Adlerian Adventure-Based Counseling to Enhance

Self-Esteem in School Children

Holly H. Wagner
University of Missouri – Saint Louis

Anna Elliott
Pocatello, Idaho

Abstract

This article provides a rationale for using adventure-based counseling (ABC) principles to promote children's self-esteem through group work within the school setting. The effectiveness of combining Adlerian theory with ABC to promote self-esteem is established. The process that would allow a school counselor to plan, organize, facilitate, and evaluate this group successfully is emphasized. Previous literature (Wick, Wick, & Peterson, 1997) conceptualized the efficacy of combining Adlerian theory with ABC based interventions in school. This article expands upon this idea to rationalize the heightened need for this type of intervention in an era of increased interaction through technology and decreased opportunities for developmental social learning. Discussion includes recruiting counselees, forming objectives and intended outcomes, and designing a program within the school. This article includes a selection of activities and initiatives and suggested evaluative measures.

Adlerian Adventure-based Counseling to Enhance

Self-Esteem in School Children

When operating within school systems that have developed an increased focus on measurable student success, it is important to consider the impact an evaluative approach has on students' identity and sense of self-worth. Research has demonstrated a correlation between a student's perceived self-efficacy and their performance in school (Pajares, 1996; Schunk, 1995; Snowman & Biehler, 2012). Professional school counselors have an opportunity to positively impact how a school system attends to students' self-esteem development. A connection between self-esteem and positive social interactions and support systems has also been established (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Duys & Hobson, 2004). Therefore, the proposed adventure-based counseling (ABC) group, founded on Adlerian principles, offers an opportunity to enhance the reciprocity between self-esteem and effective interpersonal skills, which in turn can bolster students' confidence in their academic potential.

This article will address the significant role that the development of students' self-esteem and interpersonal skills have on a student's sense of self-efficacy and subsequent academic success, and how the proposed Adlerian ABC group serves to facilitate that process. The implication of fostering increased self-esteem serves not only to positively impact academic success, but also to establish a foundation of self-regulatory behavior that can serve the students throughout their lives, in scholastic and career oriented endeavors. Students who have confidence in their potential are shown to be more motivated to challenge themselves and seek out new learning opportunities, even when they are beyond their comfort level or perceived skill set (Snowman &

Biehler, 2012). Concurrently, Adlerian theory emphasizes the importance of fostering responsibility and creativity in clients, which can assist in the continual development of initiative and self-confidence (Ziomek-Daigle, McMahon, & Paisley, 2008).

Supportive social engagement has been evidenced to increase self-esteem, which in turn contributes to greater academic success, and in our culture's current relationship with media and technology, has additional implications (Duys & Hobson, 2004; Moote & Wodarski, 1997, Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Within a culture that has become increasingly media driven and socially disconnected there is an increased rationale for creating opportunities for students to enhance interpersonal skills in a facilitated group setting (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). A student's ability to communicate effectively, as well as advocate for themselves in an assertive way leads to increased connection, as well as an opportunity for peer mentorship and further social learning and understanding (Malekoff, 2004; Ziomek, McMahon & Paisley, 2008). These interpersonal skills can potentially contribute to students' increased social maturity, which strengthens their chances for success later on in their professional endeavors (Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008; Moote & Wodarski, 1997). The experiential nature of the group, integral to the adventure-based counseling philosophy, has been shown to deepen students' learning by moving them beyond cognitive awareness of their own worth and the value of respectful social interactions to encountering their own successes and ability to connect with others through the group activities (Wick, Wick & Peterson, 1997; Ziomek, McMahon & Paisley, 2008). Wick and colleagues demonstrated the efficacy of the combination of Adlerian theory with adventure-based counseling in addressing the promotion of self-esteem. More recent literature indicates

the benefits of each modality, respectively, and how self-esteem is fostered; however, a dearth of literature exists in the last decade regarding the utility of combining these approaches in a school setting, as is proposed in this article.

Self-Esteem

Wick, Wick, and Peterson (1997) discussed self-esteem as a clear strong influence in children's overall development. Self-esteem includes the total perception of self, which incorporates self-image, self-concept, and social concept (Moote & Wodarski, 1997). The ways in which children view themselves color their worlds in positive or negative lights. Children with healthy self-esteem are likely to have success in accomplishing their life tasks and meeting challenges, whereas children without healthy self-esteem may fail to meet these challenges, withdraw socially, and experience depression (Duys & Hobson, 2004; Moote & Wodarski, 1997; Usznyska-Jaromoc, 2007; Wick et al., 1997). Furthermore, students' self-esteem influences their confidence in their abilities and willingness to engage in pro-social behavior (Duys & Hobson, 2004).

Moote and Wodarski (1997) stated that building self-esteem in children is supported by research to be a preventative method in education that can decrease behavioral issues and academic struggles. This approach enhances children's abilities to achieve as a result of their perceptions regarding their abilities and worth. Wick and colleagues (1997) demonstrated that counselees who participated in an Adlerian ABC program experienced the benefits of an enhanced self-concept. This enhancement could in turn influence their academic achievement, level of depression, ability to make decisions, and aversion to delinquency. The possible benefits are significant and have

great potential for influencing positive growth and development for the counselees involved.

Duys and Hobson (2004) proposed that self-esteem is affected by the exposure to social contexts over a period of time. Within a child's development, self-esteem can be enhanced by having positive peer relationships and interactions. With the ease of accessibility to the Internet and social networking, the potential positive or negative impact on self-esteem is great. Bushman and colleagues (2010) found that peer disapproval through a social networking profile decreased self-esteem, while peer approval increased self-esteem. Patchin and Hinduja (2010) found a relationship between low self-esteem and experiences with cyberbullying. The correlations found in these studies imply that school counselors must recognize the various sources within and surrounding the school system that affect the development of students' self-esteem. It is important to begin addressing the development, promotion, and maintenance of self-esteem within these students as early as possible.

School counselors would do well to incorporate such an important aspect of their students' development into their comprehensive school counseling programs. Including a group focused on self-esteem and building peer relationships into a comprehensive school counseling program could enhance a school counselor's ability to promote students' development in these areas, thus working towards achieving the overall goals of comprehensive and developmental school counseling programs (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2004). All children, but specifically those who are struggling academically, behaviorally, or emotionally could benefit from a group

deliberately designed to enrich and enhance their perception of self (Glass & Myers, 2001; Glass & Shoffner, 2001; Moote and Wodarski, 1997, Wick et al., 1997).

Adventure-based Counseling (ABC)

Adventure-based counseling (ABC) is a group counseling model that utilizes a thoughtfully sequenced and processed set of experiential initiatives to affect change in counselees (Fletcher & Hinkle, 2002; Schoel & Maizell, 2002). ABC was founded on the premise that humans learn by doing, by experiencing life. In ABC, a bridge is built between the activity and a counselee's life, and meaning is made when this bridge is crossed (Fletcher & Hinkle, 2001; Glass & Myers, 2001; Glass & Shoffner, 2001; Nelson, 2001). Activities and initiatives for this group program were chosen to highlight a metaphoric relationship with life and the goals of counseling. Rohnke (1984) presented numerous initiatives, games, and activities that could be incorporated into ABC. The benefits of this modality can be far reaching and affect counselees psychologically, sociologically, educationally, physically, and spiritually through enhancing such areas as self-concept, efficacy, and confidence (Fletcher & Hinkle, 2002). The primary goal for many ABC programs is to improve counselees' self-concepts (Moote & Wodarski, 1997). This is accomplished through an encouraging atmosphere that promotes problem solving, trust building, and goal setting as a group and individually. ABC programs help counselees to identify faulty thinking and enhance their ability to solve problems in various situations (Glass & Myers, 2001).

Moote and Wodarski (1997) concurred that counselees' self-esteem and self-concept are enhanced by ABC through experiences that involve cooperation, communication, risk and excitement, challenge, creativity, skill development, and last

but not least, fun. ABC programs are effective in utilizing activities that create opportunities for success and meaning making that can be applied to the counselees' lives. Sixteen of the nineteen studies described by Moote and Wodarski (1997) reported positive outcomes with counselees regarding their self-esteem. ABC programs assist counselees in making decisions and developing competence, which in turn improves their total perception of themselves.

Integration of Adlerian Theory With Adventure-Based Counseling

Glass and Myers (2001) described how Alfred Adler's individual psychology provides a holistic conceptualization of personality. Adler believed that all behavior is purposeful and that counselees choose behavior based on their individual goals (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1998). Counselee goals reflect their private logic, which is influenced by the way that they experience life and their interpretation of those experiences. The development of private logic is well underway by the time counselees are eight years old. Private logic influences an individual's lifestyle and lifestyle convictions, which continue to affect counselees' views of themselves and the goals upon which they base their behavior.

Each counselee is an integral part of a larger social system and he/she is motivated by social interest (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). Humans are inclined to be part of a larger social context, to feel a sense of belongingness, and to serve others in a way that betters humanity. In other words, social interest can be defined as a human's ability to interact with others in a cooperative way and promote social cooperation, which leads to a healthy society. This kind of social connectedness is largely what contributes to our

success, happiness, and well-being (Adler & Fleishler, 1986; Glass & Myers, 2001; Mosak & Maniacci, 1999).

Nelson (2001) asserted that as young counselees experience and interpret the world, a sense of belonging and feeling significant is particularly important. Striving for this connection is a natural human tendency, which enables counselees to continue to survive and thrive. When this need is not met, their behaviors may originate from a discouraged rather than in encouraged place, which could result in being disruptive rather than cooperative. The goals of their misbehavior are influenced by their discouraged attitude towards self, others, and life. Goals of misbehavior are employed when children are unsuccessful in achieving a sense of belonging. They include attention seeking, power seeking, revenge taking, and displaying inadequacy (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). Counselors must understand the goal of the misbehavior, encourage rather than punish their young counselees, and then help them to learn more cooperative behaviors that reflect high instead of low social interest.

Adlerian therapy attempts to reeducate counselees within their social context in order for them to experience their role in society as one of equally giving to and receiving from others. When counselees are aware and cognizant of destructive patterns that do not enhance their ability to contribute to society, they can then attempt to change their behavior and meet their goals from a place of encouragement. Counselees experience success and feel they are making progress when they sense themselves moving from a perceived minus to perceived plus (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1998; Nelson, 2001). Ultimately, the desired outcome is for counselees to emerge from the Adlerian counseling process feeling that they belong, are valued, and

have positive self-worth and esteem, which would reflect a promotion of their social interest (Glass & Myers, 2001).

Counselees should be encouraged to become responsible for their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, all of which influence their goals and successes. It is important to instill in them the notion that they have control over the direction of their lives. Furthermore, counselees' uniqueness and creativity should be highlighted when school counselors are attempting to nurture their self-esteem (Uszynska-Jarmoc, 2007). Even misbehavior on the part of counselees can be viewed as a creative attempt to achieve a certain goal. The counselor must redirect counselees back to their reasoning for the behavior and help to guide them in using their creativity to make more cooperative attempts towards meeting the same goal (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1998). When working with counselees to help promote and enhance their self-esteem, it would be important to keep in mind the goals of their behavior and the importance of attending to their creativity and individuality. Understanding their motivations as well as the way that they perceive themselves in relation to others would enable counselors to tend to the specific factors that contribute to building the young counselees' self-esteem.

ABC and Adlerian therapy are both used effectively as separate modalities in improving and enhancing counselees' self-esteem. The rationale for combining Adlerian theory and ABC has been tested, with outcomes supporting the integration (Glass & Myers, 2001, Nelson, 2001, Wick et al., 1997). Research also supports using ABC to positively affect self-esteem (Glass & Shoffner, 2001; Moote & Wodarski, 1997; Utay & Utay, 1996). Glass and Myers (2001) and Wick and colleagues (1997) have highlighted the efficacy of using Adlerian ABC to promote self-esteem. Wick and colleagues (1997)

conducted research that showed the implementation of a six-week Adlerian ABC group affected children's self-esteem positively. The combination of these two approaches and their common objective may increase the likelihood of meeting that goal and benefiting the counselees involved.

Within each type of counseling there are common themes that highlight the importance of and promote self-esteem in young counselees. Adlerian theory emphasizes the importance of promoting self-esteem through social consciousness and responsibility, while ABC's approach to working with youth addresses these components through experiential education (Adler, 1959; Hill, 2007). Therefore, a group format for attending to these issues could foster self-esteem through collaborative activities, which in turn contributes to enhanced social awareness and connectedness. This modality may encourage participants to develop self-esteem within the context of the group through connection with others and shared successes, rather than individual accomplishment or promotion. School counselors can implement and evaluate a similar group within the school setting, utilizing an Adlerian ABC group to increase self-esteem.

Characteristics of an Adlerian ABC Group

Wick and colleagues (1997), have established four tasks characteristic to ABC that are based on Adlerian tenants. They are group, unfamiliar, noncompetitive, and cooperative tasks. A group intervention is favored for ABC because of Adler's belief that humans are social and possess a need to belong (Adler & Fleishler, 1988). A group environment enables counselees to feel safe, supported, and aligned with a need to belong. Consequently, counselees adapt their views of themselves in accordance with their new experiences in the group. The group provides counselees with a model of

their larger social environments, and can be considered a safe place for them to evaluate and understand themselves in relation to others. They may begin to feel that they are an integral part of the group, where they feel that they belong and are valued within the group. If a bridging occurs between the activities in the group and their lives, meaning will be made that this sense of worth and value can be transferred to their larger social contexts (Yalom, 1995). Their role in society can then be perceived as an equal one. They may begin to nurture others and contribute to society while receiving a variety of benefits in return, including an improved self-concept (Glass & Myers, 2001).

An unfamiliar task is useful in an Adlerian ABC group to build on the opportunity for counselees to test and overcome their previously developed faulty conclusions about themselves. Many times counselees are not aware of their private logic, or ingrained thoughts and consequent patterns in behavior, yet they are guided and influenced by what they have come to believe about themselves. When following the daily, familiar routine of their lives, it is easier for counselees to continue in their established pattern and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. Unfamiliar tasks within the group experience allow counselees to draw from the unique process of the group as they are guided to a newer, more positive comprehension of themselves and resulting private logic (Wick et al., 1997).

Noncompetitive tasks are used in Adlerian ABC based on Alder's beliefs regarding counselees' feelings of inferiority that result in a lack of social interest (Adler, 1982). In many cases, feelings of inferiority can preclude a counselee's desire to want to improve and join with one another to meet their goals. It is when these feelings become too intense and overwhelming that counselees feel the need to withdraw from

others and use control as a selfish mean to meet their goals. To promote cooperation and avoid competition within an Adlerian ABC group, counselees are aligned with one another against the unfamiliar task. They are working together towards a common goal that may be difficult and challenging, but achievable. When this goal is accomplished, counselees can base their sense of achievement on the combination of efforts of all involved. Their sense of belonging and desire to continue to contribute to others is enhanced as they realize that by helping the group, they were simultaneously benefiting themselves (Wick et al., 1997).

An Adlerian ABC group will also include the use of cooperative tasks. These tasks will further the teaching of social interest and responsibility to others as well as oneself, which will contribute to a new formation of healthy behavior (Glass & Myers, 2001; Wick et al., 1997). Cooperation within a noncompetitive atmosphere reframes the concept of individual success, which is continually stressed to children in school. Adlerian counselors believe that one's willingness to cooperate with and participate in contributing to others as a result of a concern for other's welfare is the main indicator for one's mental health and well-being (Dirkmeyer, Dirkmeyer, & Sperry, 1987). By participating in a group that makes use of tasks that are unfamiliar, noncompetitive, and cooperative, counselees learn that their individual success is interconnected with others and they cannot stand alone in life. The group succeeds together or fails together; no one determines this fate individually. The group experience will teach participants that the tasks of life require them to cooperate with others. They will witness and understand the connection between their own concern for and contribution to the group and what they experience in return as the goals are achieved. Their sense of self is part of this

connection, and by working with the group and increasing their social interest, they are enhancing this important aspect (Wick et al., 1997).

Additional shared characteristics between Adlerian therapy and ABC include the aspects of encouragement and respect. Encouragement is viewed by Adlerians as a significant tool to influence behavior change in counselees (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1998). Applied to an ABC group, encouragement could strengthen the relationships among counselees by suggesting that they can meet the challenges of the group together, and transfer the meaning into their lives. The process of encouragement in an Adlerian ABC group should focus on success and skills of counselees rather than failure and lack of ability. The counselor's task is to form an alliance with the counselees that highlights their strengths and unique contributions that each of them bring to the group (Glass & Myers, 2001). The counselor's ability to see and respect counselees for their positive aspects is potentially instilled in each counselee, and then spread among the group. This approach invites the counselees to feel encouraged and respected by everyone involved in the group experience and to then adapt their private logics to benefit and enhance their perceptions of themselves.

Implementing an Adlerian ABC group within a school setting could provide an effective and beneficial adaptive experience to children dealing with low self-esteem. According to Glass and Shoffner (2001), school counselors must often work with children in groups due to class size and time constraints. The group environment within the school is also beneficial to the children as they are able to participate with and learn from one another, increasing their self-esteem while completing group oriented activities within a cohesive group of peers. Groups can be planned that will incorporate

unfamiliar, noncompetitive, and cooperative tasks in an encouraging and respectful

atmosphere for all involved (Wick et al., 1997). With some imagination and creativity,

school counselors can provide the same experiences for counselees that they might

outside of an office or institutional setting. Openness to creativity also encourages

flexibility within the counselor, which is necessary in providing group work for students.

Malekoff (2004) spoke to the significance of a counselor's ability to manage uncertainty

and planned emptiness, referring to a created space for the unknown. The form that any

therapeutic group takes on is unpredictable, and for children and adolescents who are

in process of developing social and emotional regulation skills, the need for flexibility as

a facilitator is even greater (Malekoff, 2004). The key to success is the professional

school counselor's ability to provide the necessary processing and promote the

formation of meaning within the counselees so that they may transfer the meaning to

their lives (Fletcher & Hinkle, 2002; Glass & Myers, 2001; Glass & Shoffner, 2001;

Nelson, 2001).

Implementing the Group

Target Population and Setting

School counselors may employ different methods of identifying and accruing

counselees for the group. The diverse population identified for this group includes

children struggling academically, behaviorally, and socially, and would require various

sources of referral. It is important to also consider that some students who suffer from

low self-esteem might perform well in these domains, and so attention and assessment

on the part of the counselor is essential (Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008). Parents,

teachers, and students themselves can all be involved in this process in order to foster

active engagement from the students, and a visible support network made up of involved adults from the student's life. Information related to the group could reach parents through a school newsletter. Parents could then contact their children's teachers or counselors for more information and group sign-up forms. Teachers could be notified about the group by e-mail and through an announcement at a faculty meeting. The announcement and notification would include a brief outline of the group's targeted population, goal, objectives, and outcomes. School staff will be encouraged to refer any students to the group whom they feel would benefit. Students would have access to the group as well through posted announcements that could be spread throughout the school. These announcements would provide information such as the group's time, place of meeting, duration, and potential benefits to them. School counselors could repeat the group as needed to include all students who wish to participate.

School counselors would integrate a six-week group program into the school setting, as six weeks of group has been shown to be effective in promoting self-esteem in the school system (Wick et al., 1997). The group would meet once per week, for ninety minutes, during a free period, following school dismissal, or on weekends, depending on structure and resources of the school. The timeframe of ninety minutes is suggested, as it would allow for the possibility of more than one initiative or activity to be utilized, as well as the time to reflect on, process, and apply the experience. Finally, depending on availability and weather, the school gym and/or playground would provide an appropriate meeting area for the group.

This model of group work can be designed for all ages of students, with the activities structured and planned around respective developmental levels. The groups will consist of students within the same age range, although developmental differences will commonly still exist within the spectrum. This is additional incentive for the facilitator to be flexible in creating their weekly itineraries, as they may need to be adjusted based on processing abilities or level of engagement on a particular day (Malekoff, 2004). Further screening or exclusion and inclusion practices will be based on the school counselor's determination of whether the variation in demographics of the students can be worked with within the group, or is cause for group division or exclusion. Students who are placed in groups that are inappropriate for their developmental level are less likely to experience the potential benefits of the group work (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

Process, Program Objectives, and Intended Outcomes

It is important to address the group process that counselors utilize in achieving a successful Adlerian ABC group experience. The experiential learning cycle, on which an effective Adlerian ABC group should be based, is important in this process. Nelson (2001) describes the four phases of the experiential learning cycle as experience, reflection, processing, and application. The experience occurs when counselees participate in activities and initiatives of the Adlerian ABC group. School counselors guide the group to then reflect on the experience and examine their thoughts, feelings, and observations. The next phase in processing involves counselees sharing what they have examined upon reflection. Counselors should assess each counselee's experience cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally ("what were you thinking?", "what were you feeling?", "what were you doing?") to allow counselees to fully process the

experience on these levels. Through this multidimensional focus, counselees will be able to discover and examine patterns in their thinking, feeling, and behaving. Private logic will become apparent during this present-oriented process and the opportunity for adjustment and growth will present itself to counselees with the careful and purposeful facilitation of this processing.

The final phase of the experiential learning cycle is application, where meaning constructed in group is then connected to meaning made in the broader context of their lives. As counselees understand their experiences in the group and discover patterns within themselves, they can then apply this new knowledge to experiences outside the group and understand themselves in a broader context. They can make specific plans that will influence change in the way they think, feel, and act towards themselves when they are outside of the group. It is challenging for a youth to undergo a therapeutic intervention and maintain those changes if other parts in the system do not support those developments (Bettman, Olson-Morrison, & Jasperson, 2011). Parents and teachers can also be involved in this stage of the process, encouraging and supporting the changes made once the students are outside of the group. Once the counselees complete the application phase, the experiential learning cycle starts over as a new activity introduced by the school counselor (Glass & Shoffner, 2001; Nelson, 2001).

The group program's objectives need to be carefully considered according to the population's needs and correlated with the weekly themes infused into the group. The themes are: setting goals and problem solving, cooperation and encouragement, communication and connectedness, building trust, helping others, and responsibility for

self and others. Based on these themes, the program objectives are formulated to assist counselees in:

- Enhancing their abilities for setting goals, solving problems, and cooperating;

- Learning to be encouraging instead of criticizing each other and themselves,

- Understanding the importance of effective communication and connectedness with others,

- Building trust within and between counselees,

- Realizing that by helping others to succeed, they are simultaneously helping themselves,

- Becoming responsible for themselves (their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors) and responsible to others.

As counselees experience and participate in activities and initiatives based on weekly themes designed to meet these objectives, the following intended outcomes would be achieved:

- Counselees are capable of setting goals, problem solving, and cooperating,

- Counselees encourage themselves and others,

- Counselees increase their ability to communicate and connect with others,

- Counselees experience a greater sense of trust in themselves and others,

- Counselees develop an interest in helping others succeed,

- Counselees feel responsible for themselves and to others.

Through these program objectives and intended outcomes, the overall goal of an enhanced self-esteem could be accomplished.

Program Sequence

When designing an Adlerian ABC group to enhance self-esteem in the school setting, school counselors must draw on the similarities of the two approaches and combine them to structure the group's activities appropriately. They must choose initiatives that will allow the group to perform unfamiliar, noncompetitive, and cooperative tasks that will promote the development of social interest in counselees and cohesion among the group (Wick et al., 1997). School counselors facilitate the group by introducing each initiative or activity by establishing a scenario and describing the task to the group, also called frontloading the activity (Fletcher & Hinkle, 2002). When the task is completed, successfully or not, time is taken to process what happened before, during, and after the initiative. The group takes this time to discuss what they experienced, relate the experience to their lives, and cross the bridge to meaning that can be applied to their lives (Fletcher & Hinkle, 2002; Glass & Shoffner, 2001; Nelson, 2001).

The sequencing of activities and initiatives is a crucial element of the group's facilitation. The activities (corresponding with their respective themes for the week) begin easier and progress with increasing difficulty and challenge. Each week's session begins with an icebreaker or high-energy activity to get the group motivated to participate and be present. School counselors must connect each week's theme to the activities and initiatives outlined for that particular session. This could be done, as previously mentioned, by frontloading the experience in a meaningful manner, and by processing the experience with purposeful questions related to the week's theme and objectives (Fletcher & Hinkle, 2002; Nelson, 2001).

The initial session would provide a welcome and introduction of the group program to counselees as well as an opportunity for the formation of individual and group goals. The first three sessions would incorporate facilitation and activities to promote the group's ability to solve problems, cooperate, communicate, and encourage from within. In the fourth session, the group could be provided initiatives to foster a capacity from within to build and form trust. The last two sessions' facilitation and activities would focus on using the established problem solving skills, cooperation, communication, encouragement, and trust to foster a desire within the counselees to help others in the group to succeed and feel responsible for group and individual accomplishments and achievement of goals (Appendix includes suggested ABC initiatives).

Evaluation

To properly ensure the effectiveness of this group in enhancing children's self-esteem, an evaluative measure must be utilized. Evaluations such as the Piers Harris 2 Children's Self-Concept Scale, the Coopersmith Self- Esteem Inventory (CSEI), or the Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory (CF-SEI-2) could be used with such a group. Students could be assessed with an evaluation before they enter the group program to establish their baseline for improvement. After the six-week group program, students would take the evaluation again to mark their improvement and establish that the group program is in fact meeting its goal. Any necessary adjustments could be made in accordance to the results of this evaluation; the areas where counselees improved least could be noted and modifications to activities and facilitation could be made. School counselors should make certain that counselees participating in this group are receiving

the maximum opportunities and benefits possible to enhance and enrich their self-esteem.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

A potential limitation of the proposed group could be the logistical barriers associated with setting up the group. School counselors may work in settings that do not have after school transportation or free periods in the day where the group would be implemented. Screening processes may also need to vary, depending on the population of students and level of conflict or cohesion that exists within the system. Factors such as ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic status may have previously established a divisiveness within the student culture, which does not necessarily indicate a need to avoid running the group, or limiting who may be involved, but would still need to be considered in the planning the implementation of the group.

Students who have a history of consistently disruptive or disrespectful behavior may be considered as inappropriate candidates for the group. While this type of student may present challenges for group facilitators, an appropriate level of experience and training in working with higher risk students could allow for the group to serve as an effective intervention. It would be important for facilitator's in this scenario to screen carefully and set clear boundaries and expectations of the students. An unwillingness to adhere to expectations could result in the student being asked to not participate in the group, and for school counselors to consider other more fitting intervention methods, such as individual counseling or accessing resources for the student outside of the school.

With regard to future research that could promote the concepts and interventions proposed, there is a plethora of options for examining the impact of the model. Both quantitative and qualitative measures could be used to assess the success or limitations of the group. Pre and post administrations of the surveys, mentioned earlier, as well as other valid and reliable measures, could examine the students' perceived level of self-esteem and effective social engagement. In addition, the use of students' grades and academic reports before and after the group could support the hypothesis that increased self-esteem and social support contributes to scholastic success. The original research after which this article is modeled (Wick, Wick, & Peterson, 1997) was conducted using a relatively small sample size (n=42), therefore a larger scale study could reveal more statistically sound results. Longitudinal studies exploring the long term effects of the Adlerian ABC group would also be beneficial toward understanding if the six week group has a sustainable impact. Qualitative measures could be utilized to collect narratives of how the students experience themselves and the group and whether or not they attribute the group to any noticeable changes in their self-perception and social skills. Parent, teacher, and school counselor narratives could also be supplemented to gather a more in depth assessment of whether the group impacts the variables being examined.

Summary

The rationale for combining Adlerian theory with adventure-based counseling to enhance self-esteem has been established. The process of implementing such a group within the school system has been delineated. School counselors must attend to their counselees' self-esteem throughout their development in order to affect personal,

academic and professional growth. The use of an Adlerian ABC group could be an effective intervention to promote such growth. Professional school counselors should be intentional in measuring and evaluating interventions to establish the effectiveness of implementing a group to promote self-esteem in their counselees.

References

Adler, A. (1959). *The practice and theory of individual psychology*. Totowa, NJ:

    Littlefield. Adams.

Adler, A. (1982). The fundamental views of individual psychology. *Individual*

    Psychology: The Journal of Adlerian Theory, Research & Practice, *38*(1), 3.

Adler, A., & Fleisher, L. (1986). Social influences in child rearing. *Individual Psychology:*

    The Journal of Adlerian Theory, Research & Practice, *42*(3), 317.

Adler, A., & Fleisher, L. (1988). The child's inner life and a sense of community.

    Individual Psychology: The Journal of Adlerian Theory, Research & Practice,

    44(4), 417.

American School Counselor Association. (2004). *ASCA national standards for students*.

    Alexandria, VA: Author.

Bettman, J. E., Olson-Morrison, D., & Jasperson, R. A. (2011). Adolescents in

    wilderness therapy: A qualitative study of attachment relationships. *Journal of*

    Experiential Education, 34(2), 182-200.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory.*

    Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control.* New York: Freeman.

Battle, J. (1992). *Culture-free self-esteem inventories: Examiner's manual* (2nd ed.).

    Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

Bushman, B. J., Poorthuis, A., Telch, M. J., Thomas, S., Orobio de Castro, B., &

    Reijntjes, A. (2010). I like me if you like me: On the interpersonal modulation and

regulation of preadolescents' state self-esteem. *Child Development, 81*(3), 811-825.

Coopersmith, S (1981). *Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, School Form.* Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Dinkmeyer, D. C., Dinkmeyer, D. C., Jr., & Sperry, L. (1987). *Adlerian counseling and psychotherapy (*2nd ed.). Columbia, Oh: Merrill.

Dreikurs, R., Grunwald, B. B., & Pepper, F. C. (1998). *Maintaining sanity in the classroom: Classroom management techniques.* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Taylor and Francis.

Duys, D. K., & Hobson, S. M. (2004). Reconceptualizing self-esteem: Implications of Kegan's constructive-developmental model for school counselors. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development, 43,* 152-162.

Fletcher, T. B., & Hinkle, J. S. (2002). Adventure-based counseling: An innovation in counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 80,* 277-285.

Harter, S. (1993). Causes and consequences of low self-esteem in children and adolescents. In R F. Baumeister (Ed.). *Self-esteem: The puzzle of the low self-regard* (pp. 87-116). New York: Plenum Press.

Glass, J. S., & Myers, J. E. (2001). Combining the old and new to help adolescents: Individual psychology and adventure-based counseling. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 23*(2), 104-114.

Glass, J. S., & Shoffner, M. F. (2001). Adventure-based counseling in schools. *Professional School Counseling, 5,* 42-50.

Hill, N. R. (2007). Wilderness therapy as a treatment modality for at-risk youth: A primer for mental health counselors. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 29*(4), 338-349.

Jindal-Snape, D., & Miller, D. J. (2008). A challenge of living? Understanding the psycho-social processes of the child during primary-secondary transition through resilience and self-esteem theories. *Educational Psychology Review, 20*, 217-236.

Malekoff, A. (2004). *Group work with adolescents: Principles and practices.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Moote, G. T., & Wodarski, J. S. (1997). The acquisition of life skills through adventure-based activities and programs: A review of the literature. *Adolescence, 32,* 143-167.

Mosak, H., & Maniacci, M. (1999). *A primer of adlerian psychology: The analytic-behavioral-cognitive psychology of Alfred Adler.* New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Nelson, M. D. (2001). Prevention development: An Adlerian experiential model for effective programs. *Canadian Journal of Adlerian Psychology, 31*(1), 1-26.

Patchin, J. W., & Hinduja, S. (2010). Cyberbullying and self-esteem. *Journal of School Health, 80*(12), 614-621.

Piers, E. V., & Harris, D. B. (1984), Piers-Harris children self-concept scale. Los Angeles: Western Psychological Services.

Rohnke, K. (1984). *Silver bullets: A guide to initiative problems, adventure games, stunts and trust activities.* Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Schoel, J., & Maizell, R. S. (2002). *Exploring islands of healing: New perspectives on adventure-based counseling.* Beverly, MA: Project Adventure, Inc.

Schunk, D. H., & Pajares, F. (2002). The development of academic self-efficacy. In A. Wigfield & J. Eccles (Eds.), *Development of achievement motivation.* San Diego: Academic Press.

Snowman, J., & Biehler, R. (2012). *Psychology applied to teaching* (13th ed.). Wadsworth: USA

Uszynska-Jarmoc, J. (2007). Self-esteem and different forms of thinking in seven and nine year olds. *Early Child Development and Care, 177*(4), 337-348.

Utay, J., & Utay, C. (1996). Applications of Adler's theory in counseling and education. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 23*(4), 251-256.

Wick, D. T., Wick, J. K., & Peterson, N. (1997). Improving self-esteem with Adlerian adventure therapy. *Professional School Counseling, 1*(1), 53-56.

Yalom, I., & Leszcz, M. (2005). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy* (5th ed.). New York: Perseus Books Group.

Ziomek-Daigle, J., McMahon, G., & Paisley, P. O. (2008). Adlerian-based interventions for professional school counselors: Serving as both counselors and educational leaders. *Journal of the Individual Psychology, 64*(4), 450-467.

Appendix (Adapted from Rohnke, 1984 and authors' personal experiences)

Session 1: Setting Goals & Problem Solving

One Up, One Down
Instructions:
> The facilitator or whoever wants to initiate this game chooses one of the three options as outlined below:
> - 1st option: Group member states, "one up, one down" and needs to have one of their hands above the same elbow and the other hand below that same elbow. Their hands must be in the appropriate position when the group member states, "one up, one down." For example, someone may say, "one up, one down," as they scratch their head with one hand and leave the other hand on their lap.
> - 2nd option: Group member states, "two up," and needs to have both of their hands above both of their elbows. Hands need to be in the appropriate position when the group member states, "two up." For example, someone may say, "two up" as they lean back in their seat and fold their hands behind their head.
> - 3rd option: Group member states, "two down," and needs to have both hands below both elbows. Group member needs to have hands in the appropriate position when they state, "two down." For example, someone may state, "two down," as they put both hands on their knees while they are sitting down.

Processing Examples:
- What was it like to be a group member today?
- How did you solve the problem as a group?
- What was it like to solve the problem together?

Line Up
Instructions:
- Instruct group to arrange themselves in order by a given characteristic. Instructions should be somewhat ambiguous, allowing room for group problem solving.
- Deflect questions for further instructions: "There's many ways to solve the problem. That's for the group to decide." "Who remembers the instructions"? Or simply continue to repeat the original instructions.
- After the group has formed its line, ask each member to say aloud his/her characteristic.
- Debrief with the group how they selected and implemented their solution to the problem.
- Present increasingly difficult line up problems, processing after each.
- Line Up Examples: birthplace, personal quality (members can say or spell their chosen quality) animals (with no speech, making only the sound of the animal) birth date (with no sight) — facilitators escort unsighted members around the area to be used, and ask members to turn in place to disorient them a little, height (no sight, no speech, give one minute to plan)

Processing Examples:
- What order did you use to arrange yourselves?
- What are some other ways you could have solved this problem?
- How clear were the instructions?
- How did the group communicate?
- Who was a leader? Who had a plan?
- How did it feel not to be able to talk/see?
- Was anyone frustrated during the activity? Why? How did you deal with the frustration?

Session 2: Cooperation & Encouragement

Everybody Up
Instructions:
- Ask two people of approximately the same size to sit on the ground facing one another so that the bottoms of their feet are opposed, knees are bent, and hands are tightly grasped.
- From this sitting position, ask the duo to try and pull themselves into an upright standing position.
- If the pair is successful, ask them to seek another partner and try standing up with three people, then four, etc., until the entire group eventually makes an attempt.
- Criteria for a successful attempt are:
  - ✓ Hands grasped so that an electrical current could pass through the group
  - ✓ Foot contact with the same electrical set-up
  - ✓ All derrieres are off the ground at the same time
  - ✓ An expanding group will soon find that the seemingly logical circular configuration of bodies cannot be continues beyond 8 or so. An alternate or additional way to present this problem is to ask the participants to sit back-to-back and try to stand as a pair, a trio, etc.
  - ✓ Do not allow interlocked arms for safety reasons

 Processing Examples:
- How did you all cooperate to accomplish this task?
- How did you all encourage/not encourage each other to accomplish this task?

Moon Ball Instructions:
- The group tries to strike, slap, head, or elbow a beach ball the length of a field (distance is up to the need for push or pleasure) in the least possible elapsed time.
- Team members must strike the ball sequentially; i.e., players cannot hit the ball after their first strike until everyone on the team has made contact with the ball.
- Since this is a timed event (the number of hits is irrelevant), more than one attempt should be announced so that the group is anticipating and planning for (thinking about) a second try.

Processing Examples:
- How did you all cooperate to accomplish this task?
- How did you all encourage/not encourage each other to accomplish this task?

Blanket Name Game
Instructions:
- Group divides into two teams of equal numbers.
- Two facilitators hold a large blanket stretched between them with the bottom touching the ground. The two teams sit on either side of the blanket so that one team cannot see the other.
- One person from each team sits close to the blanket facing it; this person is the "player." The rest of the team moves back a little from the blanket, still sitting so they cannot see the other team and the other team cannot see them.
- Facilitator explains that when the blanket is dropped each player must say the name of the other player; the rest of the team remains silent.
- On a three count, facilitators drop the blanket. The player who says the other's name first wins and captures that person for their team.
- Raise the blanket again; ask for two more people to sit facing the blanket. Repeat until the group understands the game, and then move to variations. Ideally, people move from one team to the other as the game progresses. The game can continue, with variations, until all the players are on one side, signifying that everyone has won the game. Or continue the game until group interest seems to wane and players have mixed considerably from their original teams.

Processing Examples:
- How did it feel to be captured?
- How did group members encourage/not encourage others?
- What can the group do to provide more encouragement to themselves and to one another?
- What were some of the best ways to describe opposite players?
- What did the group do well during this game?

Session 3: Communication & Connectedness

Flip Me the Bird Tag
Instructions:
- Provide enough "birds" for approximately a third of the group. "Birds" can be foxtails, knotted towels, or rubber chickens. When a player is holding a bird s/he cannot be tagged.
- Birds can be thrown to other players, but cannot be handed.
- One person is "it." When "it" tags another player, that player is "it." No tag backs.

Processing Examples:
- What ways did people work together and communicate?
- What strategies developed among the group? How did it feel to be "It?"

Mirage
Instructions:
- One participant is chosen from the group and is given a piece of paper with a design on it. That person must communicate the image to the rest of the group so that players can duplicate it on their own paper. You may ask that people concentrate on their own work, or you may say nothing and allow the group to collaborate if they think it will help.
- The versions below are samples that have worked well. Invent your own variations that highlight any specific issue you want to address with your group.
- For the first couple of versions, prohibit illustrators from showing their design to the leader to check its accuracy.
- This exercise should be done more than once, with each variation allowing different forms of communication between the "leader" and the "drawers." Each version should be led by a new leader.
    - ✓ Version #1:
        - The leader can say anything; any make no gestures, and must face away from the group. Drawers may not speak or ask questions.
    - ✓ Version #2:
        - The leader may only make gestures, no speaking. Drawers may ask as many questions as they want.
    - ✓ Version #3:
        - The leader may speak and gesture. Drawers many ask one question each.

Processing Examples:
- What did everyone learn from this experience?
- How could we as individuals and as a group better facilitate our own communication?
- What are you telling yourself as a leader in regards to what kind of job you did?
- How can you view this more positively?
- How does the way you view this affect how you feel after this activity?
- How can you see your mistakes as learning opportunities?

Session 4: Building Trust

Trust Sequence
Instructions:
- Provide pens and paper for group to journal on questions about trust.
- Emphasize that this information will be private, no one else will read it, and participants will share only what they choose with the rest of the group.
- Explain the group will be participating in physical activities to build trust.

    Mirror
- Purpose is to focus attention on other person's movement.
- Group members select a partner with which to work. You may want to ask the group to select a partner of approximately equal height.

- Partners decide who will begin this activity.
- Partners face one another, about I foot away from each other.
- The person who has chosen to begin, moves his/her arms, legs, face, and neck. The other person acts as a mirror, mimicking all of the movements of the partner.
- After a minute or so, have partners switch roles.

    Joust
- Purpose is to find an effective, comfortable spotting position.
- Same pairs of partners that worked together in Mirror, now face each other in a spotting position.
- Partners press palms of hands against the palms of the other person.
- Partners now joust (gently) for a couple minutes, trying to set each other off balance.

    Trust Lean
- Demonstrate and explain safety parameters. Emphasize the need for consistency. Discourage group members from joking during this exercise (oops, no wait, just a minute). The purpose of the activity is to build trust.
- Work with co-facilitator, or ask for a volunteer from the group.
- Coach leaning position: feet together, cross hands over, arms down, under and then tucked up with hands held tightly against chest, body straight and stiff.
- Commands:
  - ✓ Leaner: Spotter?
  - ✓ Spotter: Spotting!
  - ✓ Leaner: Ready to lean
  - ✓ Spotter: Lean on!
- Emphasize consistency in commands. Caution participants not to become automated with commands - do not answer as a spotter if not ready and in position.
- Begin with hands on leaner, bring leaner back about 12 inches, and then return to vertical. Remind members to bring leaner to vertical position gently, not use excessive momentum so that leaner pitches forward.
- Repeat commands, move hands 3 inches away from leaner's back, complete trust lean. Spotter should communicate to leaner how far away hands are each time, and negotiate leaner's comfort and security level.
- Repeat commands, move hands 6 inches away from leaner's back, complete trust lean.
- Have partners begin sequence of trust leans, coach members on correct positions and commands. Watch especially for leaner's feet not together and incorrect foot positions for spotting.
- Partners switch, leaner becomes spotter, and vice versa.

Processing Examples:
- What was it like to trust your partner?
- How did you feel?
- What were you thinking?
- How does this influence what you did?
- What have you learned about yourself and others today?

Session 5: Helping Others

Wizards and Gelflings
Instructions:
- Explain the following: In the universe (as defined by the boundaries on this game), there are two forces at work. Each force is represented by a unique species of beings. As is often the case when two species co-exist, there is tension and competition.
- The first species is the Wizards. Wizards tend to be serious because they are always thinking—creating spells, calculating formulas, analyzing experiments, chanting ancient rituals…you know the type. They like their work a lot and do not like to be distracted.

- On the other hand, Gelflings live to have FUN! They frolic, fantasize, sing, dance, and merrily enjoying themselves without a care in the world. Well, almost not a care. They must watch out for Wizards.
- Wizards have a fixated mindset about Gelflings. See a Gelfling, freeze it. NOW! Wizards constantly try to freeze Gelflings by touching them with their magic ball/wand/orb.
- As soon as a Gelfling is frozen, it immediately reacts to the suspension of its ability to frolic by emitting the Universal Gelfling Distress Call: A very high pitched, "Help Me, Help Me, Help Me…"
- A physical motion emphasizes this distress call. Use a fist with the thumb extended up, raising and lowering it into the palm of your other hand—the universally recognized Gelfling symbol for "help." This call repeats itself over and over until at least two unfrozen Gelflings surround their frozen partner, join hands and hug that person calling out, "Go free, little Gelfling, go free." At this joyful juncture, the frozen Gelfling is free to frolic once again.
- Wizards hate to see all their cryogenic work undone, so they get particularly upset as Gelflings become unfrozen. Wizards exhibit extra amounts of serious freezing energy when Gelflings congregate around a frozen partner.
- The challenge in this activity is to find the proper balance between seriousness and fun. Too many Wizards, the game ends quickly and the Gelflings feel overwhelmed. Too few Wizards, the Gelflings get bored and the Wizards need CPR. Experiment with your group, but 2-3 Wizards for about 15-20 Gelflings seems to be an appropriate ecological starting point.
- Allow the Wizards to change their identity. Any time they get tired of chasing Gelflings, they can tag a Gelfling and then give them the Wizard's magic ball. The Gelfling is immediately transformed into a Wizard, the Wizard into a Gelfling. This technique has been proven to prevent major stress breakdowns in Wizards.

Processing Examples:
- What was it like to be a helper?
- How did you feel when you were in the helping role?
- What was it like to be a Wizard?
- How did you feel to be in a non-helpful role?

Acid Pour
Instructions:
- Ask group to select individually a quality they possess that helps them to work with each other OR ask the group to select a quality without which they will not succeed.
- Explain that the water in the first bucket must be transferred, without spilling a drop into the second can.
- The first bucket may not be touched by any participant, but it may be moved.
- The second bucket may not be touched, and may not be moved from its position inside a large (12'+ diameter) circle.
- Participants may not enter the circle.
- Participants may use only the tube-and-string-tool you provide, touching it only between the two knots tied at the ends of the strings.

Processing Examples:
- How did you find ways to incorporate individual skills into group performance?
- How did you use the quality you chose during this initiative?
- How did the group use the skills of different people in the group to be helpful to all?
- What ways can you work together in the future to be sure that you are using the skills and talents of all group members?

Session 6: Responsibility for Self & Others

Pipeline
Instructions:
- Pipeline is a high-energy initiative requiring communication, teamwork, and planning. The activity involves transporting a variety of objects from a designated starting point and dropping them into a container. The objects can only be carried in the chutes provided. The rules impose limits on

how the objects can be transported. These rules provide a clear framework of what is acceptable and what causes the object to be recalled.

- The goal is to deliver successfully into the container as many objects as possible during the time allowed.
- All participants must start behind the boundary line before beginning to deliver an object (unless an object has already been delivered successfully–see below).
- One person may pick up the object and place it into the first chute. No one else may touch the objects during the delivery process.
- The following Rules must be maintained:
  - ✓ The object may not stop.
  - ✓ The object may not roll backwards.
  - ✓ The object may not drop onto the ground.
  - ✓ The object may not touch any team member.
  - ✓ The chutes may not touch each other at any time.
  - ✓ When an object is in someone's chute, the person may not move his/her feet.
  - ✓ If any one of these rules is broken, the object must be returned to the start and the team must begin the delivery process again. All team members must begin again in the start area.
  - ✓ When an object is successfully delivered into the container, the group does not have to reassemble in the starting area to send the next object. Only the designated delivery person must start behind the start line, all other participants may arrange themselves in any way they believe will help them successfully perform the next delivery. Only when a delivery is unsuccessful does the restart rule apply.
  - ✓ Any objects delivered successfully are finished; they are not called back even if a rule infraction occurs later in the activity.
  - ✓ The group has _____ minutes to complete the task.

Processing Examples:
- How did the group feel having this kind of responsibility?
- What are the groups' thoughts towards being responsible for someone else or themselves?
- Did the group plan effectively?
- Did the group practice the plan?

Biographical Statements

Holly H. Wagner, Ph.D., LPC, NCC, CFLE is an assistant professor at University of Missouri – Saint Louis. She specializes in issues related to prevention, child & adolescent development, career counseling, college student development, and counselor development. Please send any correspondence to boltholl@isu.edu.

Anna Elliott, MA, LPC is a graduate assistant and doctoral candidate at Idaho State University, Pocatello, Idaho. She specializes in working with adolescents in multiple settings specifically wilderness, as well as work with college students, correspondence to ellianna@isu.edu.