ADOLESCENT IDENTITY: IMPROVING STUDENT SELF-CONCEPT THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty in Communication and Leadership Studies

School of Professional Studies

Gonzaga University

Under the Supervision of Dr. John Caputo

Under the Mentorship of Dr. Heather Crandall

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Communication and Leadership Studies

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December 2011
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Abstract

Given the role past research suggests adolescent identity might play in a student's decision to stay in school, this thesis focuses on the role service-learning plays on student self-concept to help address the high school dropout epidemic. The mixed-method, qualitative and quantitative study seeks to discover in what ways service-learning impacts student self-concept. The philosophical framework for this study stems from Dewey's concept of pragmatism. The particular self-theories that grounded this study are Mead and Cooley's symbolic interactionism and the looking-glass-self, and Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory. The data for this study was collected from 28 students from a central Pennsylvania public high school that employs both traditional and service-learning curriculum. Data was collected through a thirty-minute questionnaire consisting of three parts. The first two parts collected qualitative data by way of six open-ended questions asking the subjects to describe themselves and the social groups of which they are members. The third section used Harter's Self-Perception Profiles for Adolescents (SPPA) to measure adolescents' self-concept across forty-five statements representing the following eight domains: Physical Appearance, Social Acceptance, Close Friendship, Romantic Appeal, Behavioral Conduct, Athletic Competence, Job Competence, and Global Self-Worth. Results suggest a positive correlation between service-learning and student self-concept.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Importance of the Study

Nationally each year, nearly one-third of all public high school students fail to graduate with their class. The percentage of black, Hispanic and Native American students who fail to graduate is even greater at nearly fifty percent (Bridgeland, Dululio, & Morison, 2006; Green & Winter, 2005; Payne & Edwards, 2010). This high school dropout epidemic is taking a toll on American competitiveness. Globally, the United States ranks twenty-second in high school graduation rates (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2009).

A student’s experiences and progress in school are such an important part of transitioning into adulthood that leaving school early has a direct effect on quality of life in later years. An adult without a high school education will earn an average of $10,000 less per year than a high school graduate and $1 million less than a college graduate over a lifetime (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009). Often, dropouts are ill equipped for the modern workforce and are three times more likely to be unemployed (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

People who drop out of high school are also more likely to be living in poverty, relying on public programs and social services, incarcerated, on death row, unhealthy, abusing drugs, divorced, and single with children who drop out themselves (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 1993; Swanson, 2009).

Failure to complete high school not only affects the well-being of the individual, but also the well-being of the nation as a whole. The loss of taxable output and income associated with a person dropping out of high school constitutes a substantial drain on the public treasury (Barro & Kolstad, 1987). It is estimated that dropouts from the class of 2008 will cost the United States
more than $319 billion in lost wages, productivity and tax revenue over their lifetime (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009).

With such tremendous implications of choosing to not complete high school, the reasons for dropping out must be equally significant. However, this is often not the case. While some students drop out because of considerable life circumstances, a majority cites boredom and a perceived lack of relevance of high school as the main cause (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Rumberger, 2004). Of a recent survey of high school dropouts (Bridgeland et al., 2006) forty-seven percent said classes were not interesting and teachers just stood in front of the room and talked and didn’t really involve the students in their own education.

Other reasons identified as major factors for leaving school include academic challenges and perceived disconnect between school and the real world (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Rumberger, 2004). “Failing in school” was one of the top five reasons for dropping out according to the same survey. Fifty-seven percent of respondents reported that it was difficult to pass from one grade to the next. Several students stated that the school did not do enough to help them make sense of the material being taught. There was no explicit connection between coursework, the community outside the classroom, and their future success (Bridgeland, Balfanz, Moore & Friant, 2010).

Many students simply found the world outside of school far more interesting and engaging than the world within (Bridgeland et al., 2010). Lack of relationship with teachers and peers is a contributing factor in the decision to leave school (Rumberger, 2004). Dropouts did not identify with school establishment and reported feeling isolated or alienated from school peers with no sense of belonging. As a substitute, these students sought affiliation with outside
groups through work or social situations which only further increased their feeling of separation from the school (Stevenson & Ellsworth, 1991).

While there is no simple solution to the dropout epidemic, there are clearly opportunities for improvements that would increase the chances a student would stay in school. Schools might be able to reach students at risk of dropping out by addressing the social influences that lead to their decision. Given the current economic crisis this country is facing, investing in these solutions is not only an essential part of improving high school graduation rates, but a necessary step in supporting meaningful economic recovery. Service-learning is a pedagogy often studied to address the academic, civic and social needs of students at risk of dropping out.

Despite the wealth of research on service-learning outcomes, the number of studies on the social outcomes of service-learning for high school students has declined over the past few years. With today’s schools focused more on testing rather than student well-being, it is important that more research is conducted on the social impacts of service-learning to solidify it as a viable option. A noticeable gap in research exists on the impact of service-learning on adolescent identity and belonging. While some studies examine the impact of community service on identity development (Honig, Kahne & McLaughlin, 2001; McIntosh, Metz & Youniss, 2005), the purpose of this thesis is to address this information gap through an investigation of the impact of service-learning on student self-concept.

**Definition of Terms**

*Adolescence* - A term to describe the teenage years between 13 and 19. No longer children but not yet adults, adolescents often struggle with issues of independence and self-identity.
Dropout Epidemic – This refers to the problem this study attempts to address. Each year, almost one third of all public high school students, and nearly one half of all blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans, fail to graduate from public high school with their class.

Self-Concept – A subjective collection of one’s attitudes and beliefs about him or herself; it is comprised of one’s feelings and thoughts about his or her own strengths, weaknesses, abilities and limitations (Caputo, Hazel, McMahon, & Dannels, 2002).

Service-Learning - This refers to a teaching strategy that integrates meaningful community service with classroom instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The following chapter provides an overview of philosophy and communication theory surrounding student self-concept and the pedagogy of service-learning, presents an in-depth examination of the literature that frames the study, and introduces the research question. Chapter Three explains the scope and methodology of the research conducted for the study including ethical implications. Chapter Four outlines the data collected during the study and provides an analysis with respect to the research question. The thesis concludes in Chapter Five with a summary of findings and implications for future research.
Chapter 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following section reviews literature that pertains to the topic of this study. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the impacts of service-learning on students, from various philosophical and theoretical assumptions, to address the problem outlined above.

**Philosophical Assumptions & Theoretical Basis**

**Pragmatism**

The foundation for this study is the pragmatic philosophies of John Dewey (1966). In pragmatic philosophy, education should focus on hands-on problem solving and group interaction. Information cannot simply be input into a learner's mind without some sort of interference. Rather than passing along information through lecture or reading, learners should apply their knowledge to real situations through experimental investigation. Educators need to create a social situation where the information is understood through participation in that situation (Biesta, 2010).

Dewey (1966) believed that "an ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory" (p. 144) because only through experience do theories gain their meaning. As such, he argued that education should be interactive, incorporating real-life experience that students find interesting and can apply to the world outside the classroom. "A curriculum [that] acknowledges the social responsibilities of education must present situations where problems are relevant to the problems of living together, and where observation and information are calculated to develop social insight and interest" (Dewey, 1966, p. 226).

Dewey's philosophy of education is also a philosophy of communication. He believed education exists only through communication since communication is the process of sharing experience until it is common. This interaction, he argues, is the central mechanism of
education. It is in social participation that meaning is formed and learning occurs (Biesta, 2010). Education is about situations in which a person shares in a common activity of interest where thoughts and feelings, both about his or herself and of others, are changed as a result of the participation (Dewey, 1966).

The educational opportunities high schools provide must support what the previously mentioned research suggests about the characteristics and needs of adolescents as well as the philosophy outlined above. According to the survey by Bridgeland, et al. (2006), eighty-one percent of respondents suggest that if schools provided opportunities for real-world learning such as service-learning, it would have improved their chances of graduating.

Service-learning is a teaching style that integrates classroom instruction with community service (Zeldin, 2004). Unlike community service however, which refers to a voluntary, non-curriculum based activity, service-learning includes service activities and reflection that are organized to follow classroom content and learning objectives (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2011; Schmidt, Shumow & Kackar, 2007).

Service-learning can help students move beyond the conceptual understanding of an issue and gain real life experiences and interactions that will further grow their knowledge, skills and relationships. Through the pragmatic philosophy of Dewey (1966), which focuses on the participative and communicative nature of education, a study of an interactive pedagogy, like service-learning, should help address the high school dropout epidemic.

**Self-Theory**

The American Youth Policy Forum (2008) writes that many youth drop out in the ninth grade, at the peak of adolescence, both because they are failing or have low test scores and because they are not adjusting well to high school. Adolescents not only experience physical and
academic challenges when they enter high school, they also develop increased cognitive abilities that challenge them to see and understand the world in new ways. These new abilities compel them to ask questions such as "Who am I?" and "Where do I belong?" (McIntosh et al., 2005).

An individual's self-concept is the subjective collection of attitudes and beliefs about his or herself. It includes thoughts and feelings about one's strengths, weaknesses, abilities and limitations (Caputo, Hazel, McMahon, & Dannels, 2002). Mead (1934) argued that self-concept is what differentiates humans from other animals and provides them a mechanism for self-interaction that is used to guide behavior. An individual’s self-concept is a strong forecaster of performance and presumes to explain and predict thought and action (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Pajares & Miller, 1994).

Individuals have general perceptions about themselves that make up their global self-concept, whereas more bounded perception can comprise self-concepts about academic, social, emotional or physical facets of self (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985; Pajares & Schunk, 2001). Student self-concept refers to a student's perceptions of his or herself in both academic and nonacademic domains such as social, behavioral and job-related (Manning, 2007).

From a developmental perspective, self-concept splits during adolescence into a number of identities that vary as a function of social context. Adolescents have different self-concepts around their parents, close friends, significant others, and peers as well as at work, on the athletic team, and in the classroom. In school, academic self-concepts can also be subject-specific varying between math and history and so on. (Hart, 1988; Harter, 1999; Harter, Bresnick, Bouchey, & Whitesell, 1997).

This is because self-concept, similar to meaning in the pragmatic philosophy, emerges from interaction with others (Dewey, 1966; Harre, 1984; Mead, 1934). Beginning early in life,
relationships with significant others such as parents or teachers, sculpts an individual's personal sense of identity. Humans are born with an inclination for communication. It is this interaction during development that weaves the tapestry of the complex transactions that make up a person’s self-concept (Basch, 1983).

Mead, like Dewey (1966), was a pragmatist and their work may be regarded as complementary (Vanderstraeten & Biesta, 2006). Both philosophers developed an understanding of communication where, through interaction with others, meanings are shared and something is made in common.

**The Looking-Glass-Self.**

According to symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934), others serve as a looking glass in which a person sees him or herself. Just as one discovers how he or she looks from the reflection in the mirror, people learn who they are by drawing meaning from how others react to them (Cooley, 1964; Mead, 1934). The idea that a person's self-concept is a result of inferences about how others perceive him or her is often called the looking-glass-self (Cooley, 1964).

Due to the fact that adolescents become very sensitive to the different opinions and standards of others, for instance the difference between interaction with a boyfriend and interaction with their mother, the looking-glass-self concept (Cooley, 1964; Mead, 1934) results in a number of different identities.

This hierarchical notion of self-concept does not mean that such an individual does not have a general view of his or herself or that self-concept beliefs do not generalize and influence each other. Instead, it suggests that views of oneself in very specific domains are the most likely to guide behavior in those specific areas (Bong & Clark, 1999; Marsh, 1993; Marsh & Shavelson, 1985).
**Self-Efficacy & Self-Esteem.**

It is also through interaction with others that an individual develops self-efficacy and self-esteem (Bandura, 1994; Caputo et al., 2002; Harter, 1999).

Self-efficacy, or beliefs regarding confidence in one's abilities, is an integral part of an individual’s self-concept, however Bandura (1994) argued that self-concept and self-efficacy represent different phenomena and must not be mistaken for each other. Self-concept judgments are more global and less context dependent as self-efficacy judgments. Self-concept beliefs reflect questions of “being” and “feeling” rather than competence in a given situation or activity (Pajares & Miller, 1994).

Similarly, self-esteem, or judgments about self-worth, is a fundamental element of self-concept. Some scholars believe high self-esteem is simply the positive form of self-concept and use the terms interchangeably (Shavelson & Bolus, 1982; Pajares & Schunk, 2001). Others argue that, like self-efficacy, self-esteem should be measured separately from self-concepts since self-esteem refers to comparisons between a perceived and ideal sense of self (Harter, 1993; 1999). Regardless, both self-efficacy beliefs and judgments about self-esteem are necessary to the creation of one’s self-concept and must be included in measurement of student self-concept (Pajares & Schunk, 2001).

**Social Identity Theory.**

Much like symbolic interactionism, in social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), it is through interaction with others that we express our belongingness to various groups, assess their image and reputation, and compare the social costs and rewards of maintaining various identities (Scott, 2007).
Social categories in which an individual belongs are an important part of his or her self-concept. In social identity theory, identity is the individual’s self-concept derived from perceived membership in social groups. The theory posits that identity develops from an individual’s sense of belonging to a particular group and the emotional element that comes with group membership. Its three basic principles are that individuals strive for a positive social identity, that positive identity is based on favorable comparisons between the culture a person is embedded in and a relevant counter-culture, and that when identity is unsatisfactory, individuals will strive to leave their culture or make their current group more positively distinct (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Robinson, Tayler & Piolat, 1990). If a high school student does not positively identify with school but relates more with another social group outside of school, he or she is more likely to dropout to join the outside group.

The previously cited reports of student disaffection offer a portrait of a counter-school culture and who is likely to find that group attractive. Affected adolescents trying to preserve a threatened identity will contrast their values with those of the school establishment. Through the lens of social identity theory, reconnecting these affected students to the school establishment by making curriculum relevant through service-learning, should result in a restored positive identity with the in-group making the counter-school culture less attractive (Robinson, Tayler, & Piolat, 1990; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The Literature

Service-Learning

Service-learning provides developmental opportunities that promote personal, social and intellectual growth, as well as civic responsibility and preparation for the world of work (Duckenfield & Swanson, 1992). For purposes of identifying its potential impact on high school
completion rates however, the current review focuses on outcomes related to the academic, civic and social needs of the students.

In 1990, the National and Community Service Act created Serve America (now Learn and Serve America) a federal program tasked with providing support for service-learning activities in American schools. Prevalence of service-learning grew from fifteen percent of high schools in 1979 to twenty-four percent in 2008, peaking around 1999 at forty-six percent (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2008; Skinner & Chapman, 1999).

The decline over the past decade might be due to the impact of federal legislation placing greater emphasis on standardized test scores in reading and math and reductions in funds available for such programs (Helmstetter et al., 2009). Unfortunately, evidence suggests an increased emphasis on testing may swell dropout rates by disengaging students and pushing them further from schooling (Nichols, Glass & Berliner, 2006). Studies on service-learning suggest the opposite effect.

**Academic Impacts.**

Several studies have identified benefits of service-learning on academic achievement. Students who participated in service-learning had higher scores on attitudes toward learning (Ammon, Furco, Chi & Middaugh, 2002), improved grade point averages (Billig, 2002; Kraft & Wheeler, 2003; Kirkham, 2001; Zeldin, 2004) and improved standardized test scores (Meyer & Billig, 2003; Billig & Klute, 2003, Klute, 2002; Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmeier & Benson, 2006). Other academic impacts include improved knowledge (Santmire, Giraud & Grosskopf, 1999), cognitive processes (Billig & Klute, 2003; Yamauchi, Billig, Meyer & Hofschire, 2006) and motivation to learn (Conway, Amel & Gerwien, 2009).
Almost all studies measuring academic impacts of service-learning are cross-sectional and few are longitudinal. Additional studies are needed to confirm and explain these findings but there is clear evidence that service-learning classrooms have a positive influence on students academic performance, helping them engage cognitively in school and score higher in certain content areas and tests.

**Civic Impacts.**

In today’s schools, the community and family support systems that once assumed responsibility for the well-being of children are often absent. Teachers now are expected to take on additional duties and frequently something goes unnoticed. The connections to the community forged by service-learning result in community members engaging with students in meaningful and supportive ways. This engagement often provides the relevance that some don’t see in a standard curriculum (Payne & Edward, 2010).

Most studies of service-learning and its impact of civic engagement show that service-learning has positive results (Schmidt et al., 2007). Students in service-learning classrooms show a significant difference in connection to their communities (Billig, 2002; Kim & Billig, 2003; Klute, Sandel & Billig, 2002), awareness of societal issues and willingness to take active roles in the community (Furco, 2002) and development of realistic perspectives about their education and its utility in the "real world" (Billig, 2002; Scales et al., 2006).

**Social Impacts.**

Similarly, a positive correlation between social outcomes and service-learning has been suggested. Social outcomes deal with students’ relationships and interaction with themselves and others. This includes their thoughts and beliefs about others and their feelings toward their own role in interacting with others (Conway et al., 2009).
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Social gains such as a higher sense of social responsibility, increased social competence and a willingness to be kind and helpful to others have been reported after students engage in service-learning (Billig, 2000; Eyler, 2000; Yates & Youniss, 1998). Studies have also show a decrease in social risk behaviors like violence and drug use (Billig, 2002; Youniss, McLellen, Su & Yates, 1999). Service-learning also develops positive social character traits including self-control, tolerance of individual differences, cooperation and teamwork (Muscott & O'Brien, 1999; Rosenberg, McKeon & Dinero, 1999).

Limitations of Prior Research

One limitation of the majority of prior research on service-learning outcomes is that it is often based on small, local samples rather than nationally representative ones. As mentioned when discussing academic impacts, many are also correlational leaving cause and effect undetermined. These studies, however, are still beneficial in examining the effect of service-learning on the needs of high school students because their small size allows for more precision, detail and elaboration than large national surveys.

As previously mentioned, the number of studies on the social outcomes of service-learning for high school students has declined over the past few years and a noticeable gap in research exists on the impact of service-learning on adolescent identity development. While some studies examine the impact of community service on identity development (Honig, Kahne & McLaughlin, 2001; McIntosh, Metz & Youniss, 2005; Youniss et al., 1999), this thesis will focus on the impact of service-learning on student self-concept.

Rationale

Social interaction and comparison serve as important sources of information for an individual's self-concept (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Considering the interactive nature of service-
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learning and its potential to put students in contact with groups with which they would not otherwise interact in a school setting, self-theories including social identity theory and symbolic interactionism and the philosophical umbrella of pragmatism are promising guides for better understanding issues related to identity and the pedagogy.

The study of identity in adolescents dates back to the days of Plato and Aristotle (Pajares & Schunk, 2001; Rayner, 2001) with modern roots in the works of James (1890; 1892) and Freud (1923). In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a resurgence of interest in self-theory in American schools. Educators operated with a view that a child’s positive sense of self is the critical ingredient and primary cause of academic achievement. In high school, a student with a strong sense of self was considered better equipped and more likely to succeed than a student with a less developed self-concept (Pajares & Schunk, 2001).

In recent decades however, American educators have shifted their interest from self-concept toward information processing despite current research supporting the importance of identity development (Pajares & Schunk, 2001). The importance of a strong sense of self is discussed as a key factor in affective teaching and learning (Burns, 1982; Lawrence, 1996; Margerison, 1996; Weare, 2000). Burns argues that an individual's self-concept is "intimately related to how he learns and behaves" (1982, p. v). Post-secondary education counselors have stressed the need to assist individuals in developing positive sense of self (Miller, 1997; Purkey and Schmidt, 1996).

For adolescents, a negative self-concept has been associated with several maladaptive behavioral problems including depression, drug use and attendance issues (Andrews & Duncan, 1997). In contrast, a positive self concept has been linked to positive behavioral development
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(Tarrant, MacKenzie, & Hewitt, 2006). Positive academic self-concept specifically has been associated with strong academic performance in adolescents (Byrne, 1996).

Today, students often struggle to find themselves. Self-concept frequently stagnates or declines until middle school as a reaction to the overly positive self-perceptions of childhood. As students grow, they become more aware of how others view their skills and better distinguish between their efforts and abilities (Manning, 2007). By middle school and high school, adolescents’ cognitive maturity provides more accurate self-perception while the increasing freedom allows for greater opportunity to explore self-concept (Harter, 1999). This unfortunately puts a lot of pressure on the adolescent during a very challenging time. Academic pedagogy that works to improve adolescent self-concept may hold the potential to influence the social, academic and behavioral development of students at a critical time. Therefore it is important to assess the impact of service-learning on student self-concept.

Research Question

While self-concept, self-efficacy, and self-esteem are some of the best-researched self-theory constructs in academic motivations studies (Bong & Clark, 1999) research specifically tying these identity constructs to the academic pedagogy of service-learning is limited. A handful of studies found that service-learning had a positive effect on student interpersonal and personal development including a change in attitude toward themselves (Boyle-Baise & Kilbane, 2000; Eyler and Giles, 1999; Moely, Mercer, Ilustre, Miron, & McFarland, 2001).

Youniss and Yates (1996) believe that when adolescents take on community service, they come to discover where and how they fit into the world in a positive, rewarding way. Service-learning is an opportunity to help students find this in an academic setting (Honig et al., 2001). They discovered a large number of students who participated in a social justice course with a
service-learning element reported later in a reflective essay that the course was an identity-defining experience that helped them to reflect on who they were as adolescents and who they wanted to become as adults (Youniss and Yates, 1997).

Service-learning can be a creative and useful vehicle for strengthening self-concept in school by providing the important relationships, feedback, experiences and exposure necessary to feel content and confident in one's abilities as a part of the community.

Given the role past research suggests adolescent identity might play in a student's decision to stay in school, a study focusing on the role service-learning plays on student self-concept is significant to help address the high school dropout epidemic. With a rationale to derive theoretical insight, the primary aim of this thesis is to investigate and compare the self-concept of both students in service-learning and traditional classrooms to answer the question: In what ways does service-learning impact student self-concept?
Chapter 3: SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

Scope of the Study

This study focused on the impact of service-learning on the self-concept of adolescents. The study compared the self-concept assessments of high school students in both service-learning and traditional classrooms. The study compared the self-concept assessments of twenty-eight high school students ages seventeen and eighteen in both service-learning and traditional classrooms.

In order to increase theoretical understanding of the impact of service-learning on student self-concept, this study engaged in purposeful, theoretical sampling. Participants were recruited with the assistance of the principal of a central Pennsylvania public high school that employs both traditional and service-learning education methods. As an individual with knowledge about the target group, he approached instructors at the school and developed a list of classrooms willing to participate.

Since the sample population includes high school students under the age of eighteen, these research methods, including the content of the survey instrument and parental consent form, have been reviewed and approved by the Gonzaga University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (See Appendix A) and the principal of the high school (See Appendix B).

A total of forty-four students were selected from four social studies classes as part of the senior class curriculum. Two of these classrooms employed service-learning teaching methods and two employed traditional teaching methods. The students from the traditional classroom served as the control group as part of the quantitative component of the study.
Methodology of the Study

Research Design

In keeping with the philosophical assumptions of this thesis, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used for this study. Pragmatists see benefits in using a multi-method, complementary design. Instead of embracing one over the other, pragmatists approach a research question through practicality. Complementary methods bring together the strengths of both designs to elicit a better understanding of a phenomenon and draw from inquiry with greater strength than either approach alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Greene, 2007).

With an eye toward building upon existing theory, the qualitative component of this multi-method study was analyzed using grounded theory practices. The purpose of grounded theory is to develop a hypothesis about phenomena of interest inductively using any of several sources of empirical data (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). For purposes of this study, data analysis occurred through the collection, coding and analyzing of data from several open-ended survey questions.

This approach best contributed to a method that addressed the research objectives since there is little research on the relationship between service-learning and identity development and grounded theory is often used to develop knowledge of fairly new concepts. It is flexible and allows for unanticipated findings. This methodology also allowed participants to choose their own words to more thoroughly develop thoughts, feelings and concerns (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Adding open-ended questions to the survey provided extensive narrative data much greater than could be obtained through quantitative survey instruments alone.

Completion of these open-ended survey questions also promoted self-reflection by the participants which is often mentioned as a central tenet of successful service-learning (Astin,
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Vogelgesang, Ikeda & Yee, 2000) and is an important element of pragmatic philosophy (Dewey, 1966; Mead, 1936).

Data Collection & Analysis

Data for both research methods was collected by way of a questionnaire (see Appendix C) with the quantitative data collected through close-ended statements using a Likert scale and the qualitative data collected through open-ended questions requiring responses in sentence form. When measuring thoughts and attitudes, most researchers today use mainly closed-ended questions with a few open-ended questions added throughout the survey instrument for further illustration of the responses. Open-ended responses are often quoted to lend significance to the qualitative results and also assist in the formulation of new hypothesis for further research (Hoyle et al., 2002).

Close-ended questions are easily scored using predetermined methods (Harter, 1988) to produce meaningful results for analysis while open-ended questions allow participants to express their attitudes to their own satisfaction rather than forcing them to choose a predetermined response that might not fully represent their positions (Hoyle et al., 2002).

Since the participants and the researcher are separated by a geographical distance, a paper-and-pencil questionnaire was a low-cost method that could be easily administered by a third-party. The use of a questionnaire also reduced potential interview bias or influence over responses by appearance or vocal quality. It also allowed the participants to feel a greater sense of anonymity (Hoyle et al., 2002).

One limitation of a paper-and-pencil questionnaire is that it did not allow the researcher to correct any misunderstandings the participants might have had. This led to the collection of a
few incorrect or incomplete responses and may have skewed the results due to misinterpretation (Hoyle et al., 2002).

A minimum of two classrooms from both the service-learning and traditional pedagogy groups were requested to participate to ensure a sufficient amount of data was collected for research purposes. The researcher would have preferred to continue distribution of the questionnaire, refining the content until there was no repetition of themes and no new information was shared. Such "theoretical saturation" is consistent with grounded theory research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Unfortunately, due to time constraints, this repetition was not possible.

Questionnaires were administered on site, in the classroom and on school grounds, which allowed reflection to take place where the group meets naturally. The predetermined time-frame for completing the questionnaire was thirty minutes however time was not limited if an individual needed or desired more time. This shorter length of reflection was chosen since the participants were teenagers with shorter attention spans.

Neither the quantitative or qualitative components of this study provided statistically generalizeable results applicable to all high school students. The study's validity can be determined by the ability of identified themes and the generated hypotheses to be transferable to and tested in future studies. To increase the overall reliability of the study, the multi-method, complementary approach combined with data collection in multiple classrooms using a consistent survey instrument served to catch data inconsistencies, researcher mistakes and unintended mishaps during the coding process.
Quantitative data.

The quantitative component of this study consisted of Harter's (1988) Self-Perception Profiles for Adolescents (SPPA) (Harter, 1988). The SPPA gauges adolescents' self-concept across forty-five statements representing the following eight domains: Physical Appearance, Social Acceptance, Close Friendship, Romantic Appeal, Behavioral Conduct, Athletic Competence, Job Competence, and Global Self-Worth. Students were asked to choose which of two "some kids/other kids" statements was truer of them and whether it was somewhat or strongly true. The results were then scored on a scale of one to four.

The SPPA assessment was chosen because Harter's research on self-concept, particularly of children and adolescents draws on the theoretical foundations of James’s (1890; 1892) notion of self-esteem, Mead (1934) and Cooley's (1964) concept of the looking-glass-self and Bandura's (1994) thoughts on self-efficacy and modeling (Sullivan & Evans, 2006). She developed the scale to account for all of these and it has become one of the better known self-concept scales and one of the few designed specifically for adolescents. The scale was also chosen because of its high reliability (α range of .74 to .92), low number of statements for ease in administration, and age appropriate grammar (Harter, 1988).

In addition, SPPA statements begin with "some kids/other kids" rather than "I" statements that make reference to student limitations. Since most people, including adolescents, are aware that some responses are more socially acceptable than others, the accuracy of self-reports can be decreased by a social desirability response tendency. The wording of the SPPA statements reduces this tendency for the respondent to give only socially desirable responses (Harter, 1999).

The SPPA manual contained warnings that the scales may not be appropriate for children with learning disabilities or other special adolescent populations. The present study did not
account for these differences. As previously mentioned, the manual also included instructions for coding and analyzing the collected data.

**Qualitative data.**

The qualitative component of this study consisted of two sets of open-ended questions and demographic information.

The first set of questions was rooted in the self-theory of the looking-glass-self (Mead, 1934; Cooley, 1964). Four open-ended questions asked the participant to describe in a few sentences, how they believed others, including their parent or guardian, their friends, their teacher and their classmates, would describe him or her. A fifth open-ended question asked the participant to describe him or herself. The self-assessment question was intentionally last in order to get the participants to think of themselves through the eyes of their significant others.

The second set of questions was rooted in social identity theory. This section asked the participants to create a list of each group they were a member of including classroom groups, sports teams, family, friends, charity organizations, and after-school jobs, etc. When finished, the participant circled the group to which he or she felt the greatest sense of belonging. Finally, the participant was asked to number the groups by placing a (1) beside his or her favorite group, a (2) beside his or her next favorite group, and so on.

All collected data was analyzed using a form of open and axial coding to identify common concepts in order to proceed to theoretical statements about the relationship between service-learning and self-concept (Hoyle, Harris, & Judd, 2002).

**Ethical Considerations**

It was important that the participants fully understood what they were being asked to do and were informed of any consequences of participation. This was addressed in writing at the
top of each questionnaire. In addition, each participant's family was provided a letter with information about the study (See Appendix D) along with a consent form (see Appendix E) to be completed by both the student and his or her parent or guardian. At the time of writing, both documents were pending review by the Gonzaga University IRB.

The letter provided information about the researcher and the reason for the project. It explained the project's purpose and intent and the desired outcomes as well as a discussion of how the participants were selected. Participants were informed that their involvement in this study was completely voluntary and free from coercion and deception. They could opt out of completion of the survey instrument at any time without intimidation from the researcher.

To address potential concerns about anonymity of the participants, names were not used when collecting data and no other indentifying information was made available on the questionnaires. During coding of the qualitative data, all participants were assigned a code based on pedagogy. For instance, SL3 referred to the third participant coded from the service-learning group and T5 referred to the fifth participant coded from the traditional education group. All compiled data was stored in a password protected document and destroyed after relevant results were transcribed.

Self-concept affects all adolescents. How a person views his or herself can be the difference between an A-student and a C-student, an engaged citizen and a juvenile delinquent, a high school graduate and a high school dropout. It is therefore important to research the implications of different high school curriculum on students’ sense of self. The next section of this thesis examines the study findings and its implication to the high school dropout epidemic.
Chapter 4: THE STUDY

Introduction

Past research on graduation rates shows that students at risk of dropping out of high school often do not identify with the classroom. They see no explicit connection between coursework, the community inside the classroom, and who they are as a person (Bridgeland et al., 2010). Service-learning has been effective in addressing other risk factors for student dropouts including low test scores, perceived lack of relevance of course material to the real world, violence, and drug use (Billig, 2002; Meyer & Billing, 2003). A connection between service-learning and a student's identity would suggest yet another way in which a service-learning curriculum might help combat the dropout epidemic. The present study sought to better understand that connection between service-learning and student self-concept.

Data Analysis

All participants received information about the study prior to questionnaire distribution. Information letters were sent home with students and returned with signatures of consent from parents and assent from those students who chose to participate. Of the total participant group of forty-four social studies students selected which consisted of twenty students from service-learning classrooms and twenty-four students from traditional classrooms, thirty-one students agreed to participate in the study. Three of those students did not follow instructions making their answers unusable. Of the remaining twenty-eight questionnaires, fifteen were completed by students in the service-learning classrooms, thirteen were completed by students in the traditional classrooms. A demographic breakdown can be found in Tables 1-3.
TABLE 1

Participants by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Service-Learning</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 2

Participants by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Service-Learning</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 3

Participants by Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Service-Learning</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantitative analysis included the demographic information, reliability coefficients, and comparisons. Of the nine SPPA subscales, five were identified as relevant to the three factors reviewed in Chapter Two that influence graduation rates; the academic, civic and social needs of students. These five scales have acceptable reliability coefficients: *scholastic competence* ($\alpha$ ranged .44-.79); *social acceptance* ($\alpha$ ranged .86-.88); *job competence* ($\alpha$ ranged .76-.85); *behavioral conduct* ($\alpha$ ranged .54-.66); and *global self-worth* ($\alpha$ ranged .79-.85). Mean scores were created for each SPPA subscale using the provided scoring key (Harter, 1988).
Qualitative data from open-ended questions was analyzed using open and axial coding procedures. The codes at the open coding level included specific descriptions of self such as *nice, cool, smart, friendly, helpful, rude, loud, weird, quiet* and *annoying*. Open coding also identified various categories of group membership such as *sports team, school sponsored club, social group, after-school job* and *family*.

At the axial coding level, relationships between the categories emerged. Axial coding is a way of putting data back together in new ways after open coding (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). For instance, the grouped self-descriptions could be consolidated into *positive* and *negative* categories. Similarly, the group membership categories could be reorganized into *school-related* and *non-school related*, or counter-culture, groupings.

Consistency in coding was checked throughout the analysis. At each stage of the process, the researcher reviewed and coded the data twice, waiting at least twenty-four hours before looking at the data again; then compared the coding to check for agreement. Initial agreement between the two coding attempts was nearly one-hundred percent.

**Results**

The research question around which this study was based asked: In what ways does service-learning impact student self-concept? As shown in Table 4, results of this study suggest that service-learning has a positive influence on a student's sense of self.
TABLE 4

Mean SPPA Subscale Scores

The results of the quantitative SPPA questionnaire (Harter, 1988) showed service-learning students with a higher mean score on each of the five subscales. *Scholastic competence* was .34 points higher (Σ 3.09-2.75); *social acceptance* was .19 points higher (Σ 2.74-2.55); *job competence* was .19 points higher (Σ 3.27-3.08); *behavioral conduct* was .34 points higher (Σ 2.89-2.55); and *global self-worth* was .12 points higher (Σ 2.75-2.63). The majority of standard deviations fell between .50 and .75 indicating considerable variation among participants. Due to this and the small sample size compared to the larger adolescent population, these numbers cannot be considered statistically significant.

The results of the qualitative open-ended questions showed a similar pattern. When asked to describe how they believed significant others in their lives would describe them, participants in the service-learning classroom depicted their teachers and classmates describing them more positively than did those in traditional classrooms.
Participants from both curriculum styles overwhelmingly believed their parents and friends would characterize them positively. Students used positive codes nearly seven times more than negative codes to answer these questions. However, the answers began to diverge when asked how they believed those at school would describe them. The answers of the service-learning participants more closely resembled the answers used to discuss their non-school others. Like parents and friends, they overwhelmingly believed their teachers would see them in a positive light. They also thought their classmates would describe them positively more than negatively, but by only a small amount.

Results for the participants from the traditional classroom were much different. These students believed by almost two-to-one that their classmates would describe them more negatively. They used slightly more positive codes than negative codes to explain how their teacher would classify them, but the difference was not as overwhelming as when they discussed those outside the classroom.

Results from questions about group membership also suggest that service-learning has an impact on student identity and belonging. An equal number of categories considered as non-school related groups were given by participants from both curriculum styles. These include friend circles, church groups, after-school jobs, member organizations (hunt clubs, YMCA, etc), and family. More than double the number of service-learning students however, ranked groups that were coded as school-related. School-related groups include sports teams, school clubs (band, Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), etc), honor societies and student government. No participants ranked specific classes, either service-learning or traditional, among the groups to which they feel the greatest sense of belonging.
Discussion

This thesis investigated and compared the self-concept of both students in service-learning and traditional classrooms to understand the following: In what ways does service-learning impact self-concept? Mixed-method results indicated that service-learning positively impacted adolescent self-concept in this study. Quantitative results suggest that positive SPPA subscales scores in the areas that could influence a student's decision to stay in school increased for the service-learning participants. Qualitative data supported the quantitative results and provided additional evidence that self-concept impacts occurred based on curriculum style.

The study was limited to the experiences of a particular group of students employing a particular social reference group. In addition, the study did not account for other influencing factors such as age or gender. Since the service-learning population contained a greater percentage of female participants and lesser percentage of 18-year-old participants, it is possible that the results were also affected by these factors and not only reflective of classroom pedagogy. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, the study does provide insight and suggests questions for further exploration.

Philosophical Implications

Used as a guide to structure the research, pragmatic philosophy influenced this study in several ways. Dewey (1966) spoke of the social responsibilities of education where a goal of any curriculum should be the development of social insight and interest. He believed education involved social participation where thoughts and feelings, both about oneself and others, are changed as a result of the participation.

Through the lens of pragmatism, a study exploring the social impacts of different curriculum, specifically the impacts on student self-concept, is significant. The results of this
study suggest that a service-learning curriculum does indeed advance the development of student identity and therefore has practical implications to reforming our education system.

James (1890; 1892) also held a pragmatic worldview. He believed that self-esteem results from the relationship between a person’s competence and his or her aspirations to be competent. If a person is successful in domains deemed important to him or her, high self-esteem will result. In the present study, the *global self-worth* subscale was used to measure general self-esteem (Harter, 1988).

The higher scores in the *global self-worth* subscale for service-learning students, given the higher scores in the other SPPA subscales measuring domain-specific self-concept, suggest they place a greater value on these domains than do those in traditional classrooms. Since these subscales were identified as relevant to the three factors reviewed in Chapter Two that influence graduation rates; the academic, civic, and social needs of students, these results supported the notion that service-learning is a valuable tool to help address the dropout epidemic.

**Theoretical Implications**

The theoretical foundations of this study were rooted in symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934), the looking-glass-self (Cooley, 1964) and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The results of this study supported the premise of these communication theories by identifying a positive correlation between the pedagogy of service learning, an interactive learning platform that promotes relationships between students and groups with which they would not otherwise interact in a school setting, and the development of student self-concept.

Mead, a pragmatist, believed that self-concept emerges from interaction with others. Others serve as a looking glass in which a person sees his or herself. The idea that self-concepts result from inferences about how others perceive us is called the looking-glass-self (Cooley,
1964). Even though a surprising majority of students refrained from answering the open-ended question that asked them to describe themselves, almost all answered questions about how their significant others would describe them. Service-learning students spoke more positively about the way their teacher and classmates saw them than did traditional students.

According to the looking-glass-self, these results suggest that students in a service-learning curriculum have a more positive sense of self in the classroom than their nonservice-learning peers. This is especially true given that both groups described reflections from their parents and friends outside of school in near identical ways. Although, future research should be done to gain a better understanding, these findings are further evidence that service-learning positively impacts student self-concept.

When analyzing the open-ended questions pertaining to group membership, it was discovered that a higher percentage of service-learning students than traditional student named and rated school-related groups as reflecting who they were. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), identity is the individual’s self-concept derived from perceived membership in social groups. Previously cited research reports high school dropouts often identified with nonschool-related groups, or a counter-school culture, than they did with school-related groups (Bridgeland et al., 2010; Stevenson & Ellsworth, 1991). Results from the present study suggest that service-learning causes students to identify more with school as the in-group and therefore choose to participate in more school-related activities.

However, since no student included either curriculum as a group with which they identified, it is hard to determine the exact correlation. Age, gender and other factors could also have influenced the results. Future research should be conducted to discover if the type of
students who enroll in service-learning classes are already more likely to engage in extracurricular activities for other reasons.

**Practical Implications**

The literature reviewed for this study demonstrated a significant link between service-learning and positive academic, civic and social impacts for students. The literature further indicated that these factors, including adolescent self-concept, may play a role in improving high school graduation rates. The results of the present study supported and strengthened these prior findings.

In addition, prior research can be used to demonstrate the practical implications of this study’s findings. Mead (1934) argued that self-concept provides humans with a mechanism for self-interaction, which guides behavior. As such, student self-concept would be a strong forecaster of performance and could predict future action. The SPPA subscales that showed the greatest difference between the two groups were the subscale measuring *scholastic competence* and the subscale measuring *behavioral conduct*. For both, mean scores for the service-learning classroom were .34 points higher than those of the traditional classroom.

According to the literature, weak academic performance and social risk behaviors were two of the most common reasons a student gave when discussing reasons that influenced his or her decision to drop out of high school. By improving self-concept in these areas, one could predict student performance in these areas would also improve. These results underpin this past research which suggests service-learning is a useful tool in addressing low graduation rates.

Results of this study indicate that service-learning does have a positive impact on student self-concept and therefore practical implications for combating the high school dropout epidemic.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

Limitations of Study

As with many exploratory studies, further research is needed to establish the generality of the results. Limitations existed within this study that narrow the degree to which the results can be extrapolated to more general populations. Also common among studies of service-learning outcomes, a primary limit of this study was a narrowly focused sample population. The study was conducted with a sample drawn from one particular high school and therefore results were limited to the experiences of a particular group of students employing a particular social reference group. As such, the applicability of these results is limited with respect to dissimilar socioeconomic settings. In addition, the study did not account for other influencing factors such as age or gender.

The results of the study may be applicable only to students in their late adolescence. As discussed in earlier chapters, maturational changes in biological, emotional and social arenas during the first year of high school force adolescents to face tough questions about who they are, where they fit in, as well as what risks they are going to take in life (McIntosh et al., 2005). Participants in this study already may have reached this important crossroads of identity development and the impact of service-learning might not be as significant as it would had the sample consisted of younger adolescents.

Recommendations for Future Research

While the results of the study suggest service-learning might play a role in addressing the high school dropout epidemic, they do not provide enough information to determine whether the pedagogy actually results in a higher graduation rate. Rather than taking a snapshot of student
self-concept at one particular period of time and speculating about its long-term influence, future longitudinal research would be helpful to better understand effects.

Future research surveying student self-concept over a longer period of time would also help support the findings of this study linking service-learning to positive sense of self. Follow-up research questions could include: Was this snapshot of student self-confidence simply a coincidence or would mean scores in the various SPPA subscales remain higher for student in service-learning classroom than their peers in traditional classroom if measured over time? Would these mean scores continue to rise after continued exposure to a service-learning curriculum?

In addition, while the multi-method questionnaire allowed the researcher to discover the impact of service learning, future research using other survey methods, including interviews and focus groups, could provide more insight into the reasons why service-learning has such a positive impact.

**Conclusion**

The current high school dropout rate has tremendous personal and civic implications including reduced income, increased unemployment, and a greater need for social programs. It is important that America's public school system does everything it can to ensure our nation's adolescents graduate on time. Past research suggests that by adopting a service-learning curriculum, high schools might address many of the academic, civic and social needs of students at risk of dropping out.

The study presented in this thesis supports the research behind service-learning by suggesting the pedagogy impacts yet another social need of students - adolescent identity development. During high school, students begin to separate themselves from their home and
family identity and explore new sources of identity at school and in the community. If this process is successful, students emerge with a strong sense of self and clear idea of how they fit into the high school community. If the process fails, students develop a negative self-concept and are more likely to feel alienated and become at risk of dropping out. The study suggests that an academic pedagogy like service-learning works to improve adolescent self-concept which may influence a student's decision to stay in school.

The self-theories of symbolic interactionism and social identity theory, and the philosophical umbrella of pragmatism, were useful guides to help better understand this correlation. Considering the interactive nature of service-learning and its potential to put students in contact with groups with which they would not otherwise interact in a school setting, a theoretical and philosophical foundation focused on interaction and social participation as the origin of meaning and knowledge, both about society and about one's self, was a practical starting point to uncovering the relationship between service-learning and student self-concept.

Service-learning can be a useful vehicle for strengthening self-concept in high school by providing the important relationships, feedback, experiences and exposure necessary for a student to feel content and confident in his or her abilities as a part of the high school community. While further research is necessary to confirm and explain the findings and apply the results of this study to the general adolescent population, this thesis could be significant in assisting high schools in development of curriculum and education policy to tackle the high school dropout epidemic.
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Adolescent Identity 40


November 28, 2011

John Caputo, Ph.D.
Department of Communication Arts & Leadership Studies
MSC 2616
Gonzaga University

Dear John,

I am writing on behalf of the Gonzaga Institutional Review Board (IRB) to notify you that the research proposal submitted by your graduate student, Jacob Kuhns, has been reviewed.

The proposal, "Adolescent Identity: Improving Student Self-Concept through Service Learning" qualified as a full board review. The proposal has been approved on the condition that the researcher obtains a letter of support from the principal or school district. The Board also has four recommendations for the researcher: drop the literacy level to a 9<sup>th</sup> grade level on the information sheet and consent form; change the contact information from Dr. Caputo to Jacob Kuhns; in section III E. state, "the researcher does not anticipate any risks to participants; and remove current verbiage regarding participant will pay any costs associated with adverse events, correct the spelling for principal.

We wish success as well as an optimal learning experience for Jacob. We thank you for your support with Jacob's research.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Deborah Booth, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

C: Jacob Kuhns
Appendix B

*Redacted for confidentiality*

December 7, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

It has been my privilege to have been consulted by Mr. Jake Kuhns as he was completing his thesis regarding service learning and its impact on adolescent identity development.

In working with Mr. Kuhns, I have seen him develop as a scholar and an individual with admirable concern for the well-being of students. He took great care to insure that he followed our high school’s policies concerning surveys and that everyone understood what was being requested of them.

I strongly support Mr. Kuhns’ research methods and believe them to be in line with our high school’s policies.

If you have any further concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Very truly yours,

High School Principal
Appendix C

**Student Questionnaire**

This questionnaire is being administered as part of a research requirement for a graduate level communication course. The purpose of this questionnaire is to help a graduate student researcher learn more about the impact of different teaching methods on the self-concept of high school students.

Participation in this survey is voluntary and your involvement is strictly confidential. This questionnaire is divided into three parts (A, B & C) and should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Please answer only the questions you feel comfortable with. The results of this survey will be used for a graduate school project only. No names will be associated with this anonymous study. All answers will be kept in strict confidence and any documentation will be destroyed once the project is completed.

Please read each question carefully and answer to the best of your ability. There are no right or wrong answers.

**Part A**

Please write a few sentences to answer the five questions below. Include as much information as possible, including strengths and weaknesses. Describe yourself as you believe each person sees you generally or typically.

(5 minutes)

1. How would your parent or guardian describe you as a person?

2. How would your friends describe you as a person?

3. How would your classmates in this class describe you as a person?
Part A cont…

4. How would your teacher in this class describe you as a person?

5. How do you describe yourself as a person?

Part B

Take a minute to brainstorm all the different groups you are a member of (example: classroom group, sports team, family, friends, charity organization, after-school job, etc). When finished, circle the group you feel the greatest sense of belonging to. Finally, number the groups by placing a (1) beside your favorite group, a (2) beside your next favorite group, and so on. (5 minutes)
Part C

The following sentences talk about two kinds of teenagers, one on the left side of the sentence and one on the right side of the sentence. Decide first whether you are more like person on the left side or on the right side, then go to that side of the sentence and decide if that statement is only sort of true for you, or really true for you. Put an X in the box that best describes you.

For each sentence, you will put an X in only one box. Sometimes it will be on the left side of the page, other times it will be on the right side of the page. You don’t check both sides, just the one side most like you.

(20 minutes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Really True for Me</th>
<th>Sort of True for Me</th>
<th>Sort of True for Me</th>
<th>Really True for Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Some teenagers feel that they are just as smart as others their age</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers aren’t so sure and wonder if they are as smart.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some teenagers find it hard to make friends</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>For other teenagers it's pretty easy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Some teenagers do very well at all kinds of sports</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers don't feel that they are very good when it comes to sports.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Some teenagers are not happy with the way they look</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers are happy with the way they look.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Some teenagers feel that they are ready to do well at a part-time job</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers feel that they are not quite ready to handle a part-time job.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Some teenagers feel that if they are romantically interested in someone, that person will like them back</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers worry that when they like someone romantically, that person won’t like them back.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Some teenagers usually do the right thing</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers often don’t do what they know is right.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Some teenagers are able to make really close friends</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers find it hard to make really close friends.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Really True for Me</td>
<td>Sort of True for Me</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sort of True for Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Some teenagers are often disappointed with themselves</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers are pretty pleased with themselves.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Some teenagers are pretty slow in finishing their school work</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers can do their school work more quickly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Some teenagers have lots of friends</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers don't have very many friends.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Some teenagers think they could do well at just about any new athletic activity</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers are afraid they might not do well at a new athletic activity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Some teenagers wish their body was different</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers like their body the way it is.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Some teenagers feel that they don't have enough skills to do well at a job</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers feel that they do have enough skills to do a job well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Some teenagers are not dating the people they are really attracted to</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers are dating those people they are attracted to.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Some teenagers often get in trouble for the things they do</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers usually don't do things that get them in trouble.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Some teenagers do have a close friend they can share secrets with</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers do not have a really close friend they can share secrets with.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Some teenagers don't like the way they are leading their life</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers do like the way they are leading their life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Some teenagers do very well at their classwork</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers don't do very well at their classwork.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Some teenagers are very hard to like</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Other teenagers are really easy to like.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Really True for Me</td>
<td>Sort of True for Me</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Sort of True for Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Some teenagers feel that they are better than others their age at sports</td>
<td>Other teenagers don't feel they can play as well.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Some teenagers wish their physical appearance was different</td>
<td>Other teenagers like their physical appearance the way it is.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Some teenagers feel they are old enough to get and keep a paying job</td>
<td>Other teenagers do not feel they are old enough, yet, to really handle a job well.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Some teenagers feel that people their age will be romantically attracted to them</td>
<td>Other teenagers worry about whether people their age will be attracted to them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Some teenagers feel really good about the way they act</td>
<td>Other teenagers don’t feel that good about the way they often act.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Some teenagers wish they had a really close friend to share things with</td>
<td>Other teenagers do have a close friend to share things with.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Some teenagers are happy with themselves most of the time</td>
<td>Other teenagers are often not happy with themselves.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Some teenagers have trouble figuring out the answers in school</td>
<td>Other teenagers almost always can figure out the answers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Some teenagers are popular with others their age</td>
<td>Other teenagers are not very popular.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Some teenagers don't do well at new outdoor games</td>
<td>Other teenagers are good at new games right away.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Some teenagers think that they are good looking</td>
<td>Other teenagers think that they are not very good looking.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Really True for Me</td>
<td>Sort of True for Me</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Sort of True for Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Some teenagers feel like they could do better at work they do for pay</td>
<td>Other teenagers feel that they are doing really well at work they do for pay.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Some teenagers feel that they are fun and interesting on a date</td>
<td>Other teenagers wonder about how fun and interesting they are on a date.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Some teenagers do things they know they shouldn't do</td>
<td>Other teenagers hardly ever do things they know they shouldn't do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Some teenagers find it hard to make friends they can really trust</td>
<td>Other teenagers are able to make close friends they can really trust.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Some teenagers like the kind of person they are</td>
<td>Other teenagers often wish they were someone else.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Some teenagers feel that they are pretty intelligent</td>
<td>Other teenagers question whether they are intelligent.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Some teenagers feel that they are socially accepted</td>
<td>Other teenagers wished that more people their age accepted them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Some teenagers do not feel that they are very athletic</td>
<td>Other teenagers feel that they are very athletic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Some teenagers really like their looks</td>
<td>Other teenagers wish they looked different.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Some teenagers feel that they are really able to handle the work on a paying job</td>
<td>Other teenagers wonder if they are really doing as good a job at work as they should be doing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Some teenagers usually don’t go out with the people they would really like to date</td>
<td>Other teenagers do go out with the people they really want to date.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Really True for Me</td>
<td>Sort of True for Me</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>Sort of True for Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Some teenagers usually act the way they know they are supposed to</td>
<td>Other teenagers often don't act the way they are supposed to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Some teenagers <em>don't</em> have a friend that is close enough to share really personal thoughts with</td>
<td>Other teenagers do have a close friend that they can share personal thoughts and feelings with.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Some teenagers are very happy being the way they are</td>
<td>Other teenagers wish they were different.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please choose the best answer:

Gender (Male/Female) ____________________

Race/Ethnicity (African-American, Caucasian, etc) ____________________

Age ____________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
Please place your completed questionnaire face down in the envelope provided.
Appendix D

Information Letter

Adolescent Identity: Improving Student Self-Concept through Service Learning

Gonzaga University
502 East Boone Ave
Spokane, Washington 99258-2616
John Caputo, Ph.D.
caputo@calvin.gonzaga.edu

Dear Parent,

As part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication and Leadership Studies at Gonzaga University, I am undertaking a research project entitled Adolescent Identity: Improving Student Self-Concept through Service Learning. The project examines the impact of service-learning on the process of adolescent identity development.

The researcher is hopeful to find a correlation between service-learning activities and a student’s sense of self in high school. Given the role past research suggests adolescent identity might play in a student's decision to stay in school, the results of this research could be significant in developing curriculum or education policy to address the high school dropout epidemic. Your child was chosen for participation in this study by his or her teacher because he or she participated in or will participate in a service-learning program. Selection was not based on his or her performance in school.

We would like your child to take part in a 30 minute survey to be administered in the classroom. Participation in this survey is voluntary and complies with the Protection of Pupil Rights Law as outlined in the Student Handbook. There is no compensation for participating or negative consequences for not participating in this survey. Your child’s involvement will be strictly confidential. The results of this survey will be used for a graduate school project only. No names will be associated with this anonymous study and all answers will be kept in strict confidence.

Prior to beginning the questionnaire we will ask him or her to also sign the consent form enclosed with this document for your permission so that he or she are aware of these same rights and responsibilities.

Thank you for considering granting your child permission to participate in this study. If you have any questions in relation to my study, please contact my supervisor at the above address.

Sincerely,

Jake Kuhns
Student Researcher
Information Letter

*Revised after review by Gonzaga IRB

Adolescent Identity: Improving Student Self-Concept through Service Learning

Gonzaga University
502 East Boone Ave
Spokane, Washington 99258-2616
Jacob E. Kuhns
jkuhns@zagmail.gonzaga.edu

Dear Parent,

As a requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication and Leadership Studies at Gonzaga University, I am conducting research examining the impact of service-learning on the process of adolescent identity development. I hope to find a connection between service-learning activities and a student’s sense of self in high school. Since adolescent identity might influence high school graduation decisions, the results of this research could help address the high school dropout epidemic. Because your child is enrolled in a school with service-learning classes, he or she was chosen to participate by his or her teacher. Selection was not based on his or her performance in school.

I would like your child to complete a 30 minute survey. Participation is voluntary and complies with the Student Handbook. There is no payment for participating or negative consequences for not participating in this survey. The results of this survey will be used for a graduate school project only. No names will be associated with this study and all answers will be kept in strict confidence.

Your child will sign the same consent form before beginning the questionnaire. Thank you for considering allowing your child to help with this study. If you have any questions, please contact me at the above address.

Sincerely,

Jake Kuhns
Student Researcher
Appendix E

Consent Form

Adolescent Identity: Improving Student Self-Concept through Service Learning

Gonzaga University
502 East Boone Ave
Spokane, Washington 99258-2616
John Caputo, Ph.D.
caputo@calvin.gonzaga.edu

CONSENT FORM
Adolescent Identity: Improving Student Self-Concept through Service Learning

I, (please print name of student) ______________________________ have read the information on the research project Adolescent Identity: Improving Student Self-Concept through Service Learning that is to be conducted by Jake Kuhns from Gonzaga University and all queries have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this investigation, which involves completion of a questionnaire that should take approximately 30 minutes. I agree to keep all information confidential and not discuss it with individuals other than the student researcher.

I understand that my participation in this survey is voluntary and complies with the Protection of Pupil Rights Law as outlined in the Student Handbook. I can also withdraw from this project at any time without reason or penalty. My responses will remain confidential and any documentation will be destroyed once the project is completed. My identity will not be revealed without my consent to anyone other than the investigator conducting the project.

Participant/Student Signature  ______________________________________________

Date  _______________

Parent or Guardian Signature  ______________________________________________

Date  _______________


**Consent Form**

*Revised after review by Gonzaga IRB*

Adolescent Identity: Improving Student Self-Concept through Service Learning

Gonzaga University  
502 East Boone Ave  
Spokane, Washington 99258-2616  
Jacob E. Kuhns  
Jkuhns@zagmail.gonzaga.edu

**CONSENT FORM**  
*Adolescent Identity: Improving Student Self-Concept through Service Learning*

I, (please print name of student) ______________________________ have read the information on the research project *Adolescent Identity: Improving Student Self-Concept through Service Learning* by Mr. Jake Kuhns from Gonzaga University and all my questions have been answered.

I agree to participate in this study, which involves filling out a questionnaire that should take about 30 minutes. I agree to keep all information confidential and not discuss it with anyone other than Mr. Kuhns.

I understand that this study meets the rules outlines in the Student Handbook. I also understand that my participation in this survey is voluntary and I can stop participating in the project at any time. My answers will remain confidential and the questionnaires will be destroyed once the project is completed. My name will not be revealed to anyone other than Mr. Kuhns.

*Student Signature* ___________________________________________

*Date* ______________

*Parent or Guardian Signature* ___________________________________________

*Date* ______________