatively, the immersion of students with fragile, yet unformed personas (See Adolescent Development section) in an existence where, both nationally and personally, the economic picture looks bleak, and the only educational system they have access to is not patronized by those that are responsible for its maintenance, could impede the development of a healthy self-concept. This so, it is entirely possible for their self-confidence, self worth and general outlook to be affected too.

Within the confines of this study, these elements are all deserving of consideration. As if taking this into account, Nowak (2001) candidly notes, “The current economic climate has created feelings of resentment and hopelessness among the country’s young” (Socioeconomic Response to Del. section, ¶ 5).

The term “patterned misbehavior” (Hintz, 1997) also has to be considered; what may be frowned upon and deemed worthy of a detention in one setting may be casually dismissed and seen as commonplace in another. Does the severity of the misbehavior warranting the detention suggest the amount of inner turmoil and desperation the child is feeling and hence parallel the level of attention and intervention the child should be experiencing?

These are just *some* of the subtle nuances which can affect the outcome of a study and make the results of two seemingly identical studies differ dramatically from one another. All of these elements mentioned can intensify or deplete the level of hopelessness an individual feels, depending on the circumstances. Therefore these are factors to bear in mind when conducting such a study if any usable conclusions are to be drawn. Naturally, all of these dynamics can’t be addressed in this particular study, but they are all worthy of consideration when (i) predicting the outcome and (ii) examining the results of this replication study with a view to making suggestions for further research, and discussing possible concerns and interventions.

The results of Hintz’s investigation provide more than just a little food for thought. The students were assigned to groups based on the number of detentions accrued during the Spring semester of the 1996-97 school year. Members of Group 1 had no more than one detention in the semester, while Group 2 members had a minimum of six detentions during the course of the same semester (Hintz, 1997). The results of the data collection showed that for scores of hopelessness in Group 1 the mean score was 1.000 out of a possible 20 which indicates a low feeling of hopelessness. Group 2 students had an average score of 5.077, which on the Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS – the instrument

used by Hintz to measure hopelessness) is a significantly higher score when compared to the mean score from Group 1.

These results may constitute genuine insight but the question that remains is, can these results be replicated or were they an isolated occurrence? Before we get to the stage where we are concentrating all our efforts on obliterating hopelessness in poorly behaved school-age teens in an attempt to explain their behavior, it is essential for us to know whether or not his results are reproducible, particularly in other settings. This must be established before we can presume to generalize them. It is this researcher's intention to adapt Hintz's methodology to the N.P. setting and apply it to two groups of students meeting the aforementioned criterion in a public high school in the Bahamas. By reproducing Hintz's study in a vastly diverse setting it can be better determined whether his theory is one worthy of obtaining additional funding, research, and time, and thus whether greater steps can be taken toward generalizing his findings to more high school teenage populations across the globe. If the results are similar it is logical to assume that more credence can be given to Hintz's theory connecting hopelessness to delinquency.

It has been stated that there are (most likely) numerous site differences between public schools in N.P. Bahamas and those in southern Minnesota. Assuming Hintz's study was not conducted in an inner-city environment with predominantly low S.E.S. U.S. minority students (and there is nothing in his manuscript to indicate that it was), there are bound to be some differing results obtained from the two studies. Based on the cultural differences between the two studies, it is logical to surmise that the Bahamian public school students in the replication study who engage in patterned misbehavior will show elevated scores of hopelessness.



Many Bahamian students who attend public schools, come from low income households (Brezina, 1995). It is not uncommon for several generations to live in one household to make ends meet (Nowak, 2001). Zeedyk and Smith's study (as cited in Marshy, 1999, Section 2.2, ¶ 5) found that anxiety and hostility tend to intensify over time in situations of overcrowding. Symonette (as cited in Nowak) states, newspapers in the Bahamas report that in some of the poorer neighborhoods, gun battles occur frequently and citizens live in fear (Nowak, 2001, Socioec. of Juv. Crime, ¶ 1). Bethel (2001) states that "the escalation of violent crimes among the youth are symptoms of a breakdown in quality family life in our society." Bearing all of these factors in mind, it is credible to surmise that, for some of these children, every day is a fight just to survive and/or function. Therefore, it is reasonable to predict that their mean scores on the BHS will be higher (for both groups that participate) than Hintz's subjects'.

The literature review will show that children with a high hopelessness score report significantly more problems in school functioning and performance (Kashani, Reid, & Rosenberg, 1989). Studies have also shown that negative actions activated by life experiences tend to have a controlling effect on the nature of the student's beliefs regarding the outcome of his/her immediate and future goals and well-being (Beck, Steer, Kovacs, & Garrison, 1985). Therefore, the research hypothesis for this study is that higher frequency of student behavior problems will be associated with higher scores on the Beck Hopelessness Scale for high school students attending C.R. Walker High School in Nassau, N.P., Bahamas.

### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study is to determine the level of hopelessness among students with and without detentions/behavior problems as measured by the Beck Hopelessness Scale (a replication of Hintz, 1997).

There will be no statistically significant difference between the number of detentions/behavior problems among high school students who have a high level of hopelessness as compared to those students who have fewer detentions/behavior problems and a lower level of hopelessness (Hintz, 1997).

### Definition of Terms

- Hopeless – *adj.* – **1** a: giving no ground for hope: desperate; b: incapable of solution, management, or accomplishment: impossible. **2** a: having no expectation of good or success: despairing; b: not susceptible to remedy or cure; c: incapable of redemption or improvement--hopelessness *n.* - *synonym*: despondent (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2000)
- High School Student – in this study, the high school student ranges from tenth grade to twelfth grade.
- Positive Reinforcement – involves the *addition* of something (a positive reinforcer) to a situation when a response is made (Nye, 1992).
- Negative Reinforcement – involves the *removal* of something (a negative reinforcer or an aversive stimulus) from a situation when a response is made.

Both **positive and negative reinforcement** increase the probability of response – i.e. they both strengthen behavior (Nye, 1992).

- Detentions/Behavior Problems – The term “detention” was used in Hintz’s study, however the detention system of maintaining school discipline is not used in the school where this study was conducted. “Behavior problems” for this study will be used to identify those students who have been reported by the teacher to the principal’s office for classroom disturbances.

### Limitations of the Study

1. Sample size. The size of this sample may be a limitation of the study and therefore would hamper its generalizability.
2. Socioeconomic Environment. The economic environment where this high school was located in NP, Bahamas may not be generalizable to other economic environments where adolescents live either there or in the U.S.
3. Because the Beck Hopelessness Scale was originally developed for the purpose of identifying suicidal thoughts in adults, there may be other scales that more accurately reflect the concept of hopelessness in adolescents.

## **Chapter Two**

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Review of Literature**

Several items will be examined in this review of literature. Included will be a brief look at the natures of hopelessness and learned helplessness, as well as the phenomenon of adolescent development. Additionally, the discussion which was begun in the introduction concerning converse characteristics of the Bahamian site that could possibly influence the outcome of the study, will be continued in this section. In other words these site differences (between New Providence, Bahamas and southern Minnesota) will be further delineated to offer an explanation of why possible dissimilarities may appear between the results of the two studies. These site differences may be seen as extraneous variables but their consideration may become essential for the formulation of recommendations based on the data obtained.

#### **What is Hopelessness?**

Hopelessness can be objectified by defining it as a system of cognitive schemas whose common denomination is negative expectations about the future (Beck, Weissman, Lester, & Trexler, 1974). Many clinical investigators believe that hopelessness is simply a diffuse feeling state and consequently too vague and amorphous for quantification and systematic study. However, it has been argued that a person's hopelessness can be objectified by defining it in terms of a system of negative expectancies concerning himself and his future life (Beck et al., 1974). Hopelessness, then, has been proposed to be related to negative views of oneself and the world (Kazdin et al., 1986). It is a product

of a key belief that the future will yield poor outcomes, that one cannot influence these outcomes, and that trying to do so really is not worthwhile. These negative expectations may be associated with or result from a number of stressful events that may have emerged (and may continue to emerge) over the course of development (Kazdin et al., 1986).

Range and Penton (1994) describe hopelessness as inaction when threatened. They contend that a person who has hope may anticipate that although she may presently be uncomfortable, she may feel better in the future; she senses the possible. Their study resulted in significant correlations indicating that, as hope increased, hopelessness decreased. They pointed out that a possible implication for these findings is that facilitating college students' hopefulness may bolster their survival and coping beliefs (Range & Penton, 1994).

A sense of hopelessness may originate out of a temporary or permanent cognitive deficiency, with difficulty in generating solutions to problems, leading to a state where one feels there is no way out of a stressful situation. Adolescents have fewer life experiences than adults upon which to draw and therefore have fewer problem solving resources to call on. Hopelessness, therefore, has links to inadequate problem solving skills (McLaughlin, Miller, & Warwick, 1996). McLaughlin et al. point to the fact that inevitably linked to hopelessness are the problems that people feel hopeless about.

Shiomi (1995) affirms that it can be argued that children who have little hope for the close future show weaker intrinsic motivation for learning and school activities. He indicates that hopelessness scores are significantly correlated with weaker motivation

scores. In other words, if the hopeless person consistently experienced negative situations or failures, that person may simply just give up.

In their study, Kashani, Reid, and Rosenberg (1989) found that high hopelessness was associated with more problems in school functioning and performance. They go on to say that convinced that his or her best efforts will not ensure future success, a child may consider his or her performance in the scholastic sphere to be unimportant and useless. Kashani et al. (1989) stress the idea that further research on the mechanism linking hopelessness and school problems is a priority, given the importance of the school environment to future accomplishments and advances in life.

McLaughlin et al. (1996) emphasize the importance of school problems in a study of adolescents who report feelings of hopelessness. They found that adolescents engaging in acts of deliberate self-harm (DSH) are more likely to report feelings of hopelessness about their future (even *after* depression is taken into account). In fact, the results of the study suggest that a substantial proportion of the DSH group felt unable to generate solutions to their problems. Perhaps in this group, their inability to see different ways out of a problem may lead them into a cycle of hopelessness and eventual self-harm (McLaughlin et al., 1996). It is evident, then, that the phenomenon of hopelessness can have far-reaching implications and can be extremely detrimental to those who suffer from it. In order to create and institute appropriate interventions that will bring relief to school age children and adolescents who are oppressed by hopelessness, more examination of this issue should be executed; no amount of research in this area should be seen as trivial.

The nature of our humanity indicates that whatever our nationality, sex, color or creed, there are some things that have the potential to affect us all. Hopelessness is one of these

entities. For this reason, it is essential that a study such as Hintz's (1997) be replicated in a foreign, diverse locale so that, at the very least, ideas can be generated for further research and discussion and appropriate recommendations can be made.

### What is Learned Helplessness?

Hintz (1997) explains that hopelessness is sometimes referred to as helplessness or learned helplessness, and that the two constructs can be used virtually interchangeably. He makes an effort to show how hopelessness and learned helplessness are related by examining how their definitions overlap.

According to Arnhold and Razak (1991), learned helplessness is a product of a lifetime of repeated failures or experiences that have been interpreted as failures. Individuals who rarely feel that they are able to influence outcomes or control important features of their environment eventually draw the conclusion that they are helpless. Just as people who have hopelessness can be unmotivated and think negatively, individuals with learned helplessness habitually and unthinkingly engage in self-derogation. This habit is a powerful reinforcer of the helplessness orientation. Such people tend to focus on their failures and deficiencies and ignore their successes and abilities. They tend to define competence as *perfect unassisted* performance. The emphasis on perfection leads to paralysis and is the major determinant of their procrastination. Learned helplessness is an identity, and one which is very difficult to surrender (Arnhold & Razak, 1991).

Peterson (1993) states that people experiencing uncontrollability first learn that outcomes elude their control and then generalize this belief about their own helplessness to new situations where it produces difficulties for them. Arnhold and Razak (1991)



stress the importance of remembering that helplessness is a perception and not an accurate description of an individual – even if they are quite capable in many respects, they think and feel otherwise about themselves.

Hintz (1997) states that people with learned helplessness lack effort and motivation because they blame or associate failure with one instance which may have happened many years ago. He suggests that there is a clear relationship between the way people negatively view the future in hopelessness and the way learned helplessness bases that feeling of negativity on past experiences and projects them into the future.

It is the belief of this researcher that hopelessness and learned helplessness are related to patterned misbehavior in adolescents. Remembering that these phenomena are perceptions and not part of reality is essential if one is to formulate any sort of intervention to assist students to combat and overthrow them successfully.

### Adolescent Development

As young people move closer to adulthood, they become open to new vulnerabilities because their thoughts become less practical and more comprehensive in nature. Many adolescents frequently display sarcasm, cynicism, arrogance, and seeming indifference to public opinion, however, conversely, they are more likely to be hypersensitive to criticism (whether it is real or imagined), self-absorbed and troubled by their own introspections (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 547).

The reasoning that characterizes adolescence was described by Piaget as formal operational thought, which is the fourth and final stage of cognitive development in his theory. It arises from a combination of maturation and experience. For Piaget, the single

most distinguishing feature of adolescent thought is the capacity to think in terms of possibility rather than only in terms of reality (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 549).

Sociocultural theorists point to mental advances resulting from the transition from primary school to secondary school that occurs the world over in early to middle adolescence. Information processing researchers point to a new and higher level of cognition attained by the accumulated improvement in specific skills. Whatever the explanation, the literature indicates that adolescent thought differs qualitatively from that of children. This ability to think in terms of possibility allows adolescents to fantasize, speculate and hypothesize much more avidly and on a much more grandiose level than children (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 549). Adolescents can use their daydreams practically to test out alternative behavior and solutions to problems via the imagination (Rice & Dolgin, 2002, p. 142).

Hypothetical thought involves reasoning about propositions that may or may not reflect reality. In their reasoning, adolescents demonstrate a capacity to think in this manner. For them, the here and now is only one alternative among many possibilities (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 550). According to Muuss (as cited in Berger and Thompson, p. 551), this makes knowing when to stop looking at possibilities and begin dealing with the practical realities of life much more difficult.

Adolescents have the ability to separate themselves completely from what they believe and argue as if they believe something different or contrary, and they are much less likely to accept the current circumstances because, as the adage goes, that's just "the way things are" (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 551). It can be inferred, then that in a subjective test situation, such as the administering of the BHS, a number of teenaged test subjects could

deny feeling hopeless, not because they are lying, but because they tangibly believe that a better reality will manifest. The occurrence of such a scenario could potentially have an effect on test results.

Adolescents are often confronted with novel thoughts and feelings that are provocative and sometimes unnerving, as they agonizingly reflect about the world, and their place in it. Their newfound hypothetical thinking can make reflection about any serious issue a complex, laborious and emotionally draining process (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 551).

All of this cognitive growth results in adolescents becoming remarkable theory builders in their everyday lives. In fact, many find it exhilarating to devise and create comprehensive, inclusive, carefully considered theories that are consistent with multiple kinds of evidence and information, and that are refined as a bi-product of testing them against further experience and new knowledge. Many adolescents have a tendency to engage in long, ongoing, bitter, almost feud-like debates about every conceivable topic, using inadequate evidence to defend their arguments. Inconsistent facts are conveniently dismissed and any alternative viewpoints encounter strong opposition (Berger & Thompson, 1995, pp. 554–555).

Quite often, adolescents and adults find it difficult to think of theories that contrast with their own, or to imagine what evidence could possibly disprove what they believe. Adolescence, then, is the beginning of theoretical-mindedness. Adolescents strive to build theories that provide an adequate explanation of what is experienced in life, but there is much to be desired in terms of accuracy. In other words, there is room for a great deal of growth (Berger & Thompson, 1995, pp. 554–555).

Adolescence is, undoubtedly, a time of self-scrutiny. Teenagers are very concerned about how others regard them, and they think deeply about their future possibilities. There are many conflicting thoughts, feelings and motives that need to be analyzed and sorted out. There is greater reflection on the whole and on their experiences. There is more self-awareness and, combined with all of these, an enhanced capacity for self-centeredness. This is often when adolescent egocentrism sets in (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 555).

Elkind (as cited in Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 555), states that adolescent egocentrism is a self-view in which adolescents tend to regard themselves as much more central and significant on the social stage than they actually are. In addition, they tend to hypothesize what others might be thinking – especially about them – and take these hypotheses to be fact. During this stage, then, young people focus on themselves to the exclusion of others. They believe, for instance, that their thoughts, feelings, or experiences are unique only to them (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 555).

One outgrowth of adolescent egocentrism is the invincibility fable. In this mindset, teenagers are under the misapprehension that the consequences of dangerous or illegal behavior will never affect them. As a result of this faulty thinking, they engage in life-threatening pursuits such as: excessive smoking, unsafe sexual practices, and driving dangerously, even if they are aware of the risks involved, because they are falsely secure that they will never get caught, sick, or killed (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 555).

The personal fable is yet another example of adolescent egocentrism. In this instance, adolescents perceive themselves as different from others, and that they are destined for fame and fortune, and/or great accomplishments. They imagine their own lives as

unique, heroic, or even mythical. Many believe that they will become rock or movie stars, or sports heroes – whatever will make them millionaires. Others see themselves discovering a cure for cancer, or authoring a masterpiece, or in some definite way being destined for honor and glory. What is unfortunate is that a number of them, as a result, conclude that a high school education is a waste of time (Berger & Thompson, 1995, pp. 555–556). This is of significance because, hypothetically, if a student subscribed to this doctrine, he or she could exhibit a pattern of misbehavior, but indicate absolutely no inclination toward hopelessness whatsoever.

Adolescents often fantasize about how others react to their appearance and behavior. This is a foundational characteristic of a third dimension of adolescent egocentrism, and it is referred to as the imaginary audience. It arises from teenagers' assumption that other people are as intently interested in them as they themselves are. They believe that they are constantly being scrutinized by others. They devote a great deal of attention to their hair, clothing, and other aspects of their physical appearance before going out into public because they view having a slight facial blemish or a spot on their shirt as an unbearable embarrassment that everyone will be aware of and condemn them for (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 556).

It is evident that adolescents' theorizing may be logically flawed or distorted by egocentrism. It is an integral part of adolescents' mindset as they consider their lives more thoughtfully, often leading them to inflict greater self-criticism upon themselves. Acute self-consciousness can be one of their afflictions, which demonstrates that many young people are often not at ease with the broader social world. Recognizing the nature of their mindset is essential for adolescents themselves, lest they be misled by their

bravado and by making choices that may compromise their future (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 556 & 548 ¶ 1).

During adolescence, the opinions and judgments of others – adults and peers, from a variety of backgrounds – are of increased interest. Nonetheless, because of their self-consciousness, they are highly sensitive to actual or anticipated criticism. This can put them in an emotional bind because even though they are eager for lively intellectual interaction, they are also extremely vulnerable to self-doubt (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 558).

With reference to this study, and indeed any study involving adolescents, this dichotomy could have bearing on test results because the answers may not portray an authentic representation of the students' affect, for instance. Seeing that they are often searching for approval and are concerned with people's opinions of them, teenagers may feel the need to reflect in their responses what they believe the researcher wants to see or hear.

Rice and Dolgin (2002, p. 268) cite Keefe and Berndt as saying that the quality and stability of adolescents' friendships are related to self-esteem. They cite Bishop and Inderbitzen (p. 268) in saying that involvement of peers has been found to be related positively to many indicators of psychological and social adjustment. They go on to state that social support is directly related to well-being and serves to buffer the effects of unusual stress, which is good because during adolescence, the potential for stress arising from peer relationships is particularly high. During the early adolescent years, peer conformity increases and adolescents are oriented toward their peers and rely on them for a sense of self-worth (Rice & Dolgin, 2002, p. 268).

Hortacsu, as cited in Rice and Dolgin (p. 268), states that adolescents need relationships with others with whom they can share common interests. As they grow older, according to Pombeni et al. (as cited in Rice & Dolgin, 2002, p. 268), they desire a closer, caring relationship that involves sharing mature affection, problems, and their most personal thoughts. Werebe is cited in Rice and Dolgin (p. 268) as stating that they need close friends who stand beside them and for them in an understanding, caring way. Friends share more than secrets or plans; they share feelings and help each other resolve personal problems and interpersonal conflicts.

Claes is cited as stating that in adolescent friendships, there are marked differences with respect to gender: Girls expect more from their friends than boys do, and their level of attachment and intimacy with friends is greater (Rice & Dolgin, 2002, p. 268). Rice and Dolgin state that in their friendships, boys value assertiveness, logic, and duty, whereas girls, citing Gilligan (p. 268), value caring, responsibility, and interrelationships.

Younger adolescents prefer to disclose their emotional feelings to their parents, depending on the openness of family communication, however, as they get older, their self-disclosure to their friends increases, and becomes greatest among older adolescents (Rice & Dolgin, 2002, p. 268–269). Goswick and Jones state (as cited in Rice & Dolgin, p. 269) that for adolescents, friendships are so crucial because they are insecure and anxious about themselves. Their personalities have not been established or defined as yet and their identities are not secure. It becomes imperative, then, for them to surround themselves with friends from whom they gain strength and who help them establish personal boundaries. In these friendships they learn the necessary personal and social

skills and societal definitions that help them become part of the larger adult world (Rice & Dolgin, 2002, p.269).

Many adolescents feel lonely. They describe their loneliness as emptiness, isolation, and boredom. According to Woodward and Kalyan, cited in Rice and Dolgin (p. 269), they are more likely to identify themselves as being lonely when they feel rejected, alienated, and not in control of a situation. Rice and Dolgin (2002, p. 269) state that adolescent boys have more of a problem with loneliness than do girls, perhaps because it is more difficult for boys to express their feelings.

Adolescent loneliness can be attributed to a variety of reasons. Some do not know how to relate to others; they are unsure of how to behave in different situations and are unable to gauge the appropriateness of their behavior, state Carr and Scellenbach (as cited in Rice & Dolgin, p. 269). Others have a poor self-image and anticipate rejection and criticism so they avoid potentially embarrassing actions. Those that are depressed and emotionally disturbed have difficulty establishing close relationships, say Brage et al., as cited in Rice and Dolgin (p. 269). Also, when adolescents feel a lack of support from parents, it makes it harder to make friends (Rice & Dolgin, 2002, p. 269).

By late adolescence, according to Hendrick and Hendrick, most individuals have been in love. Boys begin falling in love at a younger age than girls, according to Montgomery and Sorrell, and base their love for girls more on physical attractiveness than girls do, says Feiring (all cited in Rice & Dolgin, 2002, p. 281).

Young adolescents may have an intense crush on someone they really do not know and will fantasize romantic encounters with this person. Often, a crush is on an older person (Rice & Dolgin, 2002, p. 281).



Hatfield and Sprecher, as cited in Rice and Dolgin, state that intense love can be risky business. Success sparks delight and failure invites despair. Two of the products of unrequited love are emptiness and anxiety. Loss of love can be a devastating experience for the adolescent (Rice & Dolgin, 2002, p. 281).

With regard to education, the optimum person-environment fit, or the degree to which a particular environment is conducive to the personal growth of a particular individual, is desirable. It is dependent not only on the individual's developmental stage, cognitive strengths and weaknesses, and learning style but also on the society's traditions, educational objectives, and future needs, which vary substantially from place to place and time to time (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 557). This is of pertinence to this particular study.

Unfortunately, there is often a mismatch between student needs and the school environment. This has emotional consequences for students, and, as a result, learning suffers. The phenomenon of low teacher expectations can have a direct impact on students, leading many who are subjected to it to experience a decline in motivation and achievement. This has clear implications for the social interaction between students and teachers and among students themselves (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 559).

Ego-involvement learning is an educational strategy that bases academic grades on individual test performance, with students competing against each other (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 559). Ryan (as cited in Berger & Thompson) states that developmentalists generally agree that cooperation, rather than competition, should predominate in the classroom. For Ryan, the motivation for learning should be intrinsic

pleasure from mastery of an intellectual challenge rather than advancement of one's own ego in a grading contest (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 559).

Task-involvement learning, unlike ego-involvement learning, typically utilizes team research projects, in-class discussion groups and after-school study groups. It allows all students to improve if they cooperate, and one person's success can foster another's. When the task is assisting one's peers, rather than surpassing them, the social interaction that teenagers cherish is actually constructive for education (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 560).

It is important that the school environment be in sync with the student's developmental needs. Equally as important is that the expectations and incentives of home and school be in sync to promote student learning. Parents' values about the importance of schooling and their perceptions of the student's capabilities are conveyed in many ways and, according to studies by Eccles, and Wigfield and Eccles (as cited in Berger & Thompson), have a significant influence on their children's academic goals and motivation. Parents seem to be especially important in guiding – into somewhat different pathways – the academic choices of their adolescent sons and daughters (Berger & Thompson, 1995, pp. 563–564).

Stefanko (as cited in Rice & Dolgin, 2002, p. 344) states that in spite of personality differences, research indicates that parent-adolescent relationships are usually harmonious. According to a number of studies (as cited in Rice & Dolgin, p. 344), when conflict occurs, the focus may be in any of five areas. These include: social life and customs, responsibility, school, family relationships, and values and morals (Rice & Dolgin, 2002, pp. 344–345).

Conflicts usually occur when people's expectations are violated. These violations are especially likely during adolescence because the adolescent is changing rapidly. Feldman and Quatman (as cited in Rice & Dolgin, p. 346) affirm that adolescents expect to be granted autonomy at an earlier age than their parents believe is appropriate. Also cited in Rice and Dolgin, Montepare and Lachman indicate that this is perhaps because they feel older than they really are (Rice & Dolgin, 2002, p. 346).

It appears, then, that learning in adolescence is influenced by a wide variety of influences from home and school. This does not entail just the quality of instruction that young people receive, but also the broader psychosocial context of values, beliefs, and goals that shape their self perceptions and expectations for the future (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 564).

During adolescence, for the first time in their lives teenagers are making personal daily decisions that may have far-reaching consequences for their futures. The question for developmentalists is whether the cognitive advances that adolescents experience actually help them to make good decisions. Various studies (as cited in Berger & Thompson, pp. 564–565) show that many adolescents take dangerous risks even when they know the potential consequences of their actions. Most experts believe that adolescents need guidance with their decision making, especially in these complex times, when the onset of puberty begins earlier than ever before. This is particularly so, since more than just cognitive competence is needed for effective decision making (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 565).

What further complicates the issue is that in practical situations, decision making rarely involves a single, certain choice. More often than not, one decision leads to other

options and further decisions. What this translates to is that choices are made successively, rather than all at once. It is evident, then, that adolescents' decision making is a far more complex process than an analysis of their cognitive skills alone would suggest (Berger & Thompson, 1995, p. 565).

After taking into consideration the review of the literature, what becomes apparent is that, for adolescents, the world is a tenuous place and their level of hopelessness may fluctuate from day to day, depending on the circumstances. This fundamental reality certainly has the potential to affect the results of a study of this nature.

### Socio-Economic Factors

Information from the [www.haiti.com](http://www.haiti.com) web-site (1999) states that in terms of the ethnic divisions, the people in the Bahamas are a blend of approximately 86% African, 7% European and 8% mixed. Information from this web-site also states that the labor force of the Bahamas is approximately 142,000. The unemployment rate is 43% for those between the ages of 15 and 24 (who comprise 53% of the country's inhabitants) (Nowak, 2001).

Nowak states:

Of the 71,700 households surveyed by the Bahamian Department of Statistics in 1992, the household median income was \$20,507 .... [However, as stated before] social workers note ... that it is common for several generations to live in one household to make ends meet, resulting in a deceptively high statistic for family incomes.

(Socioeconomic Response to Del. section, ¶ 2)

In addition to this, the rate of inflation continues to rise. According to [www.centralbankbahamas.com](http://www.centralbankbahamas.com), in 1998 it was 1.3%, and in 1999 and 2000 it was 1.6%. Their most recent records indicate that the current rate of inflation is estimated at 2.0% (Accessed: July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2002).

Consideration of the economic status of the Bahamas prompts the question: What does this indicate for the futures of Bahamian adolescents? Seeing that a large percentage of the population is under 25, it would appear that the mushrooming of the demand for services and economic assistance from the government and the private sector comes at a time when the country is ill-equipped to meet those needs (Nowak, 2001, Conclusion section, ¶ 1).

Nowak (2001) recounts that in a letter to the local newspaper, a college-educated young man expressed his disgruntlement at not being able to find employment in either the government or the private sectors. He was also turned down by a bank when he requested a loan in order to start his own lawn-care business. He found this very discouraging and he was alarmed and somewhat indignant that he might have to leave his hometown in order to obtain a job. Baffled by his own plight, he worries about how those less educated than himself will fare: “If that happens to me, what do you think about the poor high school graduate?” (Socioeconomic Response to Del. section, ¶ 7)

The Consultative Committee on National Youth Development’s findings (as cited in Nowak) acknowledge that the government, tourism management, and finance sectors – those that most of the nation’s young people desire employment in – are saturated, and cannot possibly swallow up the thousands of youth exiting school each year (Nowak, 2001, Socioeconomic Response to Del. Section, ¶ 4).

In answer to the question regarding the Bahamian adolescent's future posed near the beginning of this section, Nowak reveals, "For young Bahamians seeking stable employment and financial security, the challenge is extremely formidable" (2001, History and Economy section, ¶ 9).

In light of this, ascertaining whether two groups of N.P. high school students possess any hopefulness about their futures at all, could steer the direction of what to do with the outcome of the data obtained from this study.

### Demographic Data

There are numerous differences between the site of Triton High School in Dodge Center, MN and that of C.R. Walker High School in N.P., the Bahamas. However, there are about two things that these two schools have in common. Firstly, they are both public schools, and secondly, they both educate students at the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade levels.

The number of students enrolled at Triton High is 370 students and there are a total of 40 homerooms in the school ('ClickCity', 1999). Using simple arithmetic, a division of the 370 students into the 40 homerooms yields a result of about 9.25 students per classroom, hypothetically.

Research indicates that student overcrowding in a classroom is related to: disruptions within school systems (Diem, 1976), lowered student achievement (Burnett, 1996), and violence ("Violence in the Schools," 1981). In 'A Back to School Report on the Baby Boom Echo,' [then] U.S. Secretary of Education, Richard W. Riley, comments, "A growing body of research has linked student achievement and behavior to the physical building conditions and overcrowding" (Department of Education, Washington, D.C.,

1997). Perhaps it can be inferred from the literature that classroom overcrowding is related to greater disciplinary problems, however, overcrowding is evidently *not* the case in Triton High.

The county of Dodge Center has a land area of 4.349 sq. kilometers, and had approximately 763 families in 1990 – a population of approximately 2,052 people (Key to the City, 1999). Triton is listed as the only high school in the county. Of the 370 students, there are also students included from the neighboring towns of Claremont and West Concord, according to the ‘Key to the City’ web-site.

In contrast, the total population of the Bahamas in 1997 was 273,000 people. The reproductive rate is 19 per 1,000, the average annual rate of growth is 2.1%, and the population is 47.52 per square mile ([www.haiti.com](http://www.haiti.com)). Two thirds of the Bahamian population live on the site of N.P. ([www.bahamasnet.com](http://www.bahamasnet.com)). The ‘Bahamas Vacation Guide’ site on the internet states that the last census of N.P. was taken in 1990, and population toll was listed as 172,196, all residing in the 21 by 7 sq. mile island of N.P.

At C.R. Walker, there are approximately 800 students in attendance, and there are about 29 homerooms in the school (D. Sherman, personal communication, July 24, 2000). This elevates the approximate number of students in each class at C.R. Walker (27.6), above that of Triton High (9.25).

Based upon the review of literature, it is clear that learned helplessness or hopelessness may impact school behavior of adolescents. This study will compare Hintz’s results with a sample in N.P. Bahamas to make a step toward determining if this pattern exists cross-culturally.

## **Chapter Three**



### **CHAPTER III**

#### **Methodology**

As this is a replication of Hintz's study, the methods and procedures used for determining the relationship between the frequency of student misbehavior and measured level of hopelessness will follow his format.

#### **Subjects**

The researcher approached the Principal of C.R. Walker Senior High School in N.P. Bahamas to request permission to complete this study. The researcher was aware of this school due to her previous professional experience there. After granting permission, the principal referred the researcher to the guidance department of the high school. Based upon the head of the guidance department's assistance, identified/specified students enrolled at C.R. Walker Senior High School in N.P., Bahamas were assigned to two groups based on the number of behavior problems accrued during the Fall semester of the 1999-2000 school year. Members of Group 1 were the students who had a minimum of six behavior problems as noted by the Principal in the semester identified above. Members of Group 2 were those students who had no more than one behavior problem during the course of the same semester, similar to Hintz's (1997) study.

#### **Instrumentation**

In order to measure the level of hopelessness in students, the Beck Hopelessness Scale was used. As mentioned in the review of literature, the scale was developed by Aaron T.

Beck and his associates at the Center for Cognitive Therapy (CCT), University of Pennsylvania Medical School, Department of Psychiatry, to measure pessimism in psychiatric patients considered to be suicidal risks (Beck, & Steer, 1993). However, it has been used subsequently with adolescent and adult normal populations, according to Greene's study (1981), and Johnson and McCutcheon's study (1981) (both as cited in Beck & Steer, 1993).

Johnson and McCutcheon (1981) reported that the scale was effective for measuring hopelessness in 97 normal adolescents between 13 and 17 years old (as cited in Steer, Kumar, & Beck, 1993). In fact, this measurement has been evaluated in a number of studies and has been found to be reliable, sensitive, and easily administered (Beck, Weissman, Lester, & Trexler, 1974). The means, standard deviations, and corrected item-total correlations of the 20 BHS items are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Corrected Item Total Correlations by Sample Group**

Item Number	<i>M</i>	Dysthymic Disorder ( <i>N</i> = 177)	
		<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i> <sub>tot</sub>
1	.58	.50	.61
2	.08	.28	.25
3	.36	.48	.46
4	.76	.43	.31
5	.49	.50	.06
6	.41	.49	.45
7	.50	.50	.64
8	.63	.48	.32
9	.25	.44	.47
10	.55	.50	.64
11	.36	.48	.56
12	.58	.49	.63
13	.41	.49	.52
14	.62	.49	.54
15	.64	.48	.64
16	.12	.32	.45
17	.26	.44	.57
18	.76	.43	.49
19	.47	.50	.65
20	.19	.40	.44
Total	9.03	5.01	
KR-20		.87	

Reliability may be lower in college students (KR-20 = .65). Content Validity was established through pilot tests with clinicians and patients in 1974 (Beck & Steer, 1993).

As for the make-up of the scale, it is composed of 20 true-false items assessing the expectation that one will not be able to overcome an unpleasant life situation or attain

things that one values. Nine of the items are keyed false, and 11 are keyed true. Ones are assigned to negative expectations, and zeros are assigned to positive expectations. The item responses are summed to yield total scores ranging from 0 to 20 (Steer et al., 1993). This is referred to as the “hopelessness score” (Beck et al., 1974). The scale reflects several distinct dimensions in adults. Beck et al. identified three dimensions of hopelessness which they called “Feelings about the future,” “Loss of motivation,” and “Future expectations” (Steer et al.). Colloquially, adolescents are often referred to as ‘young adults’.

Steer et al. (1993) conclude that the present results indicate that the BHS is appropriate for use with adolescent psychiatric inpatients and that the internal consistency was high. Beck et al. (1974) report that it is an instrument that may be used by both professionals and paraprofessionals involved in the detection and assessment of hopelessness as an important variable in many psychopathological processes.

The BHS (See Appendix D) was administered to the groups identified. It consisted of 20 true and false questions of which 9 were keyed false and 11 were keyed true. As stated in the Literature Review, for every statement, each response was assigned a score of 0 or 1, then the total *hopelessness score* was the sum of the scores on the individual items. Thus the possible range of scores was from 0 to 20. It took the students approximately 10 minutes to fill out the survey. The surveys were coded according to Group 1 or Group 2. Upon completion of the survey, students returned their signed consent forms and surveys to the researcher who separated the consent forms from the surveys and placed them in separate folders.

### Procedures

Letters were sent home with the students with just the essential information for them to return with their parent's signature (See Appendix A). The letters also included the researcher's telephone number if parents had any additional questions about the study. The test was administered during homeroom registration time in the afternoon. The students were also given a consent form which explained the purpose of the study and asked for their consent (See Appendix B). Students' confidentiality was assured, and the letter included assurance that no repercussions would occur as a result of their participation or non-participation. After granting their consent, students were given a form requesting demographic information (See Appendix C). A letter thanking each student for participating (See Appendix E) was also attached to every test-packet. (Students had the option of taking these letters home if they so desired.)

### Data Analysis

The test of statistical significance used for this study was the t-test for independent means. The researcher chose this statistic because it was an ex-post-facto study where the number of groups was no more than two and the interval data for the study have equal units of measure.

## **Chapter Four**

## CHAPTER IV

### Results and Discussion

#### Results

This chapter summarizes the results and discussion of this study on hopelessness and pattern(ed) misbehavior. A total of 24 students from C.R. Walker Senior High School participated in this study. Twelve of the students were identified in Group 1 because they were the students who showed a pattern of misbehavior in that they had a minimum of six behavior problems as noted by the Principal in the Fall semester of the 1999-2000 school year. Twelve of the students were identified in Group 2 because they were not seen as having a pattern of misbehavior in that they were those students who had no more than one behavior problem during the course of the same semester. Six of the 24 students were male and 18 were female. Eight were 14 years old (33.3%), 13 were 15 years old (54.2%), 1 was 16 years old (4.2%) and 2 were 17 years old (8.3%). The approximate cumulative grade point average is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. APPROXIMATE CUMULATIVE GRADE POINT AVERAGE**

			Frequency	Percent
Valid	1	GPA OF 0.00-1.00	1	4.2
	2	GPA OF 1.00-1.50	7	29.2
	3	GPA OF 1.50-2.00	8	33.3
	4	GPA OF 2.00-2.50	5	20.8
	6	GPA OF 3.00-3.50	1	4.2
	8	don't remember	1	4.2
	Total		23	95.8
Missing	System		1	4.2
Total		24	100.0	

Absences from school are noted in Table 3.

**Table 3. HOW OFTEN ARE YOU ABSENT FROM SCHOOL**

		Frequency	Percent
<b>Valid</b>	<b>1 NEVER</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>41.7</b>
	<b>2 ONCE A SEMESTER</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>20.8</b>
	<b>3 ONCE A MONTH</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8.3</b>
	<b>4 ONCE A WEEK</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>20.8</b>
	<b>5 MORE THAN ONCE A WK</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4.2</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>95.8</b>
<b>Missing</b>	<b>System</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4.2</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>100.0</b>

When asked: “How important are your grades to you?”, 3 (12.5%) responded “important”, 7 students (29.2%) responded “very important”, and 14 (58.3%) responded grades were “extremely important” to them.

In reviewing the frequency counts and percentages on items 1-20 from the Beck Hopelessness Scale for the total sample, few differences in the two groups were found. The majority of students seemed to have positive expectations about the future and little indication of hopelessness. However, there were four items which indicated differences which should be commented upon. In responding to Item 4 “I can’t imagine what my life would be like in ten years” 14 students (58.3%) responded “True” and 10 students (41.7%) responded “False”. In response to item 12 “I don’t expect to get what I really want” 10 students (41.7%) responded “True” while 14 students (58.3%) responded “False”. For item 14 “Things just won’t work out the way I want them to” 17 students (70.8%) responded “True” and only 7 students (29.2%) responded “False”. Finally, item



18 “The future seems vague and uncertain to me” 21 students (87.5%) responded “True” and 3 students (12.5%) responded “False”.

The four items should be highlighted. On item 4 “I can’t imagine what my life would be like in ten years” a greater number of those students identified as having behavior problems responded “True” (See Table 4).

**Table 4. BHS04 CAN’T IMAGINE WHAT LIFE LIKE IN 10 YRS Crosstabulation**

Item 4: CAN’T IMAGINE WHAT LIFE LIKE IN 10 YRS			0 FALSE/occ miss	1 * TRUE	Total
BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	1 YES	Count	4	8	12
		% within BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
	2 NO	Count	6	6	12
		% within BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	10	14	24
		% within BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	41.7%	58.3%	100.0%

However, the same exact number of students in Group 1 and Group 2 responded identically to item 12 “I don’t expect to get what I really want” (See Table 5).

**Table 5. BHS12 I DON'T EXPECT TO GET WHAT I REALLY WANT**

**Crosstabulation**

Item 12: I DON'T EXPECT TO GET WHAT I REALLY WANT			1 FALSE/occ miss	1 * TRUE	Total
BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	1 YES	Count	7	5	12
		% within BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	58.3%	41.7%	100.0%
	2 NO	Count	7	5	12
		% within BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	58.3%	41.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	14	10	24
		% within BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	58.3%	41.7%	100.0%

On item 14 “Things just won’t work out the way I want them to”, a greater number of the students identified as not having behavior problems responded “True” as opposed to the responses of the students who were identified with behavior problems (See Table 6).

**Table 6. BHS14 THINGS WON'T WORK OUT WAY I WANT THEM TO**

**Crosstabulation**

Item 14: THINGS WON'T WORK OUT WAY I WANT THEM TO			0 FALSE/occ miss	1 * TRUE	Total
BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	1 YES	Count	5	7	12
		% within BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	41.7%	58.3%	100.0%
	2 NO	Count	2	10	12
		% within BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	7	17	24
		% within BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	29.2%	70.8%	100.0%

With regards to item 18 “The future seems vague and uncertain to me”, students in Group 1 and Group 2 were very similar in their “True” responses (See Table 7).

**Table 7. BHS18 THE FUTURE SEEMS VAGUE & UNCERTAIN TO ME****Crosstabulation**

Item 18: THE FUTURE SEEMS VAGUE & UNCERTAIN TO ME			0 FALSE/occ miss	1 * TRUE	Total
BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	1 YES	Count	1	11	12
		% within BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	8.3%	91.7%	100.0%
	2 NO	Count	2	10	12
		% within BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	3	21	24
		% within BEH_PROB HAS SUBJECT BEEN DIAGNOSED W/ BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	12.5%	87.5%	100.0%

In summary, overall scores on the Beck Hopelessness Scale indicated that those students identified as having behavior problems scored either minimally (50%) or mildly (50%) hopeless, whereas those students without behavior problems indicated a greater dispersion of responses, i.e. 25% scored in the minimal range, 50 % scored in the mild range and 25% scored in the moderate range of hopelessness.

Finally, the results of an independent group's T-test indicated that there were statistically significant differences at the 0.5 level on the total Beck Hopelessness Scale (See Table 8).

**Table 8. Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
BHS_TOT TOTAL SCORE: BECK HOPELESSNESS SCALE	Equal variances assumed	11.020	.003	-2.204	22	.038
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.204	13.909	.045

### Discussion

In reviewing the overall responses to the Beck Hopelessness Scale, the responses were surprising and did not support either this researcher's hypothesis or Hintz's (1997). In reviewing the students' responses to the (aforementioned) items noted, some observations can be made.

The student responses to item 4 were most similar to this researcher's hypothesis and Hintz's (1997) results in that a majority of the students with behavior problems displayed hopelessness. This supports this researcher's premise that those students who have been identified with behavior problems may have less hope about their futures.

However, on item 12 "I don't expect to get what I really want", both Group 1 and Group 2 soundly rejected the notion that they would not get what they really wanted. This result completely astonished this researcher. It certainly demonstrates adolescent idealism at its finest. Rice and Dolgin (2002, p. 138) explain that because teenagers have an ability to differentiate between the possible and the real, they are enabled to distinguish what the adult world is, but also what it *might be* under *ideal* circumstances.

What makes them idealistic is their ability to grasp what is and what might be. Their tendency is to dismiss the actual in favor of the possible (Rice & Dolgin).

Still, there was no way to predict this amount of optimism, especially in a study of this nature. This result flatly contradicted any prediction connecting patterned misbehavior to hopelessness or economic instability to despair. Teenagers have a way of turning the tables in a given situation without giving any indication that they will. This is part of what makes working with and observing them, or interacting with them fascinating, endearing, appealing, astounding, and infuriating very often all at the same time.

Culturally, there are some factors that could explain this result. There are no hard and fast rules with teenagers. For instance, those who are well behaved are not necessarily abounding in common sense or moral soundness. Nevertheless, for the sake of argument, let us assume that the more sensible students in the sample group are those not identified as having behavior problems. Their response might be linked to or reflect that they are driven and simply unafraid of hard work. They could believe that they may have to work diligently and tenaciously to get what they want, but it will be well worth the battle.

Because of their idealism, they grit their teeth and refuse to believe that anything to the contrary will occur. They perceive that they will get whatever it is they want through perseverance. In a setting where they may be considered oddballs for maintaining scholastic discipline amidst a sea of recklessness, they would be accustomed to accomplishing their goals this way any way.

What may be going on in the hearts and minds of the students who were identified as having behavior problems could be a completely different state of affairs. As a defense mechanism, perhaps these students have stopped worrying and choose not to think too

much about the future. If they are subscribers to the invincibility fable (Berger & Thompson, 1995), they are not likely to believe that their actions or misbehavior will have any negative effects or repercussions.

Gottfredson (1994) states that there are “Multiple routes to problem behavior.” She also asserts that many prevention researchers and practitioners also assume a link between less serious problem behaviors and later more serious crime. From this it could be inferred that those students who are exhibiting mild misbehavior in high school are sowing behavioral seeds that will compel them to wreak havoc later. It is also possible that they are keeping as low a profile on campus as they can to cover up what they are doing on their own time.

There is a growing segment of the Bahamian populace who are increasingly more ruthless. There has also been an elevation in gang activity (Nowak, 2001), and a relatively recent resurgence of the drug trade. Sigmon (1994) states that a characteristic of Youth Violence Syndrome (YVS) is an increased desire to buy expensive consumer goods and to obtain them by breaking the law if necessary.

In this researcher’s opinion (with reference to BHS item 12) “What I Want”, for the majority of the youth in the Bahamas translates to materialism or the pursuit of material things. Culturally, if any of the students identified as having behavior problems are affiliated with gangs, and it is quite plausible that they may be, their mindset could be that they will get what they want, by any means necessary.

Seeing that they believe they cannot get any jobs because of the economic climate, and they do not see themselves as having any scholastic aptitude or future anyway, it is possible that they could believe that illicit activity is the only answer for survival.

Unfortunately, in many cases, the absence of father figures or credible substitutes, the lack of financial resources and education, and constant stimuli to hoard possessions, leads to the emulation of the drug dealer.

The nature of drug dealing is that people ‘get rich quick.’ Not only do they get exorbitantly rich expediently (to their way of thinking), they also make exceedingly more than many of those who are educated. Consequently education and school are of little significance. For the adolescent, it is a foolhardy way to make his or her personal fable a reality.

All of these pieces could build a hypothetical scenario concerning these youth who emphatically and expectantly believe that they WILL get what they want.

“Getting what I really want” may be made manifest in any number of behaviors. Some of these include: petty theft from establishments or of the personal valuables of a person known or unknown to the youth – adult, child or peer; using intimidation tactics, usually within certain neighborhoods or territories, especially when part of a gang, to procure the valuables of (usually) peers – known or unknown to the perpetrators; for girls in particular, the acquisition of an older male friend, known as a “Sugar Daddy”, with whom they exchange sexual favors in return for money or possessions (of all, the most unfathomably distasteful, deplorable and heart-achingly-breakingly sad); being a scout or a lookout for drug dealers, or actually dealing drugs themselves (often on school premises until caught), to name a few.

These are all pertinent variables that would be virtually impossible to monitor and very troublesome to remove from a subjective testing situation. All things considered, it would be difficult to sterilize the test-taking under these circumstances.



Is it possible that these children have been so immersed in hopelessness that their coping skills are so advanced and complex that situations that might seem hopeless to others are only momentary hurdles or rudimentary bumps in the road for them? It might be that they have lived with hopelessness and chaos so long that it has become commonplace and does not even register on legitimate testing instruments any more. Perhaps a more revolutionary instrument designed for the hardest of ‘urbanified’ hearts needs to be devised or developed.

One thing that is evident is that this researcher has a lot to learn. Another is that whether they intend to acquire it by using a pen and paper and their brains, their bodies, their buddies, illegal weapons, or crime, one way or another, it appears that these students intend to see to it that they do, indeed, “Get what [they] really want”, whatever that may be.

With regard to the student responses on item 14 “Things just won’t work out the way I want them to”, students without behavior problems offered the most affirmative responses. The question is why would this be? At first glance, it seems to be inconsistent with their conviction in the prior section that they do, in fact, expect to get what they really want. Upon further consideration, however, it can be seen that even though someone may *expect* to get what they really want, and may even actually *get* what they really want, it is still possible for it to happen outside of the context of *the way* they wanted it to happen.

For instance, a teenaged girl may want a date to the prom. She may expectantly believe that she will have a date to the prom. She receives a request to accompany a

young man to the prom, but it is (a) someone she isn't keen on, or (b) someone she likes but the only reason he asked her is because the girl he originally asked canceled on him.

A more troubling scenario could be that of a young man whose father is now remarried with new children. Because he has not seen him for about a year and he misses him, he calls him up and asks him to come to his martial arts demonstration. His father agrees to attend, so the boy is expecting to see his father and catch up with him and spend some time with him after the program.

On the night in question, the boy looks into the audience and spies his father and his heart is filled with joy and pride and *expectation*. However, just before the boy is about to perform, his father takes a cellular phone call and walks outside. He does not come in for the remainder of the exhibit, and when the young man dashes outside to see where his father could be, he is nowhere to be found.

In both of these instances, the youths in question expected to get what they really wanted, however things certainly did not work out the way they wanted them to. If their lives are often saturated with heart-wrenching disappointment, it is logical for them to eventually come to the conclusion that, in general, things won't work out the way they want them to. The one redeeming factor for them is that very idealism that adolescents are so recognized for. That is the one thing that is likely to keep them at least still hopeful, to some degree, about getting what they really want.

So, why would more students without behavior problems be convinced that things won't work out the way they want them to? Perhaps they are more cognizant of and realistic about life's problems and perhaps they have a greater ability than their misbehaving peers to be able to foresee some of the setbacks that might occur. It is also

possible that they took an extra moment of silence and contemplated the item more thoroughly so that they had a deeper understanding of what was being asked beyond the simple question. As a result, they could identify their feelings better and thus answer more accurately.

It stands to reason that children with less behavior problems are more settled, and can therefore muse more about the issues that confront them. Students with behavior problems many times find it less easy to concentrate on such exploits, and are often busy trying to determine what next bit of mischief they are going to inflict upon someone. Another thing to consider, in this researcher's opinion, is that students who tend to be more well-behaved, in many cases, put more effort into the projects – scholastic and otherwise – that they pursue. This can result in a deeper sense of failure when things don't work out exactly the way they planned. A greater propensity and desire in the non-misbehavers to see the whole picture, and therefore its flaws can result in typical teenage angst, impatience and self-centeredness, which are also contributors which can not be omitted.

As stated before, many of the public school students in N.P. are from poorer settings (Brezina, 1995), where there are often shoot-outs and people fearing for their lives (Nowak, 2001). As the Bahamas is a pre-dominantly Black nation ([www.haiti.com](http://www.haiti.com), 1999), these children would, therefore, be no strangers to Black on Black crime. This phenomenon is prevalent in many (Black) communities in the United States, and it is apparent that its precursors are poverty, unemployment, hopelessness and despair (Ebony, 1994).

If similar circumstances exist in the Bahamas, and the literature suggests that they do (Nowak, 2001), then it is not illogical to assume that these children have been steeped in an atmosphere where many of the young and older adults that they see seem to be immersed in hopeless circumstances and lifestyles. Ebony (1994) asserts that there is a connection between unemployment and hopelessness, both of which, according to Nowak (2001), are present in the small island community of N.P.

It is this researcher's opinion that if the students who were not identified as having behavior problems are generally more contemplative, observant, intuitive and mature in nature (which they may or may not be), then constant exposure to hardships such as have been described, could negatively affect their outlook. Based on this train of thought, it is not a stretch to see that the majority of them would feel that, as the item states: "Things just won't work out the way I want them to."

In addition to this, they have less life experiences to draw upon to give them a sense of the fact that even when things aren't perfect, they often work out.

Finally, on item 18 students identified with behavior problems and students without behavior problems both agree that "The future seems vague and uncertain to me". It is this researcher's opinion that this result can be based on a number of things. Firstly, there were, in all honesty, probably some students who were unacquainted with the meaning of the word 'vague', so rather than leave the answer sheet empty, they answered in the affirmative – this is a seemingly frivolous, yet nonetheless distinct possibility.

Another reason that both groups would have supported this statement is because it is not uncommon for high school students in general not to have any idea of what will occur in their future, or even what their desires are. In fact there are still many Sophomores in

college who are undecided in terms of their major for this very reason. Many young people rarely know what is ahead of them in their lives. They may have grandiose dreams but, deep down, many of them have no idea of how to bring them to pass, and it is still early for them to have a concretized idea of what will become of their lives.

Based on this researcher's knowledge of the family environments that the students come from, this is not actually such a surprising response. As in America, teenagers in the Bahamas have a lot of responsibilities. Many of them are products of single-parent families. Those that come from low SES households, as many in this study probably did, often work after school to help their mother to pay the bills. They often also have the challenge of taking care of their younger siblings when their mother is unable to because of work obligations.

They would be accustomed to seeing their mother 'sweating and slaving', quite often at more than one job, just to make enough money to keep their heads above water, as it were. It is not at all inconceivable for them to have many unanswered questions concerning their futures and what will happen when they are at the stage when they're old enough to make quality, life-affecting changes and decisions for themselves. They must wonder: Will I go to college? Will I continue working at this job? Will I get another? Will I have to stay and help my mother and my brothers and sisters? Will I ever be in a position to stand on own two feet? Will I ever get married?

They are faced with an endless barrage of questions that, at this point in time, they simply do not have an answer to, nor can they find one readily. This would explain why at times their future seems bleak and hazy, and why the majority of the test subjects agreed that, "The future seems vague and uncertain to me."

This just demonstrates that, whether the student is one that the teachers rejoice when they see, or one that they bolt in the next direction to get away from, there are just some times and some places where there is bound to be common ground.

This chapter presented the results and discussion of this study. The results did not reject the researcher's null hypothesis, however, as indicated in the discussion, there may be specific developmental, economic and cultural reasons for these results.

## Chapter Five

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of hopelessness among students with and without detentions/behavior problems as measured by the Beck Hopelessness Scale (a replication of Hintz, 1997).

The sample was obtained from students enrolled at C.R. Walker Senior High School in N.P., Bahamas. Identified/specified students were assigned to two groups based on the number of behavior problems accrued during the Fall semester of the 1999-2000 school year. Members of Group 1 were the students who had a minimum of six behavior problems as noted by the Principal in the semester identified above. Members of Group 2 were those students who had no more than one behavior problem during the course of the same semester, similar to Hintz's (1997) study.

The procedure began with the researcher approaching the Principal of C.R. Walker Senior High School in N.P. Bahamas to request permission to complete this study. After granting permission, the principal referred the researcher to the guidance department of the high school. Letters were sent home with the students to be returned with their parent's signature. The test was administered during homeroom registration time in the afternoon. The students were also given a consent form which explained the purpose of the study and asked for their consent. Students' confidentiality was assured. After giving their consent, each student was given a demographic form and a copy of the Beck



Hopelessness Scale. Analysis of the data was conducted through obtaining frequency counts, percentages and an independent groups T-test.

The results varied, but overall, students who were identified with behavior problems were not more hopeless than students who were not identified with behavior problems. In the discussion section, the researcher offers possible developmental, cultural, or economic reasons to explain why the results occurred.

### Conclusions

Seeing that the results did not reject the researcher's null hypothesis, there are a number of conclusions that can be made from this study.

In reviewing the characteristics of the site of N.P. (in the) Bahamas, it becomes apparent that the sample of students from there was, in all likelihood, surrounded by many pressures of various kinds. It is quite possible that they had more stressors to contend with than the sample of students from Dodge Center, MN. This being the case, it is a phenomenon to note that the levels of hopelessness on the BHS were lower for the N.P. sample than those for the Minnesota sample.

A possible conclusion that can be drawn from this is that a portion of the Bahamian children are a lot tougher, and more resilient than they are probably given credit for societally. It could also imply that they have a personal arsenal of coping and problem-solving skills that they probably utilize on a daily basis to maintain stability in their lives – something which, in all probability, few Bahamian parents or adults are overtly aware of.

A possible consideration potentially related to the outcome of the study was the fact that it was very difficult for the researcher to obtain information/data on the Bahamian family structure and way of interacting. This could have hypothetically have provided valuable insight pertaining to the prediction of the results.

In addition to this, there was astoundingly little to be found in the literature about hopelessness and misbehavior. There was a great deal more, however, on hopelessness and suicide. Evidently, the topic addressed in this work is largely absent in the literature. This indicates availability for a voluminous amount of research in this area to be continued.

It is possible that the use of the Beck Hopelessness Scale, which was originally directed at identifying suicidal behavior and revised for use with adolescents, may not be the most appropriate scale to use with this group. There may be another instrument in existence that is more geared towards detecting hopelessness in non-suicidal high school students that would, perhaps, have been more applicable and may have yielded a different result. In the discussion section, the researcher half-jokingly suggests that maybe a more urbanized version of the BHS should be developed for more diverse populations.

The nature of school guidance counseling is such that proponents of the field are interested in bringing about the optimum mental, emotional and behavioral well being in their clients (the students). It is the guidance counselor's desire and duty to assist students who are constantly involved in school discipline problems or patterns of misbehavior that adversely affect the environment that the student is in, and all of the other persons in that environment.

The results of this investigation are news for school guidance counselors interested in attempting to isolate the root causes of misbehavior in high school students, with a view to developing an effective intervention that accomplishes the goals of helping the individual student to experience a marked improvement in his or her demonstration of appropriate social interaction and respect for authority.

It would appear that the premise of this study as it stands may not be able to be used by school guidance counselors in their intervention strategies. Based on the results, which are by no means exhaustive, hopelessness, apparently, is not necessarily the underlying cause of disruptive behavior in high school students (on the island of N.P.).

The results, do, however, indicate a need to pay closer attention to students who are well behaved, but because of decorum are not crying out and are thus not getting their needs met. The results of the study indicate a broader spectrum in their levels of hopelessness. Perhaps too often in scholastic situations, all of the time, emphasis and spotlight are placed on those who misbehave – as was done in this work.

The results of this research point to the anomaly that *they* might be the forgotten multitude who are silently agonizing and waiting for someone to notice their pain and throw them a life jacket. It would be a tragedy to let these students who already possess the appropriate temperament for success be left by the wayside and allowed to fall through the cracks, simply because they were overlooked.

Nonetheless, as a counselor having performed the research and having administered the BHS, this researcher believes she has more familiarity with the concept of hopelessness than she did before. This leads her to believe that she is now better

equipped to avidly search out the signs of hopelessness in her students, and make aggressive interventions as a consequence.

### Recommendations

If the behaviors that constitute creating a pattern of misbehavior – the behaviors that might warrant six or more detentions during one semester (Hintz, 1997) – were to be defined, they would probably coincide with one or more of the behaviors typifying problem behavior in Gottfredson's (1994) article. These include: theft, violence, illegal acts of aggression, alcohol or other drug use, rebellious behavior, anti-social behavior, aggressive behavior, defiance of authority and disrespect for others.

This is of interest because many problem behaviors can lead to or become synonymous with delinquency, which is criminal behavior committed by a young person. Delinquency can include acts of aggression or violence (Gottfredson, 1994). There is only approximately a 35 percent chance that a violent child will not become a violent adult, and that number decreases every year past the age of 9 or 10 (Curriculum Review, 2002, Violent Children section, ¶ 2). It is also interesting to note that one of the characteristics of Youth Violence Syndrome (YVS) happens to be hopelessness, and many of the individuals with YVS also exhibit delinquent behavior (Sigmon, 1994).

Bearing this in mind, for guidance counselors, early detection and intervention **MUST** be made for those students exhibiting symptoms of hopelessness or those engaged in problem behavior. It is essential that this occur before the behavior escalates and becomes hazardous to the students themselves, to those with whom they come into contact, or society at large.

Even though the results of this particular study did not show a connection between hopelessness and patterned misbehavior, in light of the literature and Hintz's (1997) results, it is still the recommendation of this researcher that counselors be watchful, vigilant and alert to this end. They must be cognizant of the signs and be aware that problems can mushroom out of control like a forest fire if left unchecked.

It is obvious from the results of this and Hintz's (1997) study that more research needs to be conducted on adolescents with behavior problems and their level of hopelessness. Maybe it has not been previously recognized or addressed, but, considering the results of this study, it is evident that more attention should specifically be trained upon adolescents *without* behavior problems to ascertain and monitor their level of hopelessness as well.

Seeing that there is a connection between unemployment and hopelessness (Ebony, 1994), an in-depth examination of economic issues and cultural definitions of hope for the future should also be the focal point of any future research.

Undeniably, the latitude and scope of this study was limited. Even though the results were inconclusive, to have been privy to making a comparison between the two sites, studies and findings, was still scholastically rewarding, at least for the researcher.

Discernibly, for replications or follow-up studies, larger sample sizes are imperative. More cross-cultural research testing Hintz's premise would undoubtedly be rewarding. In the researcher's opinion, the possible implications of Hintz's theory still warrant further experimentation, and investigating on a larger scale in diverse settings could prove useful where interventions are concerned. As stated, it would be astute for future researchers to assess whether the BHS is the best instrument for the population and purpose in question, or whether a more pragmatic one does in fact exist.

It is the hope of this researcher that future endeavors would be made to replicate these studies in an assortment of sites, with larger sample populations to determine whether Hintz's original, fundamental premise is sound.

Future research on this topic would provide information to empower students to become happy, positive, hopeful individuals who no longer, it is hoped, exhibit a pattern of misbehavior!

## Appendix A

# HUMAN RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

8 March, 2000

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am employed by the Ministry of Education and have been granted study leave in order to further my studies. I am currently pursuing my Master's Degree (MS) in School Guidance Counseling at the University of Wisconsin – Stout. In order to obtain my degree, as part of the graduation requirements, I am required to do a research study.

As a future guidance counselor, I am interested in learning whether there is a relationship between hopelessness and misbehavior in Bahamian secondary school students. Your child has an opportunity to take part in this study. The Principal, Ms. D. Sherman, has fully approved this project. I am asking your permission for your child to be included in this study, and hope you will agree to allow him or her to participate.

Your child will be asked to respond to 20 questions on the topic mentioned above. I assure you that all information collected in the process of conducting this study will be kept completely confidential, and that at the conclusion of this study, all records which identify individual participants will be destroyed.

Please sign below indicating your permission for your child's participation, and return it to Mrs. Smith, the School Guidance Counselor, by \_\_\_\_\_ March, 2000. Thank you very much for your cooperation and support.

Yours sincerely,

Anja Farquharson  
Graduate Student

Dr. Leslie Koepke  
Research Advisor

By signing this form, I give my consent to allow my child, \_\_\_\_\_  
to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent / guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

NOTE: Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to the researcher, Anja Farquharson, phone (715) 232-1709 or research advisor, Dr. Leslie Koepke, phone (715) 232-2237 and second to Dr. Ted Knous, Chair, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715) 232-1126.



## **Appendix B**

8 March, 2000

Dear Student:

I work for the Ministry of Education and am on study leave in order to further my studies. I am at the University of Wisconsin – Stout, working towards my Master’s Degree in Guidance Counseling. In order to graduate, I must do a research study. I need your help to do this.

I am interested in studying the relationship between hopelessness and misbehaving in Bahamian secondary school students. You will be asked to complete a series of questions on this issue. Your answers will be kept completely confidential.

Before participating, please read and then sign the consent form **below**, showing that you understand your rights as a participant. Thank you very much for your time and support.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Anja Farquharson  
Graduate Student

Dr. Leslie Koepke  
Research Advisor

I understand that my participation in this study is strictly voluntary and that I may discontinue my participation at any time. I understand that the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between hopelessness and misbehavior. I further understand that any information about me that is collected during this study will be kept completely confidential and will not be part of my permanent record. I understand that when this study has been completed, all records which can identify me will be destroyed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

NOTE: Questions or concerns about participation in the research or complaints after having participated should be addressed first to the Principal, Ms. D. Sherman, who will contact Miss Anja Farquharson, phone (715) 232-1709, or research advisor, Dr. Leslie Koepke, phone (715) 232-2237 and second to Dr. Ted Knous, Chair, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715) 232-1126.

## **Appendix C**

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

This is some general information about you. Do **NOT** put your name on it. Your cooperation in answering these questions is greatly appreciated.

Directions: Please circle the appropriate answer.

1. Your gender is:    Male    Female
2. Your age is:                    13      14      15      16      17      18
3. What grade are you in?    10<sup>th</sup>    11<sup>th</sup>    12<sup>th</sup>
4. What is your approximate cumulative grade point average (G.P.A.)?
  - A) 0.00 – 1.00
  - B) 1.00 – 1.50
  - C) 1.50 – 2.00
  - D) 2.00 – 2.50
  - E) 2.50 – 3.00
  - F) 3.00 – 3.50
  - G) 3.50 – 4.00
  - H) Don't remember
5. How often are you absent from school?
  - A) Never
  - B) Once a semester
  - C) Once a month
  - D) Once a week
  - E) More than once a week
6. How important are your grades to you?
  - A) Not important
  - B) Somewhat important
  - C) Important
  - D) Very important
  - E) Extremely important

**DIRECTIONS:** Thank you for taking the time to complete the demographic portion of this study. When you have finished, the Beck Hopelessness Scale will be administered and will take approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete. Please give your completed answer sheets to your teacher.

## **Appendix D**



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Education: \_\_\_\_\_

This questionnaire consists of 20 statements. Please read the statements carefully one by one. If the statement describes your attitude for the **past week including today**, darken the circle with a 'T' indicating TRUE in the column next to the statement. If the statement does not describe your attitude, darken the circle with an 'F' indicating FALSE in the column next to this statement. **Please be sure to read each statement carefully.**

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| 1. I look forward to the future with hope and enthusiasm.  | (T) (F) |
| 2. I might as well give up because there is nothing I can do about making things better for myself.                | (T) (F) |
| 3. When things are going badly, I am helped by knowing that they cannot stay that way forever.                     | (T) (F) |
| 4. I can't imagine what my life would be like in ten years.  | (T) (F) |
| 5. I have enough time to accomplish the things I want to do.   | (T) (F) |
| 6. In the future, I expect to succeed in what concerns me most.  | (T) (F) |
| 7. My future seems dark to me.   | (T) (F) |
| 8. I happen to be particularly lucky, and I expect to get more of the good things in life than the average person. | (T) (F) |
| 9. I just can't get the breaks, and there's no reason I will in the future.  | (T) (F) |
| 10. My past experiences have prepared me well for the future.  | (T) (F) |
| 11. All I can see ahead of me is unpleasantness rather than pleasantness.  | (T) (F) |
| 12. I don't expect to get what I really want.  | (T) (F) |
| 13. When I look ahead to the future, I expect that I will be happier than I am now.                                | (T) (F) |
| 14. Things just won't work out the way I want them to.   | (T) (F) |
| 15. I have great faith in the future.  | (T) (F) |
| 16. I never get what I want, so it's foolish to want anything.   | (T) (F) |
| 17. It's very unlikely that I will get any real satisfaction in the future.  | (T) (F) |
| 18. The future seems vague and uncertain to me.  | (T) (F) |
| 19. I can look forward to more good times than bad times.  | (T) (F) |
| 20. There's no use in really trying to get anything I want because I probably won't get it.                        | (T) (F) |

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## **Appendix E**

## LETTER OF THANKS

March, 2000

Dear Student Participant:

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank each of you. You have shown tremendous consideration for participating in this study. I thank you for your cooperation in providing me with the information needed to conduct my research, and I appreciate you taking the time to assist me. Your willingness to take part has provided an opportunity for guidance counselors to obtain new knowledge. Once again, thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Anja Farquharson  
Graduate Student



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