

ABSTRACT

DOWDEN, ANGEL MONIQUE. The Effects of Self-Advocacy Training Within a Brief Psychoeducational Group on the Academic Motivation of Black Adolescents. (Under the direction of Edwin R. Gerler, Jr.)

The purpose of this dissertation is to make inference about the effectiveness of self-advocacy training in increasing the academic motivation and academic self-concept of Black adolescents. Action research and phenomenological approaches are utilized concurrently throughout the N=1/ ABA single subject experimental design that is replicated six times. Black adolescents are confronted with ongoing social barriers that affect their academic motivation. School counselors can improve the educational landscape for Black adolescents by employing advocacy competencies in their schools. The dissertation describes the research study results of a brief psychoeducational group employed to teach self-advocacy skills to Black adolescents, with the ultimate goal of improving their academic self-concept and academic motivation. The researcher demonstrated evidence that improvement took place during the treatment and the improvements were held in the return to baseline.

The Effects of Self-Advocacy Training Within a Brief Psychoeducational Group on the
Academic Motivation of Black Adolescents

by
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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my family. My husband, Quincy, and my twin six year olds, Bliss and Quincy, Jr., who have been patient and supportive of my enduring schedule over the last four years. Additionally, this is dedicated to my mother for teaching me to be independent and strong in the face of adversity. Lastly, my father for loving me in spite of myself.

BIOGRAPHY

I am originally from Virginia, but I have been living in North Carolina for eight years. I moved to North Carolina in 2002 after completing my Master's degree. I received my undergraduate degree in English and my master's degree in Counseling from Norfolk State University in Norfolk, VA. After receiving my undergraduate degree I taught English in Newport News, VA for two years. During that time I worked on my master's degree. After completing my master's degree, I moved to North Carolina where I worked as a school counselor in both Durham Public Schools and Wake County Schools for a total of five years. I have spent the three years working as a consultant for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI).

I have decided to focus my research on multicultural and social justice counseling because those areas of counseling resonate with me personally and professionally. I am a first generation college student. I was born to a teen mother. Although my parents wed, they divorced when I was young. I spent my youth through adolescence living in low income housing. I attended all black schools from elementary through graduate school. In high school, I did not plan to go to college. My grandparents encouraged me to go. Although I did go to college, I had limited information, resources and guidance, which are all needed to make appropriate choices. Because of this, the process to get to this point has not been easy, but I am all the better for every challenge and every barrier I have worked to overcome.

I hope to take my experiences and impart a willingness to persist, overcome

obstacles, and face adversity despite individual limitations to individuals who have been historically disadvantaged/underserved/underrepresented and marginalized in society through my teaching, research, and scholarship.

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Without my husband I would not have been able to work on my Ph.D. With that, I owe this degree to him. He has never questioned the feasibility of me working full-time, going to school, and being a wife and mother. He has supported my endeavors and for that I am grateful. He has been a great husband and father through this entire process and for that I owe him so much.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	Page viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose of self-advocacy training	1
Utilizing a social justice theoretical framework	1
Advocacy in Counseling	2
Self-advocacy training for Black adolescents	4
Brief psychoeducational group	5
N=1/ABA single subject experimental design	7
Phenomenological approach	7
Action research	8
Definitions of Terms	10
CHAPTER 2- LITERATURE REVIEW	12
Social Justice in Counseling	12
Relevant Self-Advocacy Research	17
Self-Determination Theory	21
African American Students and Education	24
Summary and Overall Critique of Literature Review	25
CHAPTER 3- METHOD	27
N=1/Single subject experimental design	27
Employing the N=1/ABA single subject experimental design .	31
N=1 within an Phenomenological, Action Research Framework	32
Research process/model	33
Participants; Participant selection and criteria	34
Instrument and Other Measures	35
Independent Variable	38
Dependent Variable	38
Procedures	39
Data Collection	47
Data Analysis	48
CHAPTER 4- RESULTS	50
Effectiveness of self-advocacy training	50

Assessment of Academic Self-Concept and Academic Motivation	51
Figure 1: Capability/Ability Section	53
Figure 2: Opportunity	55
Figure 3: Control	57
Figure 4: Importance	59
Figure 5: Emotions/Feelings	61
Attitude Toward Treatment	61
Grades	61
Summarization of individual results	62
CHAPTER 5- DISCUSSION	64
Study purpose and summary	64
Research question, research design analysis & research limitation	64
Research results and limitations	66
Limitations	67
Recommendations for future research	68
Summarization of Results	69
Implications for school counselors	72
REFERENCES	73
APPENDICES	84
Appendix A- North Carolina State University Informed Consent Form for Research	85
Appendix B- Group Activity	90
Appendix C- Resource List	91
Appendix D- Sample Role Play	93
Appendix E- Sample Social Justice Action Plan	95
Appendix F- Overview of AASCM data	96
Appendix F- ATT Survey Data	114
Appendix H- Grades Table	116

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1 Grades	116

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1 Capability/Ability Section	53
Figure 2 Opportunity	55
Figure 3 Control	57
Figure 4 Importance	59
Figure 5 Emotions/Feelings	61
Figure 6 Capability session 1.....	96
Figure 7 Capability session 2.....	96
Figure 8 Capability session 3.....	97
Figure 9 Capability session 4.....	97
Figure 10 Capability session 5.....	98
Figure 11 Capability session 6.....	98
Figure 12 Capability overtime.....	99
Figure 13 Opportunity session 1.....	99
Figure 14 Opportunity session 2.....	100
Figure 15 Opportunity session 3.....	100
Figure 16 Opportunity session 4.....	101
Figure 17 Opportunity session 5.....	101
Figure 18 Opportunity session 6.....	102
Figure 19 Opportunity overtime.....	102
Figure 20 Control session 1.....	103
Figure 21 Control session 2.....	103
Figure 22 Control session 3.....	104
Figure 23 Control session 4.....	104
Figure 24 Control session 5.....	105
Figure 25 Control session 6.....	105
Figure 26 Control overtime.....	106
Figure 27 Importance session 1.....	106
Figure 28 Importance session 2.....	107
Figure 29 Importance session 3.....	107
Figure 30 Importance session 4.....	108
Figure 31 Importance session 5.....	108
Figure 32 Importance session 6.....	109
Figure 33 Importance overtime.....	109
Figure 34 Emotions/ Feelings session 1.....	110
Figure 35 Emotions/ Feelings session 2.....	110
Figure 36 Emotions/ Feelings session 3.....	111
Figure 37 Emotions/ Feelings session 4.....	111
Figure 38 Emotions/ Feelings session 5.....	112
Figure 39 Emotions/ Feelings session 6.....	112

Figure 40	Emotions/Feelings overtime.....	113
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The Effects of Self-Advocacy Training within a Brief Psychoeducational Group on the Academic Motivation of Black Adolescents

The purpose of this research study is to make inference about the effectiveness of self-advocacy training within a brief psychoeducational group on the academic motivation and academic self-concept of Black adolescents. Ultimately, the information gathered through the research study provides school counselors with a group that can be utilized in a secondary setting (upper middle school and high school) with Black adolescents who may experience social barriers related to structural racism. The psychoeducational group, specifically, teaches Black adolescents self-advocacy skills. To do so, a social justice theoretical framework was employed emphasizing constructs such as empowerment and self-determination. Additionally, action research and phenomenological approaches are utilized concurrently in order to assist the students in developing effective strategies in dealing with negative social barriers. The term Black will be used throughout this article when referring to adolescents who may refer to themselves as Black or African American, interchangeably.

Utilizing a Social Justice Theoretical Framework

Social justice is a theoretical framework heavily utilized in the field of counseling to emphasize constructs such as advocacy, empowerment, equity and access. Social justice is the fundamental valuing of fairness and equity in resources, rights, and treatment of marginalized individuals and groups of people who do not share the power in society because of immigration, racial, ethnic, age, socioeconomic, religious heritage, physical abilities, or sexual orientation of status groups (Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, & Bryant, 2007, p. 24).

Social justice is critical to this study in that it establishes the foundation for the self-advocacy training that took place in the group setting. The social justice construct, self-advocacy, was imparted throughout group meetings to create, in students, a defense mechanism for the negative impact that oppression has on their development; in this case their academic achievement.

Although there is a wealth of research that discuss the use of self-advocacy training when working with students with learning disability, only one article could be located that discuss the use of advocacy competencies, specifically, self-advocacy when working with minority students. Astramovich and Harris (2007), the authors of that publication, recommend promoting self-advocacy among minority populations to increase their awareness, knowledge, and skill in order to overcome barriers that impede upon their academic achievement. This philosophical explanation was the basis for this research study.

Ratts & Hutchins (2009) article, *ACA Advocacy Competencies: Social Justice Advocacy at the Client/Student Level*, served as additional research in order to demonstrate the operationalization of self-advocacy training. This article provided detailed information about both empowerment and advocacy constructs in order to effectively infuse both approaches into self-advocacy training.

Advocacy in Counseling

Advocacy involves helping clients challenge institutional and social barriers that impede academic, career, or personal-social development (Lee, 1998, pp. 8-9). House &

Martin (1998) state that advocacy can be defined as the ability to fight injustice through both individual and collective action in order to improve conditions that will benefit the individual and group. Self-advocacy is the act of speaking up for yourself (Atkinson, 1993).

Additionally, advocacy involves speaking on behalf of people whose voice is not often heard in society.

Advocacy has been connected to counseling since its inception in the early 1900's. The founders of the counseling profession all initially relied on advocacy in counseling to support a community need in an effort to help others. Frank Parson, often called the founder of guidance, utilized social reform efforts, teaching and working with youth in his development of vocational guidance (Gladding, 2009). Jesse B. Davis established the first systemic guidance program to build character and prevent problems in schools (Gladding, 2009). He advocated for a preventive school education program to assist students in dealing effectively with life events (Gladding, 2009). Clifford Beers, a pioneer in the field of mental health, advocated for better mental health facilities and reform in the treatment of people with mental illness after spending time in mental illness facilities himself (Gladding, 2009; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001).

There are three levels of advocacy competencies (a) client/student advocacy, (b) school/community advocacy, and (c) public arena advocacy that school counselors use in education environments. *Client/student advocacy* is the ability to assertively communicate or negotiate one's interests, desires, needs, and rights (Van Reusen, 1996). The

client/ student advocacy involves using direct counseling to empower individuals and providing advocacy at the individual level (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). *School/community advocacy* involves community collaboration and system advocacy (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). It can include parents, members of the community or educators taking action to improve school/community relations. *Public arena advocacy* focuses on affecting public opinion, public policy, and legislation (Lee& Rodgers, 2009). This research study focuses on client/student advocacy or *self- advocacy* as a means of providing students with the skills to overcome oppressive educational environments in secondary education, and beyond.

Self-Advocacy Training for Black Adolescents

Historically, Black adolescents, on average, have underperformed in school when compared to their White peers. For decades, researchers have debated the reasons for the underperformance. Some have postulated that it is the result of cultural ramification and academic motivation (Ogbu, 2003), parental background (Stewart, 2007), social barriers (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007), self-concept (Grantham& Ford, 2003). House and Martin (1998) have attributed oppressive social, political, and economic conditions to poor academic achievement for students of color and students from low-income families in K-12 schools. Seemingly, all of these factors effect the academic achievement of Black adolescents.

Self-advocacy training imparts individuals with a wealth of information that builds a sense of self-worth and self-efficacy, helping empower them to challenge discriminatory social, economic, and political policies that effect their academic achievement (Helms,

2003a; Mays, 2000). According to McWhirter (1991) empowering minority students with self-advocacy skills may serve as a catalyst for change in the education system and may ultimately help transform society. Becoming your own advocate is critical in campaigning for your collective interest.

Brief Psychoeducational Group

According to the Association for Specialist in Group Work (2000) (ASGW) group work is the application of knowledge and skill in group facilitation. In the school settings, groups are often utilized to provide direct counseling to a group of students. Facilitating a group is an effective strategy when working with students because it provides a special environment where students can (a) come to understand that their concerns are not unique, and that other people face similar problems., (b) express emotions, disclose information about personal issues, and receive encouragement, understanding and hope from other group participants as well as (c) focus on issues that brought them to the group, generate solutions to difficulties, and practice new effective strategies for coping with problems (Livneh& Hawes-Sherwood,1993).

The ASGW (2000) states that psychoeducation groups promote normal human development and functioning through (a) group based educational and developmental strategies, (b) a here and now context, (c) the promotion of personal and interpersonal growth and development and the prevention of future difficulties, and (d) among people who may be at risk for the development of personal or interpersonal problems or who seek enhancement

of personal qualities and abilities.

Therefore, a psychoeducation group format was selected for the self-advocacy training for the following reasons: (a) this type of group is an efficient and effective way to deal with student developmental problems and situational concerns (ASCA, 1999), (b) it provides sufficient time to assist students in developing self-advocacy skills in the midst of other counselor duties, while also maintaining student engagement without involving an excessive amount of time students would miss class, (c) it establishes group structure with emphasis on interpersonal communication, interaction, and reinforcement, and (d) it equips a larger number of students with self-advocacy skills at one identified time, while also creating an atmosphere where students can discuss their experiences in a safe and supportive atmosphere.

Additionally, a brief format was also employed because it is an effective approach to use in the school counseling setting (Bruce & Hopper, 1997). Brief counseling emphasizes (a) future orientation, (b) solution-focus, (c) strength based, (d) action-orientation, (e) community support, (f) attainable goal building, (g) student empowerment in order to take control and responsibility, and (f) strong interaction between student and counselor (Bruce & Hopper, 1997). In the school setting, brief counseling effectiveness is measured by the increase in students' appropriate behavior (Bruce, 1995). Inasmuch, this approach provides a foundation for providing self-advocacy training in a school set

Research Methods, Variables, Question and Process

N=1/ABA single subject experimental design

The primary research methodology for the current study was an N= 1/ABA single subject experimental design that was replicated 6 times in order to assess the effectiveness of self-advocacy training on different students, individually. In this research study, the variables examined were (a) academic motivation and (b) academic self-concept. Self-advocacy training was the independent variable and academic motivation and academic self-concept were the dependent variables. The proposed research question for the study was: can self-advocacy training improve the academic motivation of Black adolescents? In order to effectively carryout the mission of the study, two additional research methodologies were employed as secondary approaches to complement and connect the research. Those methodologies were phenomenology and action research.

Phenomenological Approach

In order to teach Black adolescents self-advocacy skills that would assist them in overcoming oppressive educational environments, one would first have to believe that these students were operating in an oppressive educational environment, and secondly that the environment was negatively impacting their academic achievement. This phenomenological approach to doing a qualitative study was utilized in order to become grounded in the personal experiences of the individual(s) living them (Kunkel & Williams, 1991). A

phenomenological research approach does not involve a search for truth or absolutes, but rather subjective understanding (Kunkel & Williams, 1991). This subjective approach to doing qualitative research is seen throughout aspects of this research study. This approach to doing an N=1 research design was utilized to avoid reducing people to statistical aggregates; instead this approach allows individuals to be heard and enhanced simultaneously. Additionally, this approach allowed for deeper understanding of phenomenon's affecting the overall academic motivation of Black adolescents.

This approach to qualitative inquiry used an emergent perspective that involves negotiating meaning and interpretation to develop an emic perspective (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Phenomenology involves the interrelationship of subjective and objective factors by using description, reflection and imagination to understand individual experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Further, this humanistic approach to research sought to enhance self-awareness through the process of making meaning of the life experiences and understanding individual and collective perceptions of those experiences.

Action Research

Action research strengthens the relationship between action and research (Rowell, 2006). It is utilized as a method of inquiry and as a means of taking action to improve social conditions and conditions of practice (Rowell, 2006). Action research is responsive and provides an approach to increase accountability in the school counseling profession. This

type of accountability model is organic thus seemingly a good collaborator with phenomenological research.

The benefit of action research is that it produces action outcomes and research outcomes that are beneficial both to practitioners and the individuals they serve, but also to researchers and the mission/goal of their research. An action research approach aligns well with the core approach to developing, implementing and evaluating guidance curriculum (Carey, 2009). Action research was employed for this study to (a) provide immediate research outcome data in order to make adjustments within the group in order to be responsive to student needs, (b) to demonstrate a practitioners-friendly approach to school counselors interested in potentially employing the intervention when working with similar student groups, (c) and also to bridge the gap between the N=1 and the phenomenological methodologies.

An action research approach was coupled with a phenomenological approach in the study in order to respond to the phenomenon of the individual students and make necessary and appropriate alterations during the treatment to meet the needs of the students participating in the study.

Definition of Terms

1. Social justice- the fundamental valuing of fairness and equity in resources, rights, and treatment of marginalize individuals and groups of people who do not share the power in society because of immigration, racial, ethnic, age, socioeconomic, religious heritage, physical abilities, or sexual orientation of status groups.
2. Self-concept- is the perception of one's ability and beliefs that is based on environmental stimuli.
3. Self-determination- involves improving personal effectiveness and control over self and the environment by increasing self-awareness in order to effectively solve problems, make decisions, and set goals.
4. Empowerment- efforts to increase an individual or group's control over life decisions and awareness of the potentially damaging role of power structures (such as spiritual, political, social, economic) in society.
5. Academic motivation- is the desire to learn, likes learning related activities, and believes that school is important.
6. Advocacy- is the ability to fight injustice through both individual and collective action in order to improve conditions that will benefit the individual and group.
7. Client/student advocacy (self-advocacy) - the ability to assertively communicate or negotiate one's interests, desires, needs, and rights.

8. School/community advocacy- parents, member of the community or educators taking action to improve school/community relations.
9. Public arena advocacy- is the act of affecting public opinion, public policy, and legislation through advocacy.
10. Group work- is the application of knowledge and skill in group facilitation. In the school settings, groups are often utilized to provide direct counseling to a group of students.
11. Psychoeducational group- is a group that promotes educational and developmental strategies in the here and now context in order to promote personal and interpersonal growth and development and the prevention of future difficulties among people who may be at risk for the development of personal or interpersonal problems or who seek enhancement of personal qualities and abilities.
12. Brief counseling- emphasizes future orientation, solution-focus, strength based, action-orientation, community support, attainable goal building, student empowerment in order to take control and responsibility, and build strong interaction between student and counselor.
13. Phenomenological research- a systematic approach to collecting and analyzing narrative material using methods that ensure credibility of both the data and the results.
14. Action research- reflective process that allows for inquiry and discussion as components of the research.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This chapter discuss (a) a historical overview of social justice as a springboard for a short discussion on advocacy in counseling, (b) a study pertaining to the use of self-advocacy training when working with minority populations as well as the Ratts & Hutchins (2009) operationalization of the self-advocacy competency, (c) the correlation between academic motivation and academic self-concept specifically among African American students, and (d) background information on the education landscape for African American students in public schools in the United States. This information is provided to support the utility of self-advocacy training in improving the academic achievement of Black adolescents.

Social Justice in Counseling

Social justice is a fundamental valuing of fairness and equity in resources, rights and treatment of marginalized individuals and groups (Fondacaro & Weinberg, 2002). The goal of social justice is to advocate for the elimination of systems of oppression, inequity, inequality, or exploitation of marginalized populations and communities (Constantine et. al., 2007). Social justice involves the promotion of the values of self-development and self-determination for everyone (Constantine et. al., 2007). Social justice is systems focused in order to reduce the effects of oppression by improving equity and access to resources (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). Social justice counseling requires counselors to do more than assist clients in finding strategies to overcome barriers; it requires counselors to take action

by working on behalf of clients, by advocating against institutional barriers that exist within the societies we live in (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). To meet the goal of social justice counseling there are four basic social justice objectives. Those objectives include: outreach, prevention, advocacy and psychoeducation (which builds empowerment) (Vera & Speight, 2003). The objectives are discussed to provide depth of information as they provide the foundation for self-advocacy training.

Outreach programs connect the work and resources of a particular group or organization to the community in an effort to seek solutions to socio-cultural and political inequities that affect the quality of life. Outreach programs serve the most marginalized individuals within communities. Outreach programs promote the action-orientation that is fundamental to social justice.

Preventive counseling strategies are ecologically and systemically based because they occur within a complex context of interacting levels of influence (D'Andrea, 2004). Preventive counseling services are fundamentally designed to lower the incidence of psychosocial problems that are commonly manifested among a given population, such as youth who attend elementary, middle, and secondary schools (D'Andrea, 2004). There are three types of preventive counseling interventions: primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention strategies. Primary prevention is distinguished from secondary prevention, in that it aims at the early identification and treatment of problems, and from tertiary prevention, in that it attempts to decrease the long-term effects of more serious psychological problems

(D'Andrea, 2004). In essence, primary prevention involves activities that are designed to reduce environmental stressors and build people's competencies and life skills (Lewis, Lewis, Daniels, & D'Andrea, 2003), while secondary prevention focuses on individual, small group, and family counseling services, and primary prevention focuses on psychoeducational programs, life skills training programs, consultation, and advocacy services (D'Andrea, M., 2004). Thus, when implementing preventive counseling programs, counselors not only provide direct counseling services to students who are in need, they also use a variety of consultation, advocacy, and coalition/community-building services to foster positive changes (D'Andrea, M., 2004).

[As discussed in Chapter 1] Advocacy involves helping clients challenge institutional and social barriers that impede academic, career, or personal-social development (Lee, 1998, pp. 8-9). Harris & Martin (1998) state that advocacy can be defined as the ability to fight injustice through both individual and collective action in order to improve conditions that will benefit the individual and group. Self-advocacy is the act of speaking up for yourself (Atkinson, 1993). Additionally, advocacy involves speaking on behalf of people whose voice is not often heard in society.

There are three levels of advocacy competencies (a) client/student advocacy, (b) school/community advocacy, and (c) public arena advocacy that school counselors use in education environments. *Client/student advocacy* is the ability to assertively communicate or negotiate one's interests, desires, needs, and rights (Van Reusen, 1996). The client/ student

advocacy involves using direct counseling to empower individuals and providing advocacy at the individual level (Ratts& Hutchins, 2009). *School/community advocacy* involves community collaboration and system advocacy (Ratts& Hutchins, 2009). It can include parents, members of the community or educators taking action to improve school/community relations. *Public arena advocacy* focuses on affecting public opinion, public policy, and legislation (Lee& Rodgers, 2009).

The ASGW (2000) states that psychoeducation focuses on educational and developmental strategies in the context of the here and now; psychoeducation promotes personal and interpersonal growth and development and the prevention of future difficulties among people who may be at risk for the development of personal or interpersonal problems or who seek enhancement of personal qualities and abilities. Psychoeducation is strength-based and is utilized to assist students/clients in increasing coping mechanisms; it reinforces specific skills that will assist students/clients in dealing with potential problems that could reoccur overtime. Psychoeducation can take place in either a one-on-one setting or a group setting. In either setting, counselors collaborate and rely on resources to promote the goal of psychoeducation.

These four objectives are utilized to promote the goal of social justice. Social justice seeks to facilitate systemic change in response to injustice by preventing inequity on a macro-level. Nine social justice competencies have been outlined in order to move from a microlevel system to a macrolevel system of support. Those competencies include: (a)

knowledgeable about the various ways inequity can be manifested; (b) ongoing participation in critical reflection of issues of race, ethnicity, oppression, power, and privilege in your own life; (c) maintenance of ongoing awareness of how your own positions of power or privilege might inadvertently replicate experiences of injustice and oppression in interacting with stake holding groups; (d) question or challenge therapeutic or intervention practices that appear inappropriate or exploitative and intervene preemptively, or as early as feasible, to promote the positive well-being of individuals or groups who might be affected; (e) possess knowledge about indigenous models of health and healing and actively collaborate with such entities, when appropriate, in order to conceptualize and implement culturally relevant and holistic interventions; (f) cultivate ongoing awareness of the various types of social injustices that occur within international contexts; social injustices frequently have global implications; (g) collaborate with community organizations in democratic partnerships to promote trust, minimize perceived power differentials, and provide culturally relevant services to identified groups; (h) develop system interventions and advocacy skills to promote social change processes within institutional settings, neighborhoods, and communities (Constantine et. al., 2007).

This research study employed three of the four social justice principles. Those principles included psychoeducation, primary and secondary prevention, and client/student advocacy or self-advocacy. The psychoeducation group that was facilitated employed both primary and secondary prevention strategies to build self-advocacy skills in Black

adolescents. Of the three principles, the overarching goal was to assist students in developing self-advocacy skills in order to better cope and address oppressive social systems that impact their development.

Relevant Self-Advocacy Research

According to the American Counseling Association (2007) (ACA) professional school counselors should incorporate advocacy strategies into their practice in order to improve learning environments. Self-advocacy is a key survival skill for individuals who are more prone to face environmental challenges, institutional barriers and limitations. School counselors who subscribe to these competencies aid disadvantaged/underserved/underrepresented populations in becoming self-advocates. To build self-advocacy skills in Black adolescents the psychoeducation group focused on three critical constructs: (a) self-determination, (b) empowerment, and (c) social justice. The following research is presented to support the direction that was taken for the research study.

In the Astramovich & Harris (2007) article, the authors purport that school counselors may be especially powerful in their advocacy work by fostering self-advocacy skills among minorities. To support the need for advocacy work among school counselors, Astramovich and Harris (2007) discuss the work that is being done by two organizations focused on promoting school counseling: American School Counselor Association (2003) (ASCA) included advocacy as a critical leadership component of comprehensive school counseling programs and Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI) branch of the Education

Trust (2003) called upon school counselors to take an active role in helping minority students receive needed support for achieving academic success. As a result of the ongoing efforts being made to promote social justice among school counselors, Astramovich and Harris (2007) outline strategies for promoting self-advocacy among minority students. Those strategies are evident in counseling and education literature, but Astramovich and Harris (2007) synthesize the self-advocacy principles, which include: self-determination, empowerment, and social justice.

Empowerment is defined as efforts to increase an individual or group's control over life decisions and awareness of the potentially damaging role of power structures in society (Astramovich & Harris, 2007). The perception of a lack of power and control over self and the environment has negatively affected the self-concept of some members of underrepresented populations (Dowden, 2009). In some cases, it has caused Black adolescents, specifically, to feel alienated from society, leading to feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness (Brown, Higgins, Pierce, Hong, & Thoma, 2003). Empowerment efforts focus on assisting individuals or groups by bringing awareness of the role power and privilege play in their lives, providing the skills to overcome these inequities, and encouraging them to take control over their life situations and to help others in their communities become empowered (McWhirter, 1991).

Self-determination is essential to an individual's self-concept and the social environment that has shaped it (ACA, 2007). Self-determination builds personal

empowerment in those who may lack motivation due to feelings of powerlessness (Dowden, 2009). Self-determination involves improved attitudes related to personal effectiveness and control over self and environment (Wehmeyer, 1995). In education, self-determination focuses on strong self-awareness in order to effectively solve problems, make decisions, and set goals (Browder, Wood, Test, Karvonen, & Algozzine, 2001). Assisting Black adolescents in gaining these skills has the potential to improve their academic motivation (Dowden, 2009).

Social justice focuses on creating equity and access in society by improving American social systems (Dowden, 2009). In relation to self-advocacy, social justice training helps clients identify and challenge environmental limitations and systemic forms of oppression (Lee, 1998). Additionally, social justice seeks to liberate clients from oppressive social practices (Ivey & Collins, 2003).

In addition to these three self-advocacy principles, Astramovich and Harris (2007) discuss the use of self-advocacy competencies in developing self-advocacy skills in minority students. These competencies have been tailored to resemble the structure of the multicultural competencies developed by Sue et al. 1996. Moreover, the authors also provide strategies for the implementation of these competencies. The competencies focus on the awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to become a self-advocate. Astramovich and Harris (2007) state that self-advocacy awareness involves valuing culture specific experiences and becoming aware of how cultural oppression and fear of rejection could affect minority

students. Self-advocacy knowledge emphasizes understanding the role of power, privilege, and status of oppression and the ability to identify these practices in society (Astramovich & Harris, 2007). Additionally, students identify proactive means for addressing oppressive practices (Astramovich & Harris, 2007). Self-advocacy skill requires students to develop assertiveness, negotiation skills, effective communication skills, and action plans for moving forward (Astramovich & Harris, 2007).

Building on that concept, Ratts & Hutchins (2009) operationalize the ACA's client/student level advocacy. The authors have divided the competency into two parts, empowerment and advocacy. The empowerment portion of the division represents the individuals' development of advocacy skills through the counselors' ability to inform and educate, while the advocacy portion represents the counselors ability to advocate on behalf of the student/client.

Empowerment focal points include: (a) utilizing a strength-based approach when working with students, (b) identifying the social, political, economic, and cultural factors that affect the client/student, (c) recognizing signs that indicate individual behaviors and concerns reflect responses to systemic or internalized oppression, (d) (considering developmental levels) help the individual identify external barriers that affect his or her development, (e) train students/clients in self-advocacy skills, and (f) assist students/ clients in developing self-advocacy action plans (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). Self-advocacy focal points include: (a) negotiate services and systems on behalf of clients/students, (b) assist students in gaining

access to resources, (c) identify barriers that effect the well-being of vulnerable individuals or groups, (e) develop an action plan for confronting the barriers, and (f) carry out action plan (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009).

The two articles provided the foundation for the practices employed in the research study. The goals outlined and carried out through the competencies, principles, and framework guide the best practices of the research study.

Academic Self-Concept and Academic Motivation (Self-Determination Theory)

Research on academic self-concept is critical in examining academic motivation, as the opposite applies. As a result, the two constructs are examined together in order to better understand their correlation. Research has consistently shown that academic self-concept is significantly related to academic motivation (Byrne & Gavin, 1996; Cokley, 2007).

Academic self-concept is a predictor of a student's academic achievement (Byrne Shavelson & Bolous, 1982; Marsh et al., 2005), mainly overall grades, i.e. Grade Point Average (GPA). Academic self-concept is a determinant of a student's motivational learning orientation as it fosters the development of cognitive representation (i.e. goals) in achievement situations (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Self-appraisals, such as academic self-concept, are assumed to be related to motivation and achievement because "individuals who think well of themselves are believed to be more motivated to succeed" (Graham, 1994, p. 57). According to Cokley (2000a) academic self-concept is broadly considered how a student views his or her academic ability

when compared to other students. Specifically, academic self-concept is the attitudes, feelings, and perceptions relative to one's intellectual or academic skills (Lent, Brown & Gore, 1997). According to Cokley (2007) academic self-concept is an important psychological construct because it has been found to be both a cause and an effect of academic achievement.

Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton (1976) posited that individuals' perceptions of self are developed in response to their perceptions of others' reactions toward them. These perceptions are formed through one's experience with the environment, and influenced especially by environmental reinforcements and significant others. Inasmuch, Cokley (2003) found that African American students, however, did not appear to believe that there was a direct relationship between effort and grades. This belief could be a result of historical perceived injustice on the part of African Americans. Areepattamannil & Freeman (2008) purport that as children become older, they have an increased awareness of themselves and the world around them that improves their overall self-concept. Therefore, if self-awareness and a grounded worldview can improve self-concept, Witherspoon et al. (1997) conclusions that psychoeducational interventions could assist African American students succeed academically, is accurate. The utilization of psychoeducation to promote self-awareness, and awareness of the historical functions of society can improve the self-concept, specifically academic self-concept, of Black students.

Academic motivation is examined from a self-determination theoretical perspective. Self-determination theory, when applied to the realm of education, is concerned primarily with promoting, in students, an interest in learning, a valuing of education, and a confidence in their own capacities and attributes (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Self-determination theory is concerned with social-contextual factors that influence motivation and learning as well as how these factors are internalized (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Understanding how social-contextual factors are internalized in order to influence academic motivation is essential in gaining insight into the perspectives of Black adolescents. In this respect, it encompasses both academic self-concept and academic motivation.

Academic motivation, from a self-determination perspective, distinguishes between self-determined and controlled types of intentional motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1975). Self-determined behaviors are driven by choice, while intentional behaviors are driven by compliance or defiance (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Also, self-determined behaviors are perceived as internal to self, while controlled behaviors are external to self (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Therefore, a portion of the self-advocacy training enforces self-determination.

According to Deci et al. (1991) human need is vital to understanding motivation; the most essential rationale is that human need allows one to specify the contextual conditions that will facilitate motivation, performance and development. Self-determination theory focuses on three innate needs: “*competence* involves understanding how to attain various internal and external outcomes and being efficacious in performing the requisite actions,

relatedness involves developing secure and satisfying connections with others in one's social milieu, and *autonomy* involves being self-initiating and self-regulating of one's own actions" (Deci et al., 1991, p. 327).

Students who are internally motivated and autonomous appear likely to stay in school, to achieve academically, to demonstrate conceptual understanding, and be well adjusted when considering social-contextual factors (Reeve, Deci & Ryan, 2004). Central to self-determination theory is the hypothesis that "a social context that supports people being competent, related, and autonomous will promote intentional motivated action, and furthermore, that support for autonomy in particular will facilitate that motivated action's are self-determined, rather than controlled" (Deci et. al.,1991, p. 331-332).

The research study sought to train students to be there own self-advocates when faced with negative feedback that does not support intentional motivation and autonomy. The self-determined needs assisted in shaping the research study. The group setting provided the students the opportunity to develop connections with other students with similar concerns. The specific focus on self-determination and empowerment in the group increased competence and promoted autonomy, which is critical in becoming a self-advocate.

African American Students and Education

On average, the underperformance of African American students in school as compared to their White peers is a phenomenon that is constantly being researched in an attempt to find an explanation. The historical racial injustice experienced by African

American students in schools has increasingly contributed to their underperformance academically as compared to their white peers (Ford et. al., 2008). The social-contextual school environment for African American students is often considered negative. From separate but equal (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896) to desegregation (*Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, 1955) to affirmative action (*Gratz v. Bollinger*; *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003), and resegregation (Orfield, 2005), the road to equal and equitable education for African American students has been a slippery slope at best.

Currently, African American students are underrepresented in advanced academic programs that often lead to college access (Ford et. al., 2008), overrepresented in exceptional children/special education programs (Harris, Brown, Ford & Richardson, 2004), are often assigned to remedial tracks in school (Potts, 2003), and are the victims of negative teacher perception (Ford & Harris, 1996), which research has shown (Fordham, 1988; Scott, 2003) result in poor attitudes toward school, skipping class, feelings of alienation toward school, and eventually dropping out. Feelings of alienation have contributed to low academic motivation and academic self-concept. These educational inequities have contributed to barriers related to career development, postsecondary education, limited job skills, and low wages.

Summary and Overall Critique of Literature Review

Historically, sociopolitical factors related to race and class has severely impacted public education systems today. As a result, African American students have externally and

internally been impacted. Overtime, sociopolitical structural barriers have been directly related to low academic self-concept and low academic motivation that has had a negative impact on the academic achievement of Black students. On average, poor achievement on the part of Black students as compared to their White peers has had a negative effect on college going rates, poverty, health disparities, environmental conditions, language acquisition, life span, and many other education, developmental and medical health issues.

Education research on self-determination theory posits that it can assist in improving students internal motivators in order to improve their academic self-concept thus increasing their academic self-motivation. Additionally, social justice theoretical framework, specifically client/student advocacy or *self-advocacy* is utilized as it is rooted in improving systems that oppress underrepresented/disadvantaged populations. These two theoretical orientations met as the premise of the research study. Self-determination theory's innate needs/constructs: competence, relatedness and autonomy are directly related to self-advocacy principles of self-determination, empowerment, and social justice. As a result of the correlation between the two theory-driven frameworks, a psychoeducational group emphasizing self-advocacy skills was facilitated with the goal of increasing the academic self-concept and academic self-motivation of African American adolescents.

CHAPTER 3

Method

An N=1/ABA single subject experimental research design was employed to determine if self-advocacy training can improve the academic motivation of African American adolescents. Chapter 3 illustrates the strategies utilized to implement the research study. To do this a historical overview of single subject research in counseling is explored, different types of N=1/single subject designs are discussed and the unique process of each one. I discuss the specific approaches employed for this research study such as the ABA design, action research, phenomenology and the process utilized to employing the mixed method approach. Additional information on the participants, participant selection and criteria, instrument and other assessment tools, variables, both independent and dependent, research procedures, datum collection and analysis.

N=1/single subject experimental design

Historically, in the counseling profession, case studies have been more widely utilized than N=1 (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivilighan, 2008). A case study is an observation of an individual client in retrospect; these observations may be recollections through intermittent records or statements that seemingly support a particular hypothesis (Heppner et al., 2008). Case studies however lack experimental control making it difficult to reach a hypothesis that might be plausible in explaining a client's behavior (Heppner et al., 2008).

Today, researchers in the counseling profession are utilizing the single subject design more frequently than the case study (Heppner et al., 2008). As the need for the counseling profession to become more evidence based emerges, $n=1$ research designs provide counselors the opportunity to validate research by utilizing a systemic, rigorous methodology, while also adhering to fundamental counseling practices, such as the evaluation of clinical casework (Sharpley, 2007). Although single subject designs are more utilized than case studies, Sharpley (2007) posits that just over 1% of the total articles reporting research data in the *Journal of Counseling & Development* employ $n=1$. Sharpley (2007) purports that the reason for the underutilization of $n=1$ research is the lack of knowledge many counseling professions possess about the research design. Subsequently, an overview of the different types of single subject designs is provided.

The $n=1$ /single subject experimental design is an applied counseling approach to research. Single subject experimental designs refer to a design used to gather information on a single subject. All single subject designs consist of a baseline (A) and an intervention (B) (Sharpley, 2007). At the heart of a single subject research methodology is a graphical analysis data pattern (Lundervold & Belwood, 2000). Single subject experimental designs are theory free and take on a phenomenological stance (Lundervold & Belwood, 2000).

According to Kazdin (2003) common features of single subject experimental designs include (a) specification of treatment goals, (b) repeated measurement of the dependent variable (target behavior) over time, (c) treatment/intervention phase, and (d) stability of

baseline datum. The first feature, treatment goals, can consist of cognition, affective reactions, behaviors, physiological responses, or personality characteristics (Heppner et al., 2008). The repeated measure/assessment of the target behavior begins during the baseline phase and continues through the intervention phase. The baseline datum is used to determine the current state of the target behavior prior to the intervention, in order to make predictions about the intervention (Heppner et al., 2008). The next phase then is defining time periods to enact the treatment/intervention (this can be days or sessions) (Heppner et al., 2008). Lastly, it is critical that the researcher stabilize the baseline before the onset of the intervention; stabilization of the baseline includes an accurate and consistent assessment of the dependent variable (Heppner et al., 2008).

There are three types of single subject research designs. Those research designs include (a) AB design, (b) ABA design, and (c) ABAB design (Gall & Gall, & Borg, 2007; Heppner et al., 2008).

The AB design is a two phase single subject experimental design consisting of the baseline (A) and the intervention (B) (Heppner et al., 2008). While this type of single subject research design can provide valuable information, it can be difficult to draw inference about the effects of an intervention. The difficulty in drawing inference results in the inability to rule out threats to internal validity from history or maturation because of the lack of follow-up or return to baseline. As a result, depending on the goal of the research study, an ABA or ABAB designs may be more effective.

The ABA model is representative of A=baseline, B= intervention, and A= baseline withdrawal of the treatment. Like the AB or ABAB, this approach is utilized when specific behavior datum on a single subject is collected over a series of time. Again, characteristic of the other two designs, clients/participants/students act as his or her own control/comparison group. Thus, the basic comparison is between the A (baseline) and B (intervention) within the same subject (Heppner et al., 2008). In an n=1/ABA single subject design, the researcher measures the target behavior repeatedly during the baseline; when the treatment/intervention is administered the researcher continues to measure the target behavior (Gall et al., 2007). Next, the target behavior is again measured; this time after the intervention has been removed. Finally, the researcher plots the raw datum on a graph and makes inferences about the effectiveness of the intervention based on the graphical datum.

Overall, the n=1/ABA single subject design robustly establishes a casual relationship between the intervention and the effect, which, in turn, demonstrates validity in the research design (Sharpley, 2007). As a result, the structure of an ABA design and the process employed during the research has established it as a feasible approach to provide important information in the counseling profession.

The ABAB is a four phase design often referred to as a reversal design. “The ABAB design examines the effect of the treatment (independent variable) by either presenting or withdrawing the variable during different phases in an attempt to provide unambiguous evidence of the casual effect of the independent variable” (Heppner et al., 2008). The

reversal results in a return to the baseline, then re-administering the independent variable at B₂ further strengthening the casual relationship (Heppner, Wampold & Kivilighan, 2008).

The goal of the ABAB design is to conclude that the independent variable caused the change in the dependent variable in the B₁ phase (Heppner et al., 2008). As with the ABA design, the ABAB design and the process employed during the research has established it as a feasible approach to provide important information in the counseling profession.

Employing the N=1/ABA Single Subject Experimental Design

As a result of the structure and process of the ABA, this type of single subject experimental design was employed for this research design. The research question was can self-advocacy training improve the academic motivation of African American adolescents? The research study included a five week psychoeducational group that employed self-advocacy training as the intervention. The baseline (A) datum was gathered a week prior to the group beginning and continued into week one; the initial group meeting. Therefore, the initial baseline was two weeks in length. The treatment (B) datum was gathered during weeks 2-4 of the group while the self-advocacy training was occurring. The baseline/withdrawal (A) datum was gathered during week 5; the last group meeting. As a result, the structure of the research design was: A-A-B-B-B-A.

In the study, the independent variable was self-advocacy training and the dependent variables were academic motivation and academic self-concept. Research literature, discussed in chapter 2, indicates that improved academic self-concept is directly correlated to

improved academic motivation. Therefore, if self-advocacy training improves academic self-concept it will directly improve academic self-motivation. Because the study was done to improve academic self-concept, and academic self-motivation directly, Deci (2003) self-determination theory was employed in order to determine what constructs would be assessed. As a result of self-determination theory, the following three constructs are assessed (a) autonomy, (b) relatedness, and (c) competence.

The Assessment of Academic Self-Concept and Academic Motivation (AASCM) was utilized during the ABA time series single subject design to assess students' competence, relatedness, and autonomy individually. Additionally, pre-intervention and post-intervention grades were assessed to support the baseline in drawing inference about student overall academic achievement. All of the datum was gathered to assess the student's academic self-concept, and academic motivation, directly.

N=1 within an Phenomenological, Action Research Framework

The N=1 was employed within a phenomenological, action research framework. The problem identification, plan, act, observe, reflect action research model was employed during the establishment of the group as well as throughout the group sessions and intervention. This model was critical in ensuring that the intervention was meeting the needs of the students in the group. As a result, I kept a journal throughout the group as well as utilized the data gathered during each session to independently evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention in order to make minimal planning adjustment for the next group meeting.

Planning adjustments included different ways of engaging students in interpersonal communication, additional opportunities to provide interpersonal feedback, and various ways of applying the skills that had been taught. These added approaches to the established N=1/ABA research design were effective in building rapport with the students, providing improved understanding of the needs of the population being served, being responsive to their needs, and opting for individual action-oriented outcomes in addition to research outcomes.

Research process/model

As the primary research methodology, the N=1/ABA single subject experimental design was employed in an A-A-B-B-B-A format. This format allowed a structure for students to take the primary measure, the AASCM. In addition to the N=1 format, the process of gathering and using qualitative data was a layered effect employed through the six week psychoeducational group.

Phenomenological data collection began in week three of the group; during the first treatment (B₁). Phenomenological data collection took place during group meetings 3-5, or the treatment portion of the N=1 (B₁- B₁). I kept a journal to collect and reflect on information students shared during the treatment portion of the group. The phenomenological data was used to understand, make meaning of life experiences as well as interpret phenomenon in order to assist group members continue to develop self-awareness. Phenomenological data was a critical component of the study because it influenced the

direction of the treatment portion of the psychoeducational group. Depending on the depth of information shared, student responses to it or the number of students experiencing the phenomenon, an action research approach would be utilized. In this process, the next step would be taking action. This cyclical approach was often employed during group meetings 3-5. Additionally, phenomenological data was used make subjective inferences relative to AASCM data.

This process was effective in providing various means to inform the research question.

Methodology

Participants; Participant Selection and Criteria

In order to provide additional datum, in addition to self-reported information, students' pre-intervention and post-intervention grades were utilized to assess competence. Students' grades after the first 9 weeks of school (reporting period) were utilized to initially identify them for the group. Students at this school attend classes on a block schedule. Students take four classes each semester on a block schedule. A semester starts in mid-August and ends in mid-January. The second semester starts in mid-January and ends in late May. On a block schedule, students take four classes a semester. As a result of the two semesters, on average, students have the ability to obtain eight credits by the end of the school year. Freshmen have to pass at least six of the eight courses they take to be promoted to the 10th grade. Three of those eight classes must be core classes. Core classes consist of

(English, Math, Science and History). Therefore, students' who were failing two of the four first semester courses were already in high risk of being retained. In an attempt to intervene, they were identified for the group.

Once students' were identified based on their pre-intervention grades, the next step was the selection process. Students who were initially identified were then selected or recommended for future student support services programs. The following criteria was employed to select students for the group: (a) students who were experiencing truancy problems, (b) students' who verbalized wanting to drop out of school, (c) students who avoided rigorous coursework, (d) students who demonstrated verbal or nonverbal negative feelings toward schools, (e) students who demonstrated inconsistent behavior patterns (i.e. behavior problems in one class versus all classes), (f) students who often blamed teachers and other staff members for school related problems (a student who is unable to take responsibility for their actions), and (g) students who were struggling academically.

As a result of the selection criteria and process, there were six participants for the study. All the participants were first-time freshman in high school in the Southeastern portion of the United States. All the participants were African American. Three of the participants were female and three of the participants were male. The participants' ages ranged from 14-15 years old. The mean age of the participant's was 14.5 years old.

Instrument and Other Measures

Assessment of Academic Self-concept and Motivation. The measurement used in this study is the Assessment of Academic Self-Concept and Motivation (AASCM). The AASCM was used to assess the autonomy, competence and relatedness (basic academic motivation constructs) of the students' participating in the study. The assessment seeks to provide depth of knowledge relative to academic self-concept and academic motivation. To do that, the three constructs of self-determination theory are further disseminated in order to specifically identify the strand of academic motivation and academic self-concept that is being manipulated. As a result, of the five sections, ability correlates with competence, environmental responsiveness and importance/value correlate to relatedness, and control and emotions correlate to autonomy. According to Gordon Rouse (2000) the information gathered by the AASCM in the subscales is important for studies of self-concept, motivation and resilience. The assessment is most successful in predicting academic self-concept and academic motivation among adolescents and adults (Gordon Rouse, 2000).

Unlike other scales that have been normed to assess the motivation of European Americans, this scale can be used to assess the motivation of various ethnic groups such as Hispanic American and African Americans (Gordon Rouse, 2000). This scale also provides a comprehensive assessment of self-concept and motivation within the high school environment (Gordon Rouse, 2000). This is critical as it speaks to relatedness, specifically considering ethnic/racial/cultural constructs as well as environment. An example of a

relatedness question includes “participating in sports or other team activities at school” (Gordon Rouse, 2003).

Each section of the AASCM has four subsets. Those subsets are (a) cognitive goals, (b) social goals, (c) extra-curricular goals, and (d) personal goals (Gordon Rouse, 2000). Each subset had five statements for a combined twenty brief statements that students responded to per section. Students responded to the statements by ranking themselves accordingly in each section of the assessment. The scale utilizes a 7-point Likert scale. The Likert scale ranges from 1 (not very capable) to 7 (very capable). The scale is high in construct validity, as it correlates with Deci (2003) self-determination theory. The assessment is high in both reliability and validity across racial/ethnic groups. The reliabilities for the AASCM ranged from .80 to .94 (Gordon Rouse, 2003).

Grades. In addition to the AASCM, students’ grades were assessed pre and post intervention. During the group, students were enrolled in four courses. As a result, each grade was assessed individually versus on an average (e.g. GPA) in order to evaluate potentially minimal academic growth as a result of academic motivation. The grades provided additional datum to support the effectiveness of the intervention in improving academic motivation and academic self-concept.

Attitude Toward Treatment (ATT). Lastly, at the conclusion of the last session, students completed the Attitude Toward Treatment (ATT) survey. The survey assessed the usefulness of the group from the students’ perspective. Additionally, it measured students’

preference for the training (Kiselica et al., 1994). The ATT is a brief survey consisting of 14 questions. The survey utilizes a 7-point Likert scale. The scale ranges from 1 (not at all confident) to 7 (very confident). The scale ranges from 14 to 98 with higher scores indicating a degree of confidence (Kiselica et al., 1994). The survey provided student feedback on the usefulness of the group. This information obtained from the ATT was helpful in determining if other school counselors could employ the group when working with similar student populations.

Independent Variable

The independent variable in the study was self-advocacy training. The self-advocacy training took place over 5 group sessions. Sessions 2-4 embodied the three self-advocacy competencies. Those competencies included (a) empowerment, (b) self-determination, and (c) social justice. The purpose of the self-advocacy training was to provide Black adolescents with information relatives to these competencies in order to manipulate the dependent variable, which would in turn increase the overall academic motivation and academic self-concept of the students participating in the group self-advocacy training.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variables in the study are academic motivation and academic self-concept. The increase, stability, and/or decrease in these variables were assessed by the Assessment of Academic Self-Concept and Motivation (AASCM). The results of the assessment are plotted on a statistical graph in the results section.

Procedure

Students were exposed to self-advocacy skill development on three levels. Level one was interpersonal communication (information), level two was interaction (application), and level three was reinforcement (comprehension) (Dowden, 2009). Using this format, group meetings 2-4 were devoted to one of the self-advocacy skills. This design was organized to provide detailed information related to self-advocacy skills, while allowing enough time to ensure that students adequately processed the information. Each level was allotted thirty minutes. The 30-30-30 teaching model was employed to ensure that stimulating and engaging teaching and learning was taking place (Jenkins, Queen, & Algozzine, 2002).

Once the selection and screening process was completed, and parents, group members, and their teachers had been notified, and student participation had been cleared, arrangements were made for a room that was quiet and comfortable where the group met regularly (Arman, 2002).

Pre-session

Prior to session one, there was a pre-session. This session was used to administer the first baseline of the AASCM. The pre-session lasted thirty minutes. During the pre-session a brief overview of the purpose of the group and assessment were discussed. Students were given the opportunity to ask questions before beginning the baseline assessment. The assessment took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Session 1

Objective: To get to know each other and understand the purpose of the group.

Procedure: Session one was 45 minutes. The first group meeting was spent discussing the structure of the group, group procedures, answering questions about the group, and completing the second baseline AASCM assessment. Discussion focused on group goals, participant goals, and important ground rules such as confidentiality.

Group members participated in a game called “I think s/he is cool because...” to assist in breaking the ice and transitioning into a more cohesive team. It also allowed for the assessment of student personalities, the roles the students may play in the group, and the students’ interests based on who they admired (see Appendix B).

A portion of the first group meeting was spent on the agenda for the upcoming four group meetings. The importance of journal writing as homework, the expectation of open communication, and constructive interpersonal feedback was highlighted. Participants were given time before the meeting adjourned to respond to this information either in the group or individually. Expectations were altered as long as it did not compromise the group outcome (e.g. if a student does not do the journal assignment for homework, the student could share what they would have potentially written in the journal). During the last 20 minutes of the group, students completed the 2nd round of the baseline; the AASCM.

Session 2

Objective: To introduce students to the self-advocacy empowerment competency. Procedure: First, there was a presentation that assisted in the identification of social, political, economic, and cultural factors that potentially affected the students. Topics included, but were not limited to, power and privilege, perception, culture, values, and attribution (see Appendix C).

Next, students watched a slide show of different pictures taken from magazines, commercials, the media, and the internet. The selected images relayed a specific message such as wealth, family, and poverty (the pictures were a reflection of the society in which we live - they portrayed underrepresented populations more negatively than represented populations). Targeted discussion focused on group members' perception of the person in the picture, why they perceived them in that manner, where this perception might have been learned, and how these perceptions can be a reflection of how they see themselves.

After the presentation and conversation, each student was asked to reflect on individual incidents where they were made to feel powerless. I shared a personal experience to model self-disclosure and provide a real-life example. Laminated phrases were available that corresponded with oppressive experiences students had shared in previous counseling environments (e.g., "This is an Honors class, I don't think you belong here") to give to students who might have a difficult time thinking of personal experiences; none of the laminate phrases were needed. Lastly, students were asked, "How did that experience impact

who you are?” “How did it impact your educational outlook?” and “How did you respond to that experience?”

During this activity, the student onlookers had the opportunity to provide constructive interpersonal feedback to the student sharing information. The goal of the interpersonal feedback was to spark thought-provoking dialogue as a means of providing insight and change. Before interpersonal feedback began, examples of effective versus ineffective interpersonal feedback were given. Students were asked to be aware of their word choice and voice tone. The importance of listening to the interpersonal feedback and using it as an opportunity to learn and grow was also emphasized. Prior to the end of the group, students took the AASCM for the third time; the first time after the initial stage of the intervention.

As reinforcement, students’ homework included briefly journaling about one of the situations they discussed and telling how they could handle the situation differently with the new knowledge they have about empowerment.

Session 3

Objective: To introduce students to the self advocacy self-determination competency.

Procedure: Session three was 90 minutes. To open the group, students discussed their journal entries and received feedback from the facilitator and other members. This allowed for lively continued discussion and reflection about empowerment. The review and reflection segued into the presentation on self-determination. The presentation included an overview of critical constructs such as motivation, control, and self-awareness that influence self-

determination. (Appendix C lists resources that provide strategies that school counselors can use to assist students in understanding and developing self-determination skills). The chart in figure 1 of the self- determination Powerpoint presentation and slide 2 of the *Designing Assessments to Enhance Motivation* powerpoint were used to help students understand the factors that influence self-determination. Next, students worked in dyads, with someone they had not already worked with, to present role plays (see Appendix D). During the role plays, students had the opportunity to interact and apply the skills learned. Student onlookers were asked to take abbreviated notes in order to recollect what they observed, look for themes in order to give their thoughts about the observation, and provide feedback on any constructs related to the self-advocacy competencies, such as the role player's ability to establish goals and make sound decisions in the face of adversity. This allowed for greater participation and targeted conversation.

The students watched the video "Two Brothers, Two skin tones." The video clip demonstrated effective and ineffective examples of self-determination, such as effective decision making versus ineffective decision making and the consequences of both. The complete video runs for 7 minutes and 21 seconds, but students should watch the first 3 minutes and 45 seconds of the video clip (see Appendix C). The video helped students put this information in perspective.

Next, students engaged in conversation about what they observed. They discussed how they felt watching the video, what the individuals in the video did differently that set them apart, and what contributed to the actions of the participants in the video. Lastly, students complete the fourth round of the AASCM; the second round during the intervention.

Session 4

Objective: To introduce students to the self advocacy social justice competency.

Procedure: As a brief overview of empowerment and self-determination, students were asked “How does knowing this information make you feel?” Social justice was presented last in order to ask students, “Now that you know this information, what are you going to do with it (how will you change your behaviors and assist your community?” This process allowed students to analyze and potentially change their behavior, which had the potential to change what motivated them.

Some portions of the *Education for Democracy, Equality and Social Justice*

Powerpoint (see Appendix C) were used to emphasize issues of equity and access and the effects it has on the educational outcomes of Black adolescents. The presentation sought to liberate students and empower them to want to change the social system of education and beyond, starting with them. The idea of social justice is not as concrete as empowerment and self-determination. It requires students to be more abstract in their thought process, therefore,

more time and attention was spent to ensure that students understood how complex and important social justice is.

After the presentation students were asked rhetorically “What are you going to do about it?” Students were then placed in dyads and asked to think of inequities that persist at school. Step two was to reflect on those experiences and use their thoughts and emotions from the reflection and their new skills to develop a viable action plan. I rotated from dyad to dyad and provided assistance to groups that needed it, often helping students brainstorm. Students were asked to develop a realistic and responsible plan of social justice that could be implemented to improve the inequity that they documented (see Appendix E for sample plan). They were given markers and a flip chart to map out their ideas and a final plan. Next, students presented their school-related inequity and plan of social justice to the other group members. Next, group members engaged in discussion to further reinforce the social justice competency and receive feedback relative to their plan of social justice. Lastly, student took the AASCM; this was the last round of the AASCM during the intervention.

For homework, students were asked to journal their overall feeling about the self-advocacy competencies discussed, their current view of society, and the impact they believed they could make on society.

Session 5

Objective: To provide an opportunity for students to share what they have learned, to terminate the group sessions, and take the AASCM after withdrawing the intervention.

Procedure: First, students read and/or discussed their journals with the group. Afterwards, I briefly discussed how this group served as an example social justice. By working with a group of Black adolescents on improving their academic self-concept and therefore academic motivation, I was exemplifying social justice. It was important that this information be imparted to the group in order for them to realize that social justice does not have to resemble the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. or other prominent figures, but can exist in the lives of individuals they encounter everyday. ¹

Subsequently, students worked independently to answer the survey questions from the ATT. The group transitioned into termination with a round robin activity in which, each student had the opportunity to discuss what they appreciated about the group, the group facilitator and group members, and to share their next steps in applying what was learned and reaffirmed their goals for moving forward. Students received a short list of resources for additional follow-up, continued support, counseling and communication about this topic and others. Lastly, students were encouraged to stay for any remaining time to enjoy light refreshments and conversation.

¹ Note. From “Implementing Self-Advocacy Training Within a Brief Psychoeducational Group to Improve the Academic Motivation of Black Adolescents,” by A. R. Dowden, 2009, *Journal for Specialist in Group Work*, 34(2), 118 -136. Copyright 2009 by Routledge- Taylor and Francis Group. Adapted, currently seeking permission.

Data Collection

An N=1/ABA single subject experimental design was employed for this research study. To stabilize the baseline data, initially, pre-intervention grades, from each class that students were enrolled in, was collected as the first step in determining student eligibility for the group. In addition, there was a pre-group session in order to administer the AASCM as the first baseline (A₁). The baseline was repeated one additional time during the first group meeting (A₂). Therefore, the baseline was established over a two week, two session timeframe. This information was gathered to stabilize and determine each student's level of academic motivation and academic self-concept prior to administering the intervention. In doing so, this allowed for the prediction of the effectiveness of the intervention. Treatment/intervention datum (B) was collected during group sessions 2-4. Once the intervention was withdrawn, baseline datum was gathered again during group meeting 5 (A₃). Overall, baseline datum was collected at three different times and treatment/intervention datum was collected at three different times during the research study. As a result, the research design was: A-A-B-B-B-A.

Also, during group meeting 5, students' completed the ATT survey. The datum from the survey informed about the students' perception of the effectiveness of the group.

After the group terminated, at the end of the first semester (nine weeks), post intervention grades from all the students' classes were collected again. The grades were used to provide additional information to support the datum gathered from the AASCM.

Data Analysis

The research question was can self-advocacy training improve the academic motivation of Black adolescents? To test this, six students participated in the research study. AASCM results for each student were broken down into sections. There were five sections of the AASCM (ability, environmental responsiveness, control, importance/value, and emotions). Therefore, student's results on section one were statistically graphed. This pattern continued through section five. Specific attention was devoted to significant fluctuation, of any kind, in each section, in their level of academic self-concept and academic motivation. Breaking the AASCM measure into sections to assess student's academic self-concept and academic motivation provided a more comprehensive assessment. Additionally, it helped in assessing specific areas of strength and weakness when determining a student's academic self-concept and academic motivation. Also, utilizing the action research approach, I was able to assess each section of the AASCM separately, evaluating each student's strengths and weaknesses individually based on the responses to construct specific questions, and observe fluctuations in the outcome data gathered from the overall totals from each section of the assessment. I was able to assess overall and construct specific results that provide information about the student's academic self-concept and academic motivation. This information proved helpful in using the group format to meet the specific needs of the student individually.

After AASCM datum had been analyzed and plotted on the graph. Each students' grades, both pre and post intervention, were assessed and plotted on a separate graph. Specifically, grades were assessed individually, per classes, versus on average (i.e. GPA), in order to pinpoint academic growth as a result of the intervention. A phenomenological approach to assessing academic growth in classes was utilized based on student's responsiveness during group and information gathered during journaling. Statistical graphs provided visual reference to support the findings. These two forms of data provided robust inference to accept or reject the casual relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Lastly, survey datum from the ATT was synthesized in order to draw conclusions about the perceived effectiveness of the group from the perspective of the student.

CHAPTER 4

Results

The research question was can self-advocacy training improve the academic motivation of Black adolescents? To answer this question, data was collected and analyzed from six students individually. The results of the data collection and analysis is discussed per section of the AASCM in order to make inference about each student's individual academic motivation. The major finding is that there is evidence that improvement in academic motivation took place during the treatment and the improvements were held in the return to baseline.

From the outset, each student had two baseline measurements to establish the foundation for the N=1 research (A₁, A₂). The treatment took place over three weeks (B₁-B₃) to correspond with the brief group interaction that was acceptable within a school setting. The last group, the sixth group meeting, accounted for the group termination and also provided the return to the baseline (A₃) of the N=1 research.

Effectiveness of self-advocacy training

Self-advocacy training is potentially an effective intervention program within a psychoeducational group to improve the academic self-concept and overall academic motivation of African American adolescents. The six African American students who participated in the group demonstrated consistent, gradual improvement in all five areas that were assessed (See Appendix F). The self-advocacy training provided the students the

opportunity to gain awareness about sociopolitical issues that have the potential to impact their academic success. Additionally, they were able to openly and honestly share their questions, concerns, and tribulations in a safe environment, which provided phenomenological data and further strengthened the effectiveness of the self-advocacy training.

The psychoeducational group format was conducive to the self-advocacy training and the phenomenological approach that was being utilized. This format allowed students to gain comfort relatively immediately through commonalities in peer communication, peer interaction as well as the facilitator's understanding, through the use of a grounded approach to research, as well as the facilitators personal disclosure of information. Additionally, by acknowledging and validating student concerns, providing constructive feedback, reinforcing the three constructs (empowerment, self-determination and social justice) and reflecting on previous group meetings to highlight when connections were being made, students, overall, were able to grasp the information being shared and connected it to their individual and collective experiences.

Assessment of Academic Self-Concept and Motivation (AASCM)

The AASCM proved to be effective in providing detailed data to assess academic self-concept and overall academic motivation. Utilizing the AASCM to assess individual student's overtime in each section of the assessment individually provided additional data in

order to specifically understand what could potentially attribute to a students level of motivation or lack thereof.

Section One: Capability/Ability

While the mean increase in overall academic motivation was 7 points on the AASCM, in the capability/ability section, the mean increase was 8.3 points (see Figure 1). This demonstrates a gradual improvement in the student's perceived ability to perform well academically. Student #2 demonstrated the largest increase in this area with a 13 point increase across the 6 week psychoeducational group. Student twos' largest increase in the capability/ability section occurred during the second treatment group (B₂) that focused on self-determination. During the second treatment group his score on a scale ranging from 0-140 went from 95-102. Phenomenological data gathered during the group discussion on self-determination indicated that Student #2 felt that he was capability of making good decisions, but often established goals that were later abandoned. Although student #2 showed gradual improvement in his overall level of capability/ability based on his score on the AASCM, that score did not correlate with his pre-post treatment grades (see Appendix H). On the other hand, student #1, whose initial baseline score on the capability/ability section was the highest, made the smallest gain during the course of the intervention. Consistent with his AASCM scores on the capability/ability section, student #1 did not see any improvements in his grades as a result of the intervention (see Appendix H). Although he did not see any grade improvement, his Algebra IA teacher did comment on his grade report that he had begun to

demonstrate a willingness to learn and if it continued grade improvement would follow.

Student #4 perceived capability on the AASCM improved by 11 points during the six week group. These increases in perceived capability did not translate to post grades collected on student #4 nor did phenomenological data collected correlate with gains in the capability/ability section. On the other hand, student #6, who demonstrated a 9 point gain in the capability/ability section, showed significant post treatment grade improvements (see Appendix H). During the group, student #6 attributed his ability to achieve academically to school involvement, specifically playing school sports and taking advantage of school tutorial programs before sports practice began. Student #3 saw a 7 point gain and student #5 saw a 9 point gain on the capability/ability section.

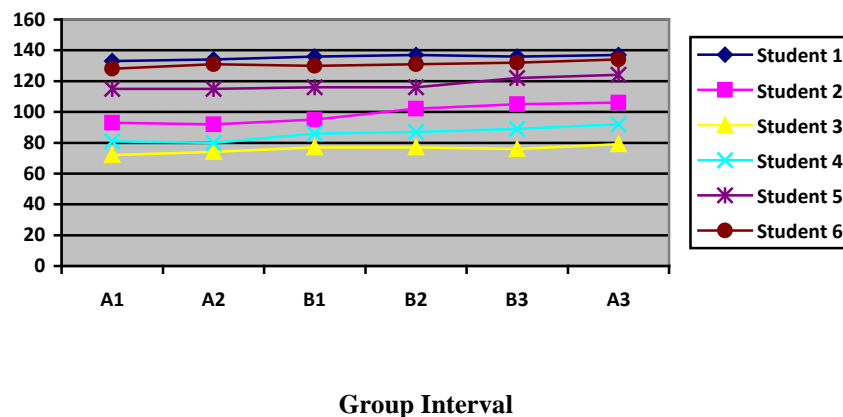


Figure 1: Capability/Ability Section of the AASCM

Section Two: Opportunity

The mean increase on the opportunity section was 9.2 points (see Figure 2). While students did demonstrate a high mean increase on this section, student's initial baseline (A1) scores were the lowest among the other four sections of the assessment. Therefore, the large overall gain can potentially be attributed to the minimal amount of initial perceived opportunity. The opportunity section seeks to gather information on the student's perceived level of environmental support to be successful in and outside of the school setting. Students #1 and #4 had the largest gains in the opportunity section. Student #1 had a 13 point gain, while student #4 had a 14 point gain (see Figure 2). Student ones gain in this section is consistent with the phenomenological data gathered on him. Again, while his grades (see Appendix H) do not reflect his perceived capability/ability or opportunity, phenomenological data gathered on student #1 demonstrates a clear career path that potentially correlates to his level of self-determination or ability to set goals and make decisions. Student ones interest in going into the military and his current involvement in the schools Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program further supported his interest and had the potential to impact his scores in the opportunity section.

Again, while student #4 had the highest AASCM increase on the opportunity section, neither phenomenological data gathered during the group nor pre-post treatment grades reflected the increases in score demonstrated on the opportunity section.

Student #3 had the smallest gains on the opportunity section of the AASCM and the next to lowest score. This correlated with student threes pre-post treatment grades (see Appendix H).

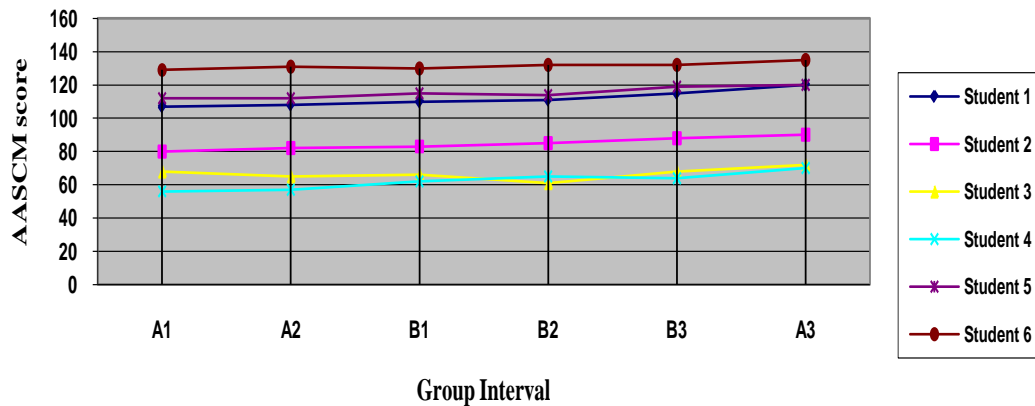


Figure 2: Opportunity Section of the AASCM

Section Three: Control

The mean increase on the control section was 6.3 points (see Figure 3). Student #1 demonstrated the greatest increase on the control section by increasing his control score by 12 points. On the other hand, student #2 saw a 3 point increase and also demonstrated score fluctuation. Student twos score was consistent on the initial baseline data gathered on the AASCM, scoring 86 points on both of the initial baselines. After the initial treatment, the control score increased by 5 points from 86 to 91 then dropped after the second treatment to 87, the ending score, during the return to baseline, was 89; the same score as the third treatment. There is seemingly no obvious rationale for the score fluctuation. Neither

phenomenological data nor pre-post treatment grades provide insight to support the fluctuation.

While student's #5& 6 did not make the greatest gains in the control section of the AASCM, their initial baseline scores and ending return to baseline scores were the highest in the group. Their overall high scores are consistent with their ability to improve their grades; as reflected in the post treatment grades (see Appendix H). It is also consistent with the phenomenological data gathered based on information shared during the group. For example, both student's #5& 6 discuss weekly routines that included staying after school to receive additional support on areas that they were struggling in academically like math and English. Both students' discussed the importance of doing homework to improve grades.

Student's #3& 4 had the lowest initial baseline grades on the control section of the AASCM, had the lowest mean increase in the control section, and the lowest scores on the return to baseline. Neither student #3 or #4 demonstrated grade improvement as a result of the group (see Appendix H).

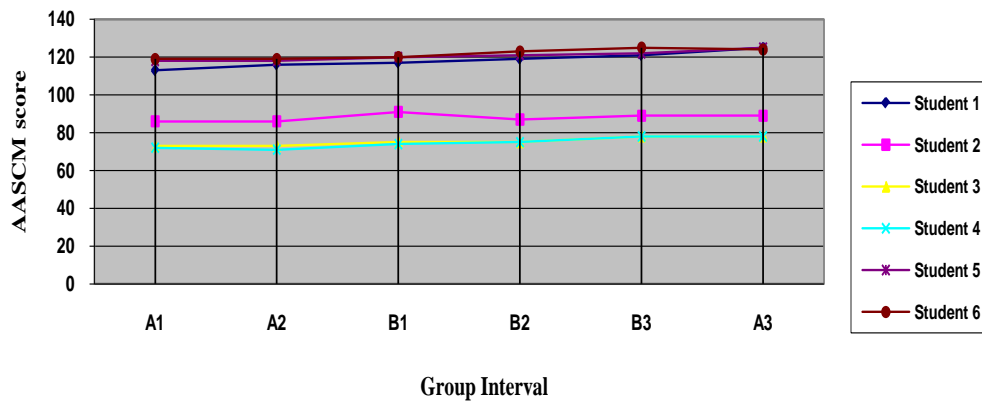


Figure 3: Control Section of the AASCM

Section Four: Importance

The mean increase in the importance section of the AASCM was 5 points. The importance section of the AASCM represents the student's perception of the importance of being overall academically astute. Student #3 increase on the importance section was minimal; one point. This was student three's smallest gain across all sections of the AASCM. Student three's lack of importance, as it pertains to being academically astute, can be generalized to the student's lack of academic motivation. This lack of importance toward being academically astute correlates with pre-post treatment grades obtained for student #3.

Student #1 has the highest initial baseline score on the importance section of the AASCM. Additionally, a 4 point gain from the initial baseline score was achieved. While

student ones initial baseline score demonstrates that he feels school is important, his grades do not reflect this overall perception of education (see Appendix H). Phenomenological data (teacher comments) gathered demonstrates that student #1 has a willingness to learn. Also, the support of the group was beginning to make a difference in student ones level of academic motivation as demonstrated in his score increases on the AASCM as well as comments from the teacher that indicated that although his grade in math did not improve continued effort would result in grade increase.

Both Students 2 and 6 saw a six point increase in their importance score on the AASCM. Student #2 had the second to lowest initial baseline score in the importance section, while student #6 had the second highest in this section. In line with his initial baseline score and steady increase in this section, student #6 had significant post grade increases. Phenomenological data gathered indicated that Student #6 was able to make a connection between school –work- and quality of life indicating that “if I want to become a Social Worker or Psychologist I need to do good in school; this will allow me to give back to people like me and live a good life.”

Student #4 had the largest increase on the importance section with 9 points. However, student fours initial baseline and return to baseline score was the lowest out of the group. Additionally, student #4 did not see any improve on post treatment grades. This demonstrates the potentially positive impact that the group had in making gradual improvements in

academic motivation. It also demonstrates the need for additional, ongoing, support to sustain higher levels of academic motivation beyond the scope of the group.

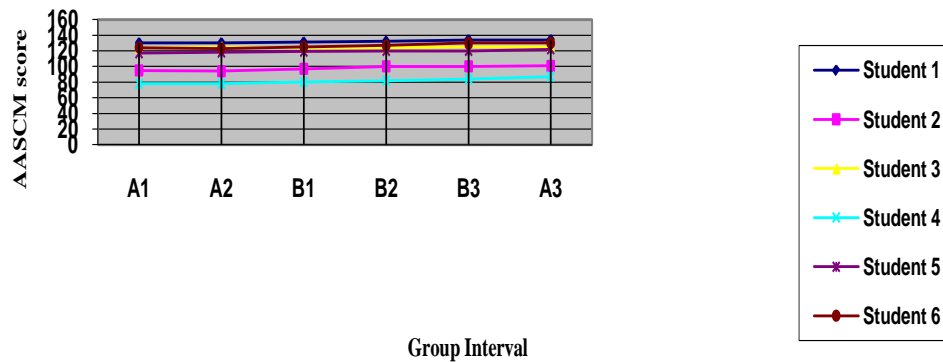


Figure 4: Importance Section of the AASCM

Section 5: Emotions/Feelings

The mean increase in the emotions/feelings section of the AASCM was 6 points. The emotions/feelings section assesses the students' feelings toward school and school related activities. Consistent with other sections of the AASCM, student #6 was tied with student #3 with the highest initial baseline score in the emotions/feelings section of the AASCM.

Student #6 has demonstrated constant and high scores on the AASCM, his phenomenological data supports his high AASCM scores and gradual score increases, he also has post treatment grade increases to support the quantitative data.

Similar to student #6, student #5 has also demonstrated high scores on sections of the AASCM, has phenomenological data to support high AASCM scores and gradual scores increases, and also has post treatment grade increases to support quantitative data.

Student #2 showed the most significant gain on the emotions/feelings section with an increase of 11 points across the 6 week psychoeducational group. While this score indicates that student #2 felt strongly about school, phenomenological data collected during the group sessions and pre-post treatment grades did not reflect this.

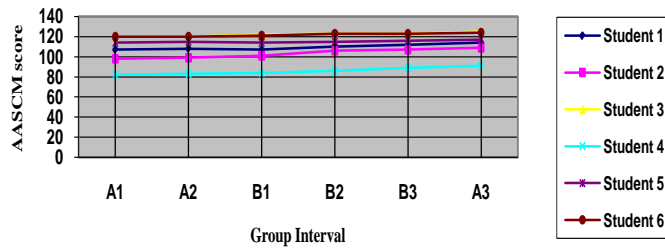


Figure 5: Emotions/Feelings Section of the AASC M

Attitude Toward Treatment (ATT) Survey

Overall, the students in the group responded very well to the self-advocacy training. ATT survey data (see Appendix G) indicated that all 6 students felt the self-advocacy training was believable, that it changed their idea of problems related to self-defeating behaviors, they felt the explanation of the program was very understandable, and that the program was very helpful in assisting them to understand themselves. While Student #5 did not feel the teaching was effective and that the program compared to doing nothing, the remaining students overwhelmingly felt the teaching was effective and it was better than doing nothing (see Appendix G). This data has demonstrated, from the student's perspective, that overall the self-advocacy training was effective.

Grades

Students received progress reports less than two weeks after the group terminated.

Two students, student #5 and #6, were passing all of their classes after failing two courses when the group started. Although students #1-#4 grades had remained the same, teacher comments indicated that effort had increased and if the same effort continued gradual grade improvement would follow. One of the underlying issues discussed in the group was homework and seeking help. Student #6 discussed efforts to complete homework daily. Student #6 indicated that he often stays after school and completes homework and receives tutorial help before football and now basketball practice. Student #5 admitted to doing homework routinely. Student #1 admitted to not completing homework routinely and not being able to stay after school for assistance because of his obligation to pick his little sister up from the school bus. Students #2-#4 also admitted to a lack of homework effort.

Summarization of Individual Student Results

This research provides evidence that improvement in academic motivation took place during the self-advocacy training (treatment) and held during the return to baseline. This is demonstrated in the improvements in both quantitative and qualitative data gathered on the six students who participated in the research study.

Student #1 consistently demonstrated gains on the AASCM during the course of the six week psychoeducational group. While Student #1 did not demonstrate improved grades, he did show improvement in academic motivation in his math class based on information collected from the math teacher. Also, student one discussed clear career interests and goals; and was working toward those goals by taking classes that would support his career interest.

Student #2 seemingly made the least progress in establishing increase academic motivation during the group and maintaining it after the group terminated. While Student #2 demonstrated minimal AASCM increases, he also showed AASCM score fluctuation. It is difficult to account for the fluctuation in AASCM scores; however, there was not an increase in grades. Also, student #2 provided limited phenomenological data to support the minimal increases in AASCM.

Students #3 and #4 demonstrated gains on the AASCM, but did not show grade improvement during the course of the psychoeducational group. During group discussion on self-determination, both students discussed having siblings incarcerated and the effects it had on their academic motivation. Both students discussed feelings of hopelessness that contributed to their lack of academic motivation.

Students #5 and #6 demonstrated gains on the AASCM during the course of the six week psychoeducational group. Additionally, both students demonstrated grade improvement during the course of the group. Each student discussed staying after school for support. Student #6 discussed his involvement in after school sports; both basketball and football. This information provided phenomenological data to support school involvement as a strategy to increase student academic motivation. Student #6 also discussed career interest in the Human Services field. This is provided Student #6 with a goal to work toward, which phenomenological data showed enhanced his academic motivation.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Study Purpose and Summary

This study provided an opportunity to explore and address the utilization of self-advocacy training in a psychoeducational group setting as an effective mechanism to increase the academic motivation of African American adolescents. The foundation of the research is grounded in multicultural and social justice counseling. The examination of self-advocacy skill acquisition when working with an able population of African American adolescents is new research in the field of Counselor Education/Counseling. As a result, this research has the potential to provide a wealth of valuable information for counselor educators/researchers/practitioners alike.

Research Question, Research Design Analysis and Research Limitations

The research question was can self-advocacy training improve the academic motivation of African American adolescents? The research study included a five week psychoeducational group that employed self-advocacy training as the intervention. The baseline (A) datum was gathered a week prior to the group beginning and continued into week one; the initial group meeting. Therefore, the initial baseline was two weeks in length. The treatment (B) datum was gathered during weeks 2-4 of the group while the self-advocacy training was occurring. The baseline/withdrawal (A) datum was gathered during week 5; the last group meeting. As a result, the structure of the research design was: A-A-B-B-B-A.

Research results demonstrate that improvement took place during the treatment and held during the return to baseline.

An N=1/ABA single subject design and a phenomenological approach was utilized for the study. Additionally, an action research approach was also employed to (a) provide immediate research outcome data in order to make adjustments within the group in order to be responsive to student needs, (b) to demonstrate a practitioners-friendly approach to school counselors interested in potentially employing the intervention when working with similar student groups, (c) and also to bridge the gap between the N=1 and the phenomenological methodologies. Utilizing a mixed method approach was beneficial in allowing for the merger of objective and subjective data to make show evidence that there was improvement in academic motivation during and after the self-advocacy training. Overwhelmingly, both data sets demonstrated improvements in academic self-concept and academic motivation among all 6 students who participated in the group.

The psychoeducational group format provided the optimal setting for assessing the students overtime. It also allowed for rich discussion and interaction that proved effective in gathering phenomenological data to support the N=1 data gathered through the AASCM. Additionally, while the AASCM length may not have been optimal when assessing students overtime because of its repetitiveness, it was beneficial it providing specific and detailed data.

Research Results and Limitations

Research results demonstrate that improvement took place during the treatment and held during the return to baseline. One theory for the level of growth that occurred can be attributed to the brief nature of the group (six weeks total). This timeframe, while conducive in school settings, allowed for a surface perspective of the concepts being explored. A more in depth discussion, overtime, has the potential to result in greater gains in academic self-concept and academic motivation. Although consistent improvement was made, it was minimal. Inasmuch, replication of this group should also consider strategies for supporting group members after group termination. Further support has the potential to further increase academic self-concept and academic motivation.

AASCM data revealed that a) students demonstrated consistent, yet minimal growth in improving their overall academic motivation and b) that student's perceived school as important, but perceived their level of opportunity to be low. Research on the aspiration-expectation gap of colored adolescents demonstrates that this contrast in interest and opportunity results in low academic motivation (Arbona & Novy, 1991; Baly, 1989; Constantine et al., 1998; Hellenga et al., 2002; Diemer & Hsieh, 2008).

Phenomenological data collected during the group session on self-determination indicated that 3 out of 6 of the students participating in the group had older siblings incarcerated. This was an unexpected issue that correlated with the level of overall academic motivation among the student population. Research on familial incarceration indicates that

students with older siblings incarcerated often struggle academically, socially and emotionally; they often exemplify the following behaviors: anger, hopelessness, poor grades, offending behaviors, embarrassment and are reluctant to share the fact that they have a sibling in jail (Meek, 2008). These feelings, associated with older sibling incarceration, potentially contributed to the students' current levels of academic self-concept and academic motivation.

The beacon of light here is that despite these challenges these students can achieve academically. This research revealed that involvement in school and ongoing support in school and/or in the community is critical in assisting students achieve academically while increasing overall academic motivation.

Limitations

There are three limitations that influenced the research study, those include: a) small sample population, b) time constraints (brief nature of the group), and c) AASCM self-reporting. Characteristic of N=1 studies, the sample size reduced the ability to effectively generalize the study to all African American adolescents. The inability to effectively generalize is due to the high variability that correlates to the lack of reliability in the study. Phenomenological data assisted in offsetting this; however, it is still a limitation of the study.

Secondly, the brief nature of the initial baseline provides limiting observations as evidence of academic motivation, or lack thereof, among the students who participated in the group. The brief nature of the baseline reduces the possibility of forming conclusive evidence

of change when the treatment was applied. Additionally, the brief nature of the treatment resulted in minimal improvement in levels of academic motivation. An extension of the group could potentially increase levels of academic motivation.

There is always the potential for bias when participants are asked to self-report. The subjective nature of self-reporting can be seen as ambiguous when collecting data. The uncertainty of this process becomes a potential liability and thus a limitation of the research. To overcome this limitation, additional methods were utilized to extract data from the participants. Phenomenological data and the collection of pre-post treatment grades assisted in supporting the self-reported AASCM data.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could focus on replication of the study to increase potential generalizability to African American adolescents. Sharpley (2007) states that N=1 research design should be replicated three times before effectively being generalized.

A second option could be to focus on different strategies to support students after initial self-advocacy training is received and evaluate the effectiveness of the continued support. Based on this research, it is evident that for continuous improvement in, or to avoid declines in gains in academic self-concept and academic motivation, ongoing support is essential. An additional approach could be to extend the psychoeducational group beyond six groups meets and compare increases in overall academic motivation to that of students who participated in the brief group. Similar assessment techniques, such as the utilization of the AASCM and/or

making subjective inferences based on academic grade information overtime would still be beneficial in future research.

Moreover, additional research could focus on other delivery models for effectively teaching self-advocacy training and the effectiveness of those programs in improving levels of academic self-concept and academic motivation among diverse student populations. Other program delivery options could focus on teaching self-advocacy skills in a classroom guidance setting in order to effectively meet the needs of more students.

Future research could focus on the effectiveness of self-advocacy training with other racially/ethnically diverse students groups (i.e. White, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian). African American students were specifically targeted for this study as a result of the aforementioned information (Chapter 2); however, all students have the potential to benefit from self-advocacy training. Future research in this area that targets all or other specific racial/ethnically diverse student groups has the potential to further self-advocacy research in these areas.

Summarization of Results

The quantitative and qualitative data gathered demonstrates that the self-advocacy training within a brief psychoeducational group can be effective in beginning to improve academic self-concept and overall academic motivation of African American adolescents. However, continued research as well as continued school and environmental support is

needed to ensure continued improvements in academic self-concept and academic motivation.

Overall, students demonstrated gradual improvements in each section of the AASCM. Although there was consistent growth in all five of the assessed areas, the growth was minimal. The mean student growth across the five sections of the AASCM was seven points (see Appendix F). This could potentially be attributed to the brief format of the psychoeducational group that was employed.

While the student's demonstrated consistent, yet minimal growth on the five areas of the AASCM that were assessed to predict academic motivation, 4 out of the 6 student's did not improve their grades; two students improved their grades to passing. Inasmuch, the brief format that was utilized demonstrated that providing self-advocacy training did improve the academic motivation of African American adolescents and held the improved levels of academic motivation after the treatment ended. However, extended engagement of self-advocacy training overtime would be beneficial to assist students in sustaining high or higher levels of academic self-concept and academic motivation.

During the psychoeducational group, there were two occurrences that seemed to shed light on the academic self-concept and academic motivation of the students participating in the group. The first was the students' connection to the video watched during the group discussion on self-determination, "Two Brothers to Skin Tones." That video better assisted them in understanding the concept of self-determination. Several students connected to the

video on a personal level. Three students admitted to having siblings in jail and candidly discussed the impact that had on their ability to make long term goals and/or to think positively about their futures. This data supports research that purports that students with older siblings incarcerated often struggle academically, socially and emotionally; they often exemplify the following behaviors: anger, hopelessness, poor grades, offending behaviors, embarrassment and are reluctant to share the fact that they have a sibling in jail (Meek, 2008). These feelings potentially contribute to the students' current levels of academic self-concept and academic motivation.

Second, on average, students exemplified the lowest scores in the opportunity section (see Figure 6). The mean A₁ (the initial baseline) opportunity score was 92 on a scale that ranges from 0-140. With the exception of student #6, the Opportunity section was each individual student's lowest score on A₁. On the other hand, the highest mean A₁ score was on the importance section of the assessment (see Figure 6). The mean importance score was 111.3 on a scale that ranges from 0-140. This data supports research that has been done on the aspiration-expectation gap of students of color (Arbona & Novy, 1991; Baly, 1989; Constantine et al., 1998; Hellenga et al., 2002; Diemer & Hsieh, 2008). This data demonstrates that students of color, in this case, African American students, do view education as important, but feel that opportunities for success for them are limited. This perception of success contributes to their level of academic self-concept and overall academic motivation.

Implications for School Counselors

While it is never too late to assist high school students reach academic achievement, it is critical that school counselors work to assist African American students feel connected to school from the outset. School counselors could work to develop measurable intervention and prevention programs for 9th grade students that focus on high school transition and school retention. These programs could specifically assist these students in gaining awareness of school activities that may align well with their interest. Other programs could focus on providing information on how to seek out and obtain academic support such as peer tutoring or mentoring. Other programs could focus on minimizing the anxiety that many students have about coming to high school.

This study further demonstrates that ongoing support is needed in order to improve the academic self-concept and academic motivation of African American adolescents. School counselors have an important role to play in assisting students reach academic success.

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Appendices

Appendix A

North Carolina State University Informed Consent Form for Research

Date

Parent(s) Name

Student Address

City, State, Zip Code

School counselor name

School Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear *Parent(s) Name*,

(Student's name) has been selected to participate in a group that will be held as a part of a research study. The group is free of charge and will take place at the school. The goal of the group is to improve academic motivation and self-concept through self-advocacy training. Self-advocacy training focuses on informing and educating students about social justice, empowerment, and self-determination. The group will include five other African-American students who are struggling academically in one or more of the following areas: grades, attendance, and/or behavior.

The self-advocacy training program was developed by the principal researcher. The group will meet weekly for 5 weeks. At the end of each group meeting, students will take the same evaluation. The evaluation is a part of the research study and will assist in determining if there are improvements in the students who participate academic self-concept and motivation. The first meeting will be 45 minutes and will take place during his/her lunch, while the remaining 4 meetings will be 90 minutes. There will be a one week pre-session prior to the first group meeting to gather important information about the students by allowing them to take an assessment before the actual group begins. Because students will be missing time from class as a result of the group, I will be available to assist them with any makeup work before school, after school and during lunch during the duration of the group to lessen the possibility of them falling behind in their classes.

Meetings will take place on (*specify day of the week*). The class period will be staggered, starting with 1st period and ending with 4th period. Group meetings will be facilitated by me, (*name*), one of the school counselors here at (*school name*).

Our hope is that the group will be beneficial to the student participants. However, that is the question we are testing by assessing students' academic self-concept and motivation before and after the group sessions. Although we cannot promise that your child will benefit from these sessions, we hope that they will learn to advocate for themselves when faced with challenging situations, and that they will improve academically as a consequence of these

sessions. Also, student participation is voluntary and the student is able to withdraw from the self-advocacy sessions at any time without penalty.

Some group session will be observed by the principal researchers that I am collaborating with on the research study/group. Additionally, some of the group meetings may be videotaped. Videotaped group meetings will be number labeled to reflect that specific group meeting (e.g. videotape would be labeled two to reflect group meeting two). Videotapes will be kept confidential and stored in a sealed container with other research material. Videotapes will not be used for any future research; they will be destroyed 3-5 years after being made. Videotapes can be used by the principal researcher to reflect on in order to appropriately assess the effectiveness of the group.

Student expectations:

- attend all group meetings (although group participation is voluntary; students can withdraw at anytime)
- participate in the group meetings
- maintain group confidentiality outside of the group meetings
- complete assignments missed while in the group (I will be available before school, after school, and during lunch to assist with make-up work)
- complete homework journal writing assignments associated with group meetings
- respect himself/herself, the group, group facilitator, and group members
- Complete pre- and post- group assessment

Student participants can be terminated from the group for the following reasons:

- group confidentiality is not maintained, and/or
- student grades suffer as a result of the group

To ensure confidentiality during the research study, student information will be kept in a classified file. Student's names will not be used during the collection of the research information. Instead, each student will be assigned a letter of the alphabet to represent them. Additionally, no research report will include the students' names or any way of identifying any individuals in the group.

Student Consent:

I (*student name*) am willing to participate in the group (print and sign name)

I (*student name*) would not be willing to participate in the group (print and sign name)

Parent Consent:

I give (*student name*) permission to participate in the psychoeducational group on self-advocacy (print and sign name) _____.

I do not give permission to participate in the psychoeducational group on self-advocacy (print and sign name) _____.

If additional information is needed, contact *(school counselor's name)* at *(provide phone number and email address)*.

Also, if there are questions about the research study, contact Angel Dowden, doctoral student at North Carolina State University and principal researchers, at 919-641-9093.

If at any time participants feel their rights have been violated, contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) office at North Carolina State University at 919-515-4514 or 919-515-7515.

Appendix B

I think s/he is cool because...

Participants should interview someone else in the group and report out to the group the information recorded about their partner during the interview.

Group member name _____

Who do you admire or think is cool? _____

Why? _____

What is this person's strength(s)? _____

Does this person have any visible weaknesses? _____

Appendix C

Resource List

Designing Assessments to Enhance Motivation: <http://training.kent.edu/assess/motivation.ppt>

Education for democracy, Equality and Social Justice Powerpoint:

http://mason.gmu.edu/~josterli/PowerPoint/NAEYC_2005_FIRST_Social%20Justice%20Power%20Point.ppt

Empowerment

- NcCrest: http://www.nccrest.org/events/events_2006/disproportionality.html *Self-determination*
- Self-determination PowerPoint (refer to figure 1 chart for key constructs):
http://www.ndpc-sd.org/documents/SEA/2004_SEA_Forum/Zhang_Self-determination.ppt

Tool for Change document:

<http://www.toolsforchange.ca/downloads/Promoting%20Healthy%20Equal%20Relationships%20-%20Nov4-05.ppt>

Two Brothers, Two Skin Tones:

<http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/bestoftv/2008/07/24/ac.two.brothers.cnn?iref=videosearch>

Additional Social Justice Reading:

- Sue, D. W., Arredondo, P., & McDavis, R. J. (1992). Multicultural counseling competencies and standards: A call to the profession. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 70*, 477-486.
- Vera, E. M., & Speight, S. L. (2003). Multicultural competence, social justice, and counseling psychology: Expanding our roles. *The Counseling Psychologist, 31*, 253-272.

Appendix D

Sample Role Plays

Directions: Students should work in dyads. Students should select roles and act out the role play showing how they would respond. After the role play, students should discuss their answers to questions #2 and #3 with the group.

Role Play #1:

Kim is the only Black student in AP World History. Kim is frustrated because during conversations about African or African American culture, the teacher turns to her for answers and/or an explanation. On this particular day, the teacher relies on Kim for an explanation.

How should Kim respond?

What is the best way for Kim to handle this situation to ensure that it does not continue?

What else should Kim do to improve her situation?

Role Play #2:

Shawn is 6'4 and in the ninth grade. He is constantly asked by teachers and students if he plays basketball or plans to try out for the team. Shawn, who would prefer to play volleyball, is insulted by the constant assumption that he plays basketball because he is Black and tall.

How should Shawn respond to these assumptions?

What is the best way for him to minimize these accusations?

What else should Shawn do to improve this situation

Role Play #3

Felicia is on the debate team. She enjoys debate and aspires to one day become a lawyer.

Felicia is often complimented on how well she speaks after debate competitions. Initially, she welcomed the compliments, but began to view them as oppressive racial comments.

How should Felicia respond to this type of compliment in the future?

What else should Felicia do to improve her situation?

Should Felicia be insulted by the compliments? Why or why not?

Appendix E

Sample Social Justice Action Plan

Problem: _____

Objective(s)	Action(s)	OUTCOME(S)
Example: Get more students of different racial, ethic, and cultural backgrounds to eat and communicate during lunch	Example: Have students to sign up to participate in a game called “Dare to be different.” Goal is to dare to be different by sitting with people who are different from you and really taking the time to get to know them.	Break the cycle of lunch room segregation.

Appendix F

Overview of the Capability/Ability Section of the AASCM

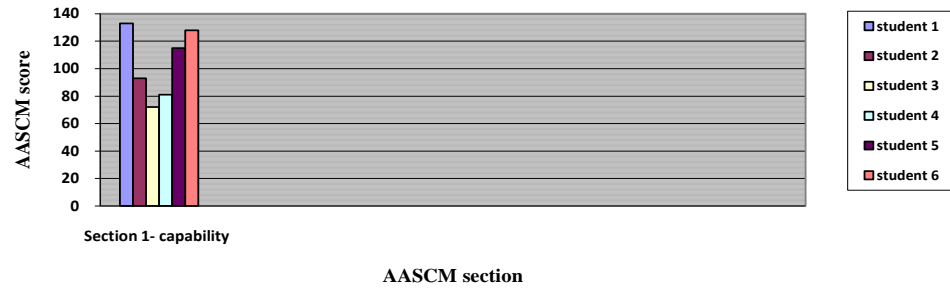


Figure 6: Section 1- Capability - Baseline A1

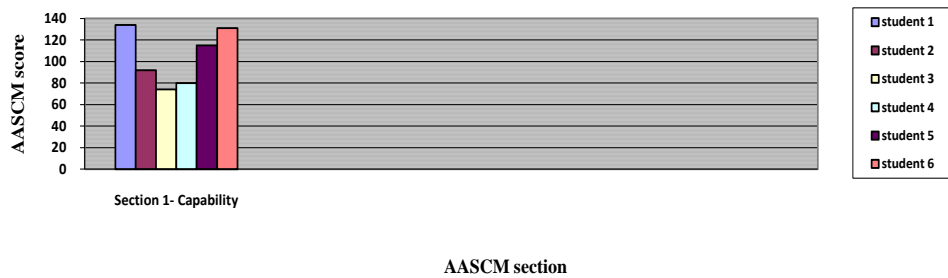


Figure 7: Section 1- Capability – Baseline A2

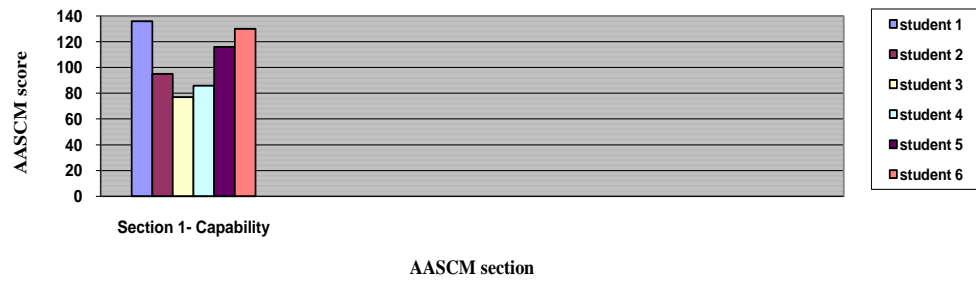


Figure 8: Section 1- Capability - Treatment B₁

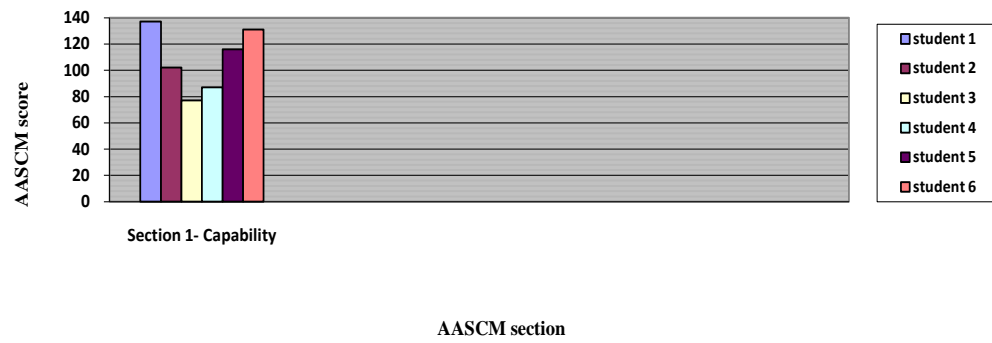


Figure 9: Section 1- Capability – Treatment B₂

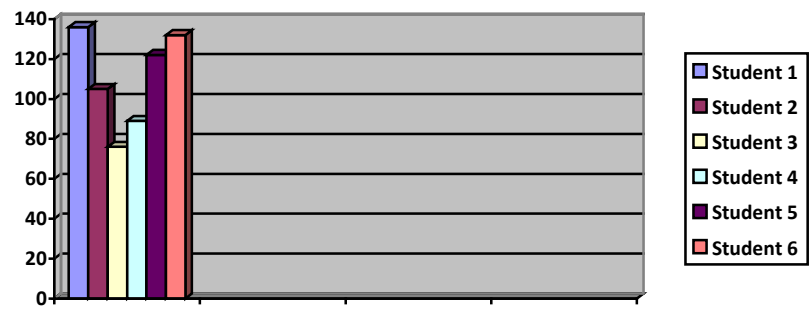


Figure 10: Section 1- Capability – Treatment B₃

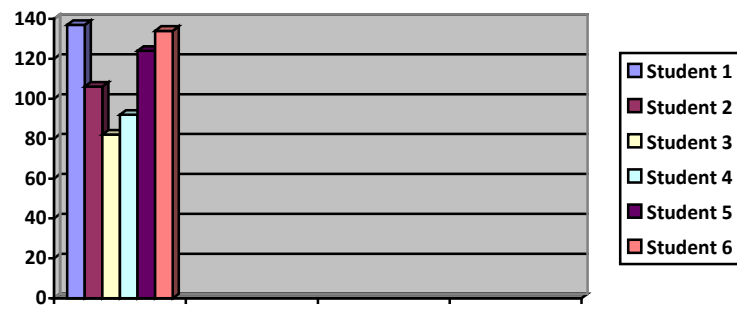


Figure 11: Section 1- Capability – Return to Baseline A₃

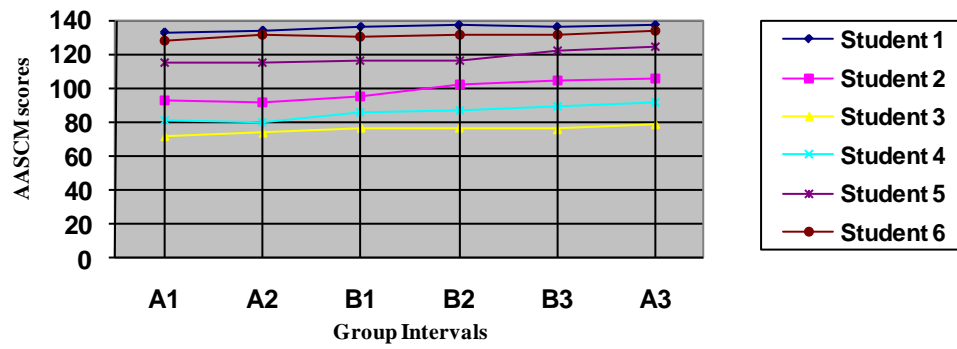


Figure 12: Capability Section (Overtime)

Overview of the Opportunity Section of the AASCM

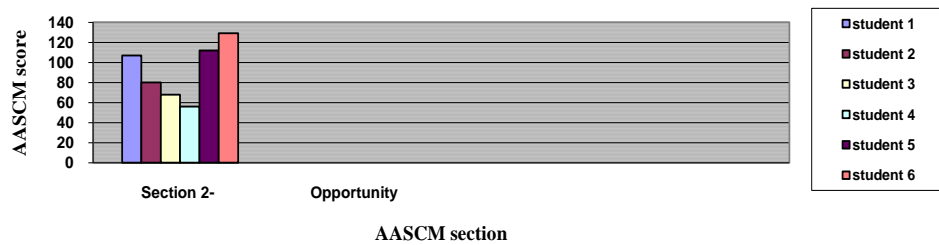


Figure 13: Section 2- Opportunity – Baseline A₁

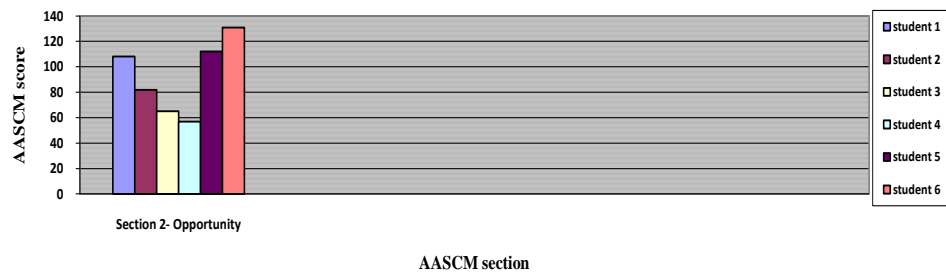


Figure 14: Section 2- Opportunity – Baseline A2

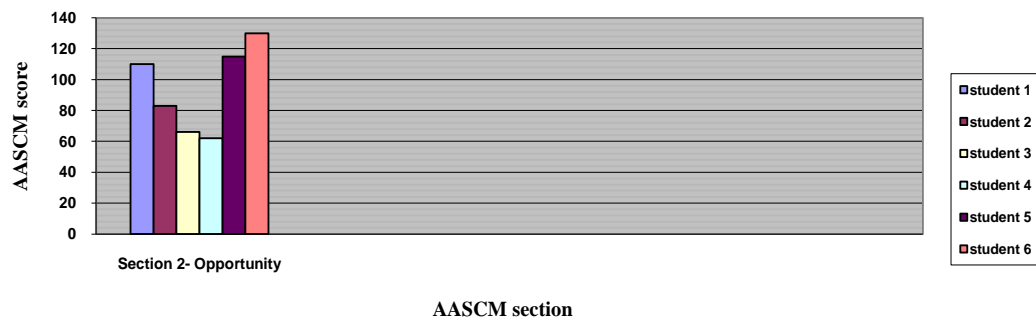


Figure 15: Section 2- Opportunity – Treatment B1

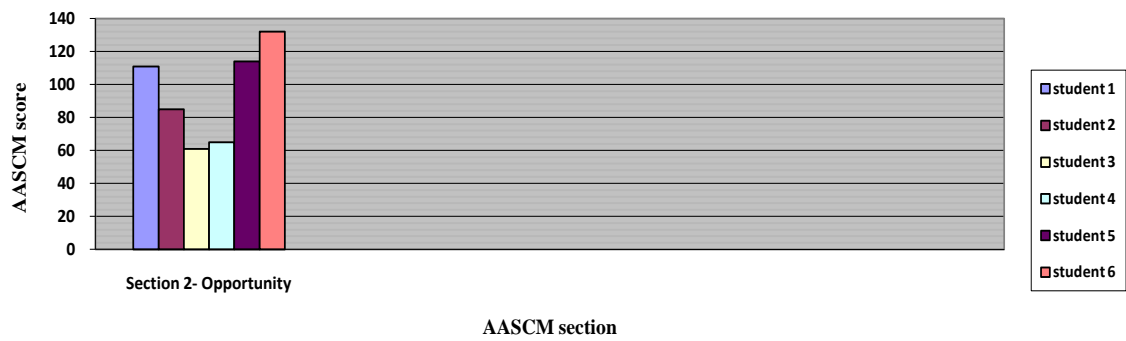


Figure 16: Section 2- Opportunity – Treatment B₂

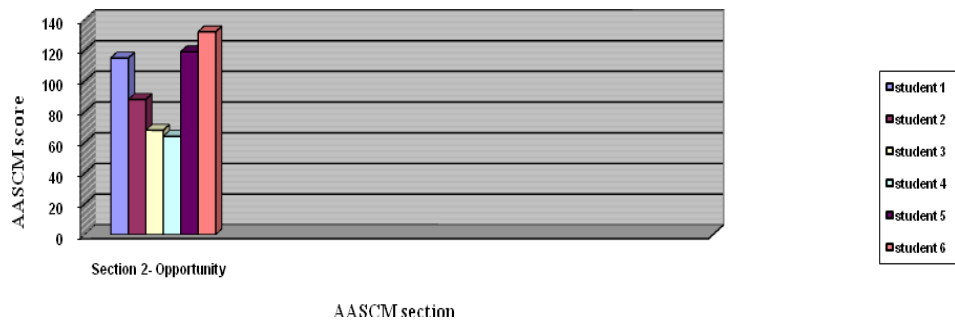


Figure 17: Section 2- Opportunity – Treatment B₃

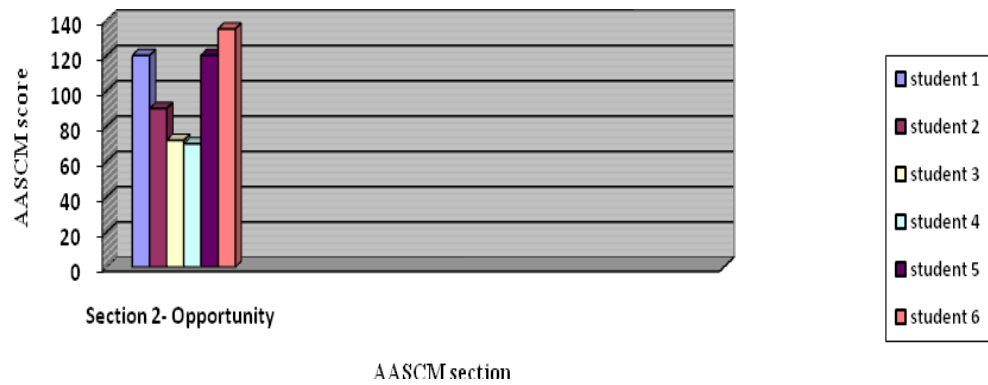


Figure 18: Section 2- Opportunity – Return to Baseline A₃

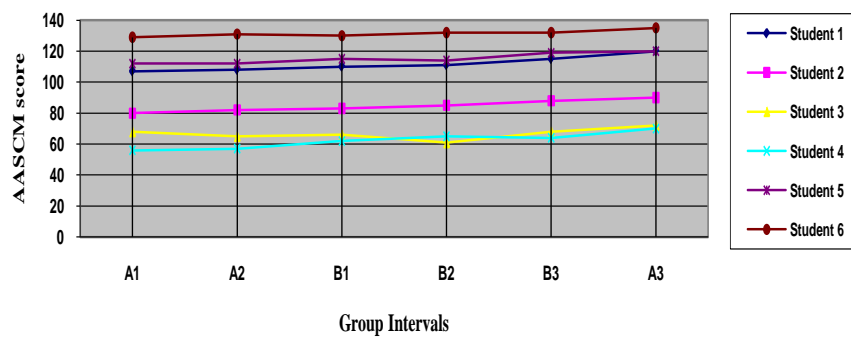


Figure 19: Opportunity Scores (Overtime)

Overview of the Control Section of the AASCM

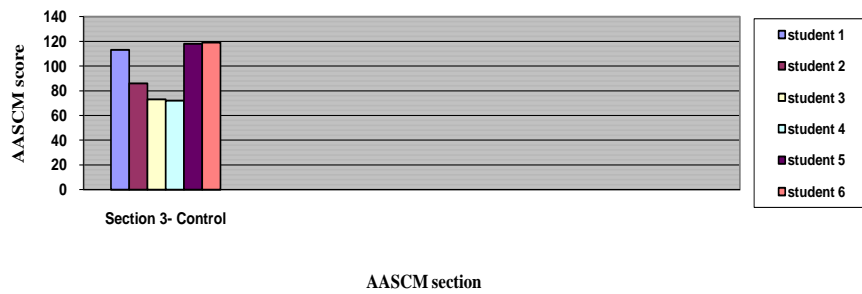


Figure 20: Section 3- Control – Baseline A₁

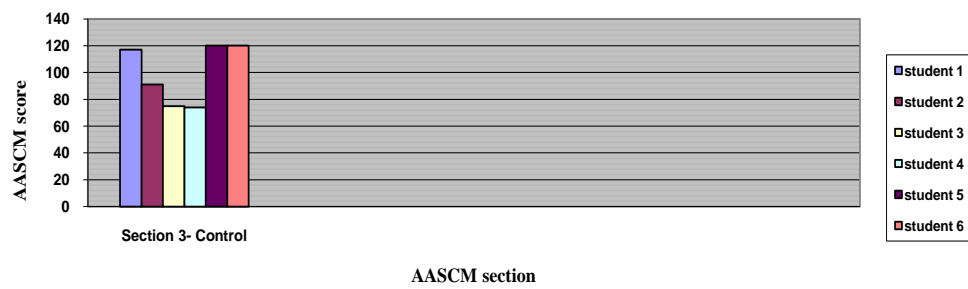


Figure 21: Section 3- Control – Baseline A₂

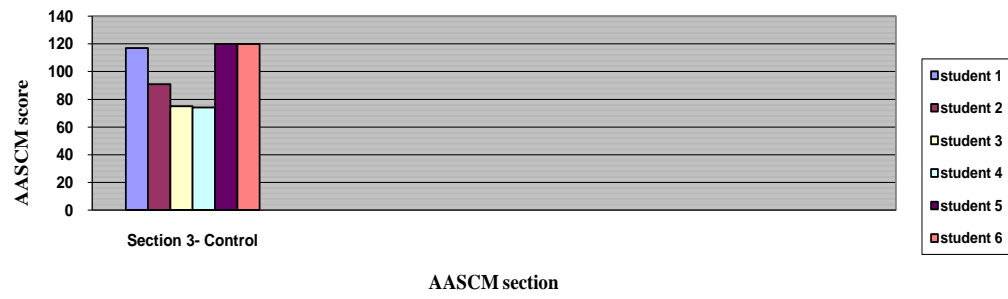


Figure 22: Section 3- Control – Treatment B₁

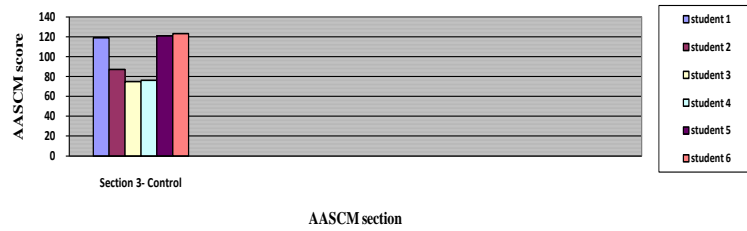


Figure 23: Section 3- Control – Treatment B₂

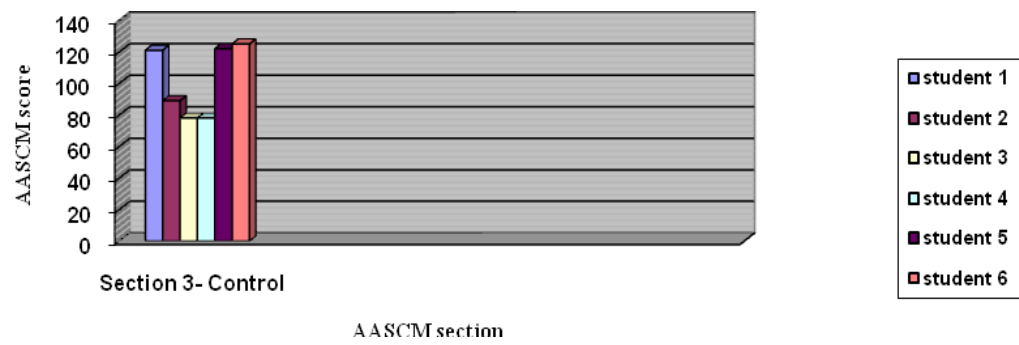


Figure 24: Section 3- Control – Treatment B₃

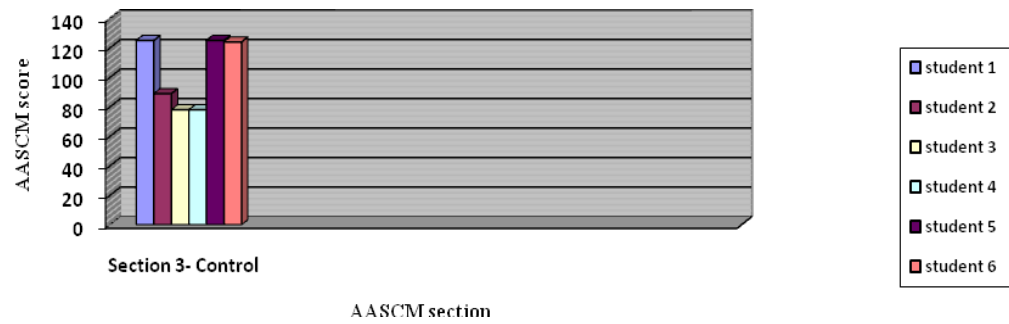


Figure 25: Section 3- Control – Return to Baseline A₃

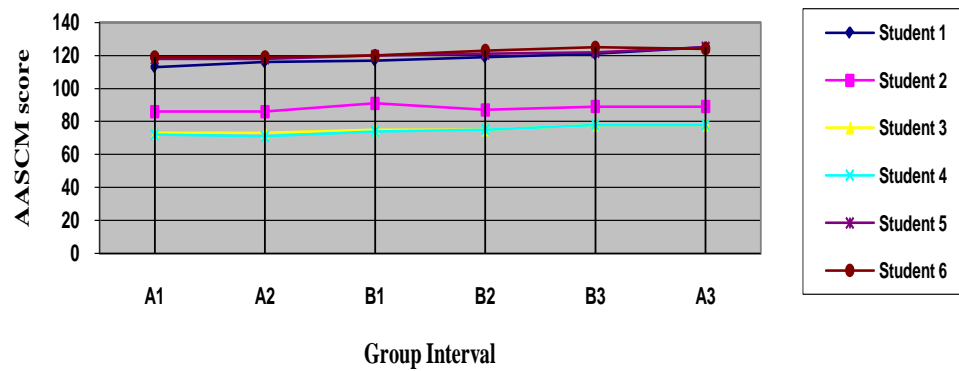


Figure 26: Control Scores (Overtime)

Overview of the Importance Section of the AASCM

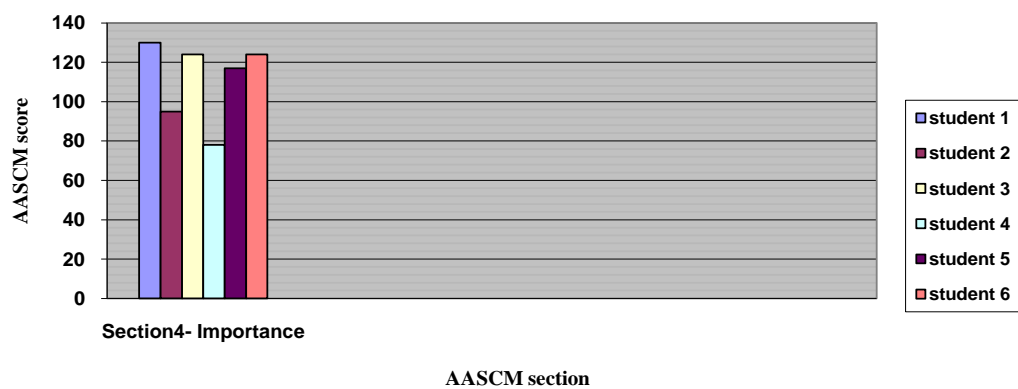


Figure 27: Section 4- Importance – Baseline A₁

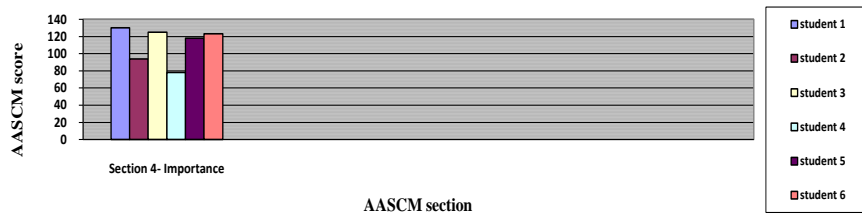


Figure 28: Section 4- Importance – Baseline A2

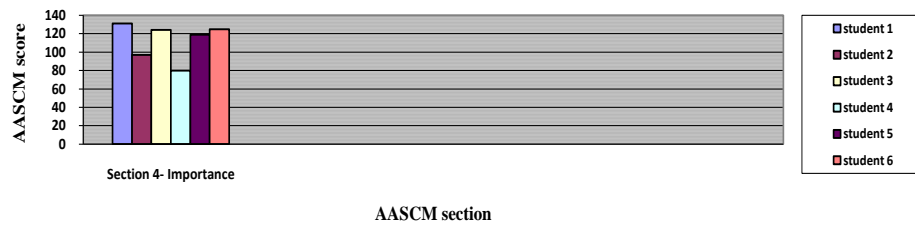


Figure 29: Section 4- Importance – Treatment B1

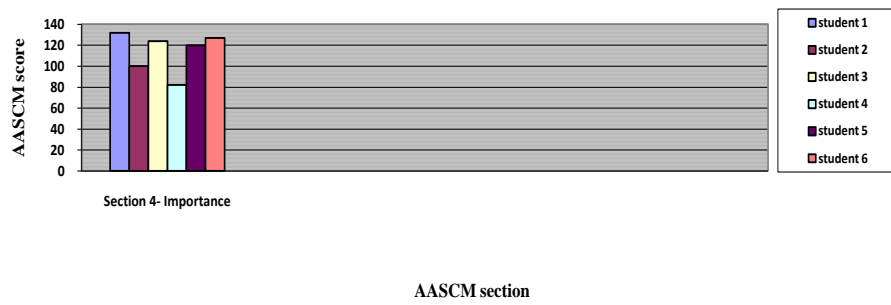


Figure 30: Section 4- Importance – Treatment B₂

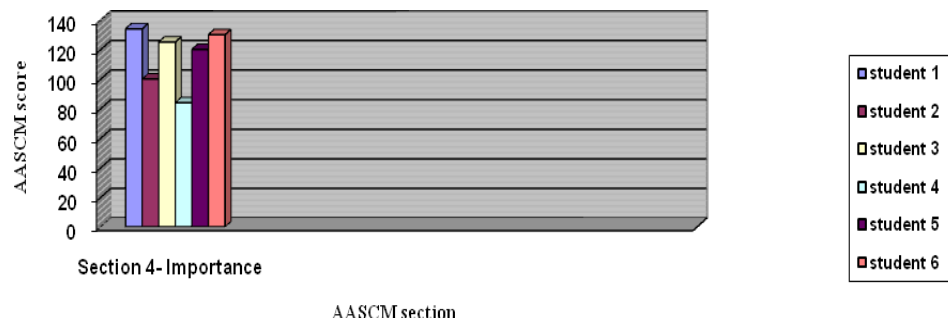


Figure 31: Section 4- Importance – Treatment B₃

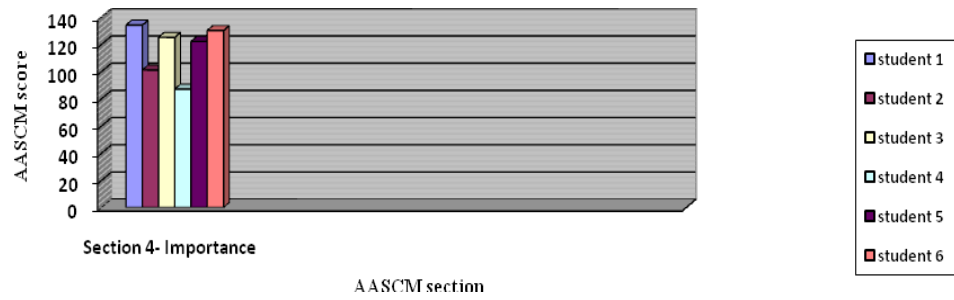


Figure 32: Section 4- Importance – Return to Baseline A₃

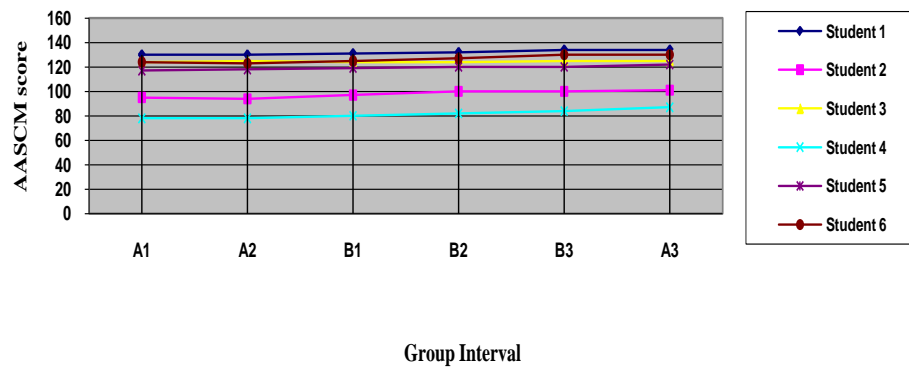


Figure 33: Importance Scores (Overtime)

Overview of the Emotions/Feelings Section of the AASCM

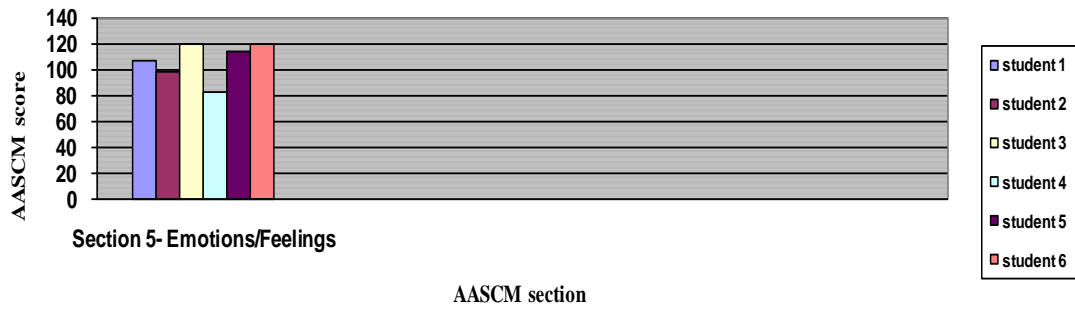


Figure 34: Section 5- Emotions/Feelings – Baseline A₁

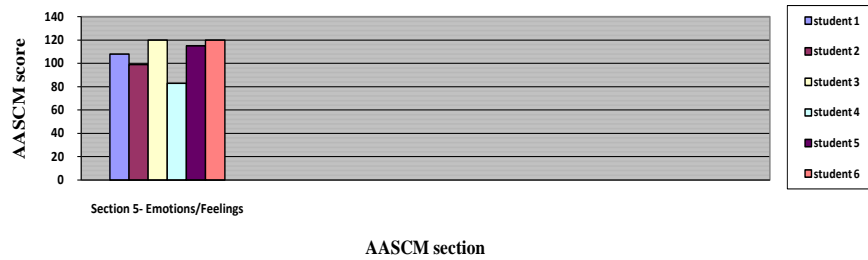


Figure 35: Section 5- Emotions/ Feelings – Baseline A₂

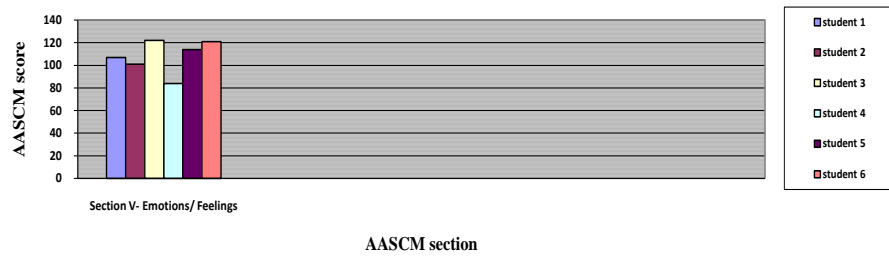


Figure 36: Section 5- Emotions/ Feelings – Treatment B₁

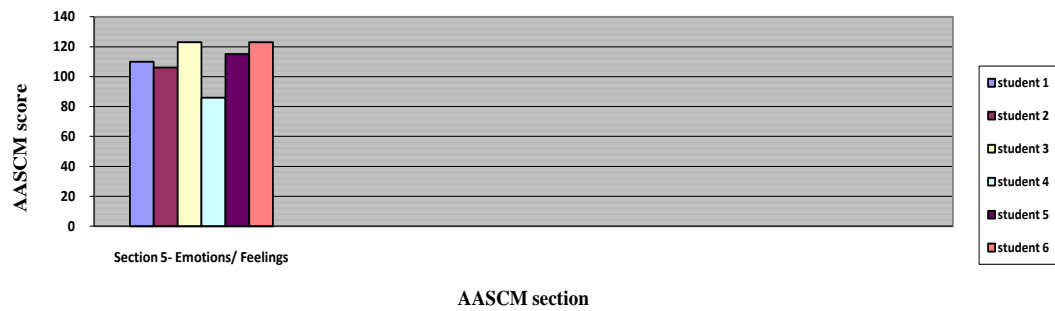


Figure 37: Section 5- Emotions/Feelings – Treatment B₂

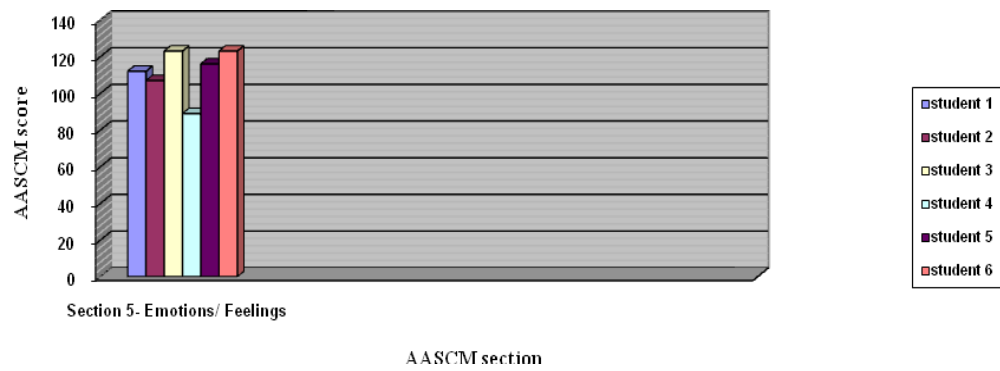


Figure 38: Section 5- Emotions/Feelings - Treatment B₃

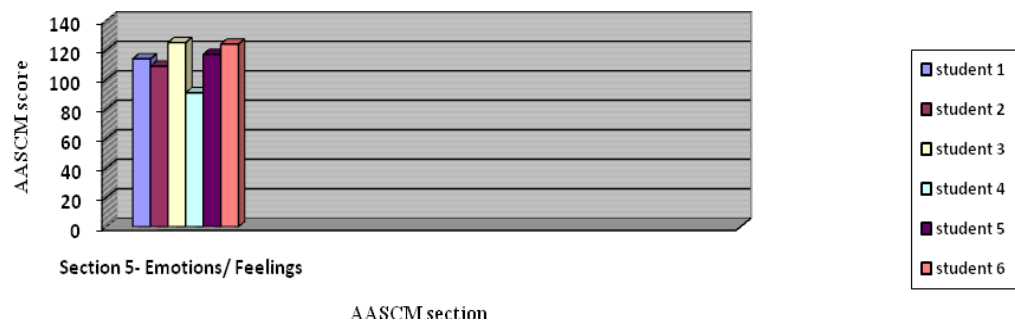


Figure 39: Section 5- Emotions/Feelings - Return to Baseline A₃

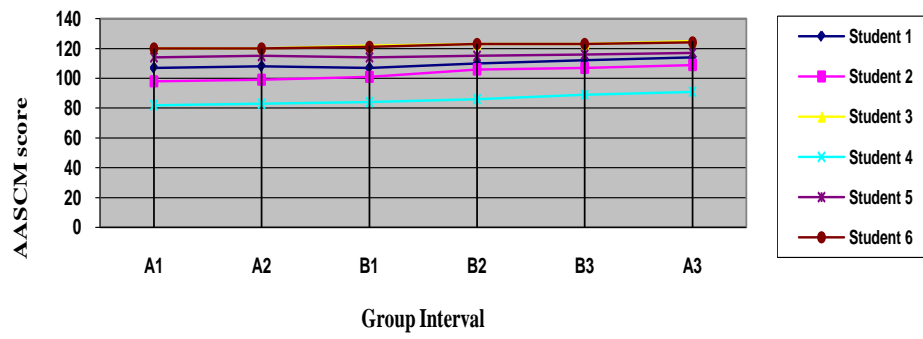


Figure 40: Emotions/Feelings Scores (Overtime)

Appendix G

ATT Results

1. How confident are you that this program will be successful in helping you? **66.8 % were very confident (4 students); 16.6% were above confident (1 student); 16.6% were confident (1 student)**
2. How logical does this type of program seem to you? **50.1% were very logical (3 students); 33.4% said it was above logical (2 students); 16.7 % logical (1 student)**
3. Are you willing to undertake a similar program sometime in the future? **83% were very confident (5 students); 17% were above confident (1 student)**
4. How beneficial do you think this program was for you? **50.1 % very beneficial (3 students); 16.7 % above beneficial (1 student); 16.7% (1 student) somewhat beneficial**
5. How does this program compare in effectiveness with just doing nothing? **83% (5 students) much better than nothing; 17% (1 student) the same as nothing**
6. How does this program compare in effectiveness with teaching yourself? **66.8% (4 students) much better than own attempts; 16.7% (1 student) better than own attempts; 16.7% (1 student) same as own attempts**
7. How useful were the described program techniques? **66.8% (4 students) very useful; 33.2% (2 students) moderately useful**
8. How well was the program explained? **66.8% (4 students) very well; 33.2% (2 students) moderately well**
9. How believable was the program? **100% (all 6 students) very believable**

10. How valuable is the program in treating self-defeating behaviors? **66.8 % (4 students) very valuable; 16.7% (1 student) above valuable; 16.7% (1 student) valuable**
11. To what degree has the program changed your idea of problems related to self-defeating behaviors? **100% (all 6 students) very much changed**
12. How understandable was the explanation of the program? **100% (all 6 students) very understandable**
13. To what degree did this program help in understanding yourself? **100% (all 6 students) very helpful**
14. To what extent does the program allow for insight into yourself? **83.5% (5 students) very much insight; 16.5% (1 student) moderate insight**

Appendix H

Table 1: Grades

Students	Courses	Pre Treatment Grades	Post Treatment Grades
Student #1	1. English I	1. F	1. F
	2. Algebra IA	2. F	2. F
Student #2	1. English I	1. F	1. F
	2. Algebra IA	2. F	2. F
Student #3	1. English I	1. F	1. F
	2. Biomedical	2. F	2. F
Student #4	1. English I	1. F	1. F
	2. Algebra IA	2. F	2. F
Student #5	1. English I	1. D	1. C
	2. Algebra IA	2. F	2. C
Student #6	1. English I	1. D	1. C
	2. Algebra IA	2. F	2. C